

# **Gunnison Travel Frequently Asked Questions**

(June 6, 2007)

## **1. What is the current Gunnison Travel Management Project?**

This is a joint effort with U.S. Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to designate routes open to motorized and mechanized vehicles in spring, summer and fall. Vehicle class (type of motor vehicle) and season of use will also be identified for each route.

## **2. Why is travel management a joint effort between the two agencies?**

Public land in the Gunnison area is managed by both the BLM and the FS. In many cases the agencies' lands are adjacent to one another, so it makes sense to have consistent policy and consistent efforts in regard to travel management. Previous travel issues were a joint effort.

## **3. What is the goal of this effort?**

The goal is to provide a transportation system within both agencies' ability to manage (operate and maintain), provide a variety of users with a diverse experience and minimize impacts to resources.

## **4. Why not address winter travel at the same time?**

Summer and winter travel are two very involved issues and the agencies' wanted to address each one individually. Also, the Forest Service may address winter travel on a Forest-wide basis for the GMUG National Forest.

## **5. Didn't the agencies just complete a travel plan a few years ago?**

In 2001, the Gunnison Interim Travel decision restricted travel to established roads and trails to stop the proliferation of new user-created routes. This was done through a public process and with an environmental analysis. This was an interim decision until more detailed planning could be done. The product was the "Green to Yellow" map which displayed the best available information regarding roads, trails and user-created routes as of January 12, 2001. This interim decision did not address vehicle class or season of use.

## **6. What do you mean by vehicle class?**

By vehicle class we are referring to motorized and wheeled vehicles. The following are options for vehicle class route designations:

- Roads open with seasonal restrictions

- Roads open to highway legal vehicles only

- Roads open to all vehicles (licensed and unlicensed)

- Trails open to vehicles 50 inches or less in width (ATV, motorcycle, etc.)

- Trails open to all (full size) vehicles (trails are rugged and narrow- intended for jeeps)

- Trails open to motorcycles only (single track)

- Trails open to non-motorized uses such as horses, foot or bicycle

## **7. What do you mean by season of use?**

There may be seasonal restrictions on a road or trail during some part of the year for various reasons such as wildlife disturbance, unsafe or impassable conditions.

## **8. What are the primary transportation "system" routes shown on the maps at the 2006 public meetings?**

These are routes in the FS or BLM inventory that the agencies take responsibility for in terms of maintenance, resource damage protection, and public safety. These are routes the agencies would expend public funds on to maintain the government's investment in these facilities and to provide for public transportation, resource management, public access, and recreational use.

**9. Were routes identified in the Green to Yellow map (from the 2001 Interim Travel Plan) included as primary transportation system routes ?**

Not necessarily. Many of the routes on the Green to Yellow map were user-created routes and did not identify modes of travel. Some user-created routes on the Green to Yellow map were identified as a system route so maintenance funding could be used to repair excessive resource damage.

**10. Where can you view the Gunnison Travel maps?**

All maps for **North Gunnison, South Gunnison** and **Paonia**, can be viewed on the GMUG website ([www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug/)). Hard copies are located in the FS/BLM office in Gunnison, and Forest Service offices in Paonia, Lake City and Delta. If you would like to request a CD with the maps, please call (970) 874-6637.

**11. What is the proposed action for Gunnison Travel and how was it developed?**

The proposed action addresses those existing routes that the agency believes provide a sustainable transportation system and meets the goals of Gunnison Travel Management. The proposed action is depicted as a display of routes (i.e. map) proposed to remain open for motorized and mechanized travel and areas where routes are recommended to be added. The proposed action does not mean the agencies have made a decision on travel management. The proposed action is a draft map, the public is asked to comment on.

The proposed action for Gunnison Travel has been developed as a result of route evaluations and travel analysis, along with consideration of over 1,100 specific comments received during the fall 2006 comment period (pre-scoping), by a team of resource specialist from the FS, BLM and the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW). Each system route, as well as many user created routes, was evaluated using resource information, wildlife concerns, road density, public safety, and public comment. Recommendations were made by the specialist to keep many routes open, change the type or season of motorized and mechanized use on some routes, add some routes or eliminate some routes from the agencies' transportation systems.

It was not uncommon to have opposing perspectives from the public on almost all of the routes where specific route comments were received.

**12. What were some of the criteria that will be used to make decisions on routes or vehicle classes for the proposed action?**

- Recreational opportunities would be a major consideration – making sure we provide access to a variety of recreation opportunities, providing a range of uses and levels of difficulty, providing loop trips.
- We will consider the needs of other public land uses such as grazing, timber harvest, minerals, etc.
- Environmental criteria would also be an important factor – considering impacts to watersheds, soils, vegetation, wildlife habitat, fisheries, etc.
- Ensuring public safety would be another set of factors (especially on current mixed-use routes), need to consider volume and speed of traffic, compatibility of vehicle class with road or trail design.
- Factors such as our ability to maintain roads and trails, ability to enforce regulations and designations, road density, redundancy (reasonable access areas by other routes) are also considered in the evaluations.

**13. Will the maps of the proposed action indicate the season of use for all routes?**

Significant changes will be identified on the maps, however, many current closures in place related to wildlife, spring conditions, etc. will remain unchanged and will not be shown on the map. Those routes,

where the season of use restrictions have been proposed to change, will be displayed on the maps. There will also be tables listing all routes with travel restrictions or seasonal closures.

**14. How is access to dispersed camping on the forest addressed in the travel plan?**

In areas where there is historical or continued dispersed camping occurring, the proposed action shows routes or spurs off of the open routes to these popular areas. Generally, these spurs and short routes to camping areas currently exist on the ground and would remain open. Often dispersed camping access routes were user created rather than system routes under the current FS and BLM inventories.

**15. Will the travel planning process make decisions on motorized mixed use for routes?**

Motorized-mixed use is defined as designation of a National Forest System (NFS) roads for use by both highway-legal and non-highway-legal motor vehicles. Designating NFS roads for motorized mixed use involves safety and engineering consideration. A motorized-mixed use (MMU) engineering analysis for a route is done on a case-by-case basis. Routes can be recommended for MMU analysis during travel management planning or by District Ranger at any time. EM770-30 provides guidelines for the engineering analysis for motorized-mixed use on National Forest System Roads. The engineering analysis findings are provided to the District Ranger who has the authority to make a decision. The designation of a trail for mechanized or motorized use would be a decision to be made during the travel management planning and would be analyzed through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

**16. Does the proposed action recommend new routes?**

During the initial comment period, recommendations for new routes were considered, however, the agencies focused on evaluating existing routes. As the proposed action is refined and alternatives developed, potential new routes may be identified and evaluated in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). We would like to work with you to get more specifics on the general proposals for new routes. For those of you that have provided specific comments on new routes, we may need to work with you to refine the new route proposals as we develop and incorporate them into alternatives.

The travel plan will not make decisions on new routes, other than to conceptually define possible alignments for new routes. New route construction would require a site-specific proposal and the on-the-ground environmental consequences would have to be evaluated in a NEPA compliance document before final decisions on new routes can be made. The development of a new route would require detailed project-level analysis (NEPA compliance). In summary, the travel plan conceptually addresses areas for new routes, but project-level analysis is required before any decision on new route development could occur.

**17. What is the next step after you develop the proposed action?**

We would like to hear what you like about the proposal, suggestions for improving the proposal or issues or concerns you have. Please be as specific as possible. You may use the comment form provided if you wish. Public comments, concerns, issues, and recommendations received during this formal scoping period (May-August 2007) will further define the public's concerns and issues that will be used by the agencies to further refine the proposed action and to develop alternatives. A proposed action and a range of alternatives will be analyzed in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This will analyze and disclose the environmental consequences of travel management planning. The public will again have an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed action, a preferred alternative, as well as other alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS (DEIS). We anticipate the DEIS to be available for public comment by the summer of 2008.

**18. I sent in a comment during the pre-scoping, do I need to re-submit that comment for it to be considered in the alternatives?**

If you commented during the initial comment period (July-October 2006), your comments will be brought forward into this formal scoping. You do not need to re-submit the same comments again to have your comments considered or to demonstrate your interest in this travel planning. If after reviewing the proposed action, you have additional recommendations or want to change your comment, please submit new comments/concerns to the address below. If you have commented previously, you are on the Gunnison Travel mailing list. If your contact information changes at anytime during this planning process, please let us know.

**19. What is the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM)?**

This map is a product of the travel management decision and will indicate designated motorized routes on FS and BLM public lands. If a route is not on the MVUM map, it is an unauthorized route which means closed. Routes designated for motorized use may not always be signed but will be identified on the MVUM map if they are open. It will be the public's responsibility to reference the MVUM map to determine designated routes for motor vehicle use. MVUM maps will be developed for each forest on a nationwide basis. It is not only a tool for motorized users, but also a consistent and standardized law enforcement tool used by FS for their lands nationwide.

**20. Will the MVUM also show mechanized and non-motorized trails?**

No, a visitor use map will provide information on motorized routes as well as non-motorized routes, including mechanized trails, hiking, and horse trails. These maps, once developed, will be available for purchase at FS offices.

**21. Does the Forest Plan affect Gunnison Travel?** Not directly, Gunnison Travel is a program level decision and designates those routes to remain open for motor- or mechanized-wheeled vehicle use. It will also determine the appropriate and allowed type of vehicle use, and season of use for a specific area of the GMUG National Forests. The land and resource management plan for the GMUG National Forest (referred to as the Forest Plan) is a strategic document. As such it does not designate roads, trails, or areas for motorized or mechanized travel. The Forest Plan does provide goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines that provide general guidance to the resource specialists and managers in their evaluations of routes to determine if they are in suitable locations, do not conflict with landscape-level resource management objectives and can be sustained within the standards set in the Forest Plan. While the Gunnison Travel planning process is proceeding under the current 1983 Forest Plan, which is still in effect, much of the public input provided during the Forest Plan revision is being considered in on-going planning activities. During the Forest Plan revision, the public expressed their desired conditions for landscapes with the GMUG National Forest. Much of Gunnison Travel Planning has been consistent with the desired conditions provided by the public for the Gunnison Area.

**22. Can we designate a road or trail for motor vehicle use within an inventoried roadless area?**

Some inventoried roadless areas already contain roads and trails open to motor vehicle use established through prior decision-making. The 2001 Roadless Rule acknowledges existing roads in inventoried roadless areas. New roads in roadless areas are prohibited with limited exceptions. Currently, the State of Colorado Petition does not have language to allow new roads in roadless areas.

Existing motorized trails are allowed in roadless areas. During travel planning, recommendations for the "concept" of a new motorized trail in a roadless area may be considered (for example, to complete a loop); however, the process to construct a new motorized trail in a specific location would require additional NEPA analysis.

**23. Who can we contact for more information or to be added to the mailing/email list?**

Call or email Anne Janik at (970) 874-6637 ([ajanik@fs.fed.us](mailto:ajanik@fs.fed.us)) for comment forms, copies of maps, or to be placed on the Gunnison Travel mailing list.