



COLORADO
Parks and Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources

6060 Broadway
Denver, CO 80216
P: 303.297.1192



RRC

RRC Associates
4770 Baseline Rd., Suite 355
Boulder, CO 80303
P: 330-449-6558

To: Members of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission
From: Amanda Biedermann, CPW Policy and Planning Project Manager; Jake Jorgenson, COO, RRC Associates; Lucy Harbor, Director of Outdoor Recreation Research, RRC Associates
Date: January 11, 2024

Re: SB23-059 State Parks and Wildlife Area Local Access Funding - Project Update and Study Overview

INTRODUCTION

The rapid increase in demand for outdoor recreation in recent years has challenged local governments' ability to maintain access to state parks, leading to increased barriers for the public. Consequently, on May 22, 2023, the Colorado General Assembly passed [SB23-059, State Parks and Wildlife Area Local Access Funding](#). This bill allows municipal and county governments with local access routes¹ to state parks to apply for up to a \$2 additional fee on daily vehicle passes to support transportation access² to state parks. This bill requires Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to:

1. Have the Parks and Wildlife Commission (the Commission) establish by July 1, 2024:
 - a. A process for local governments to request an additional fee to be charged on a daily vehicle pass that authorizes the use of a state park located within the local governments' geographic boundaries, and
 - b. Criteria for approving such a request.
2. Complete a study on access to state parks, including assessing local transportation infrastructure deficits, funds available to address these deficits, and services used by visitors to access state parks. The study and any accompanying legislative recommendations are due to the Colorado General Assembly by November 1, 2024.

CPW has contracted a Consultant Team to conduct the study and accompanying local engagement process. The plan for this study and local engagement process is presented throughout this memo. At the end of this project, CPW will present the Commission with a process and criteria to approve the additional fee on daily vehicle passes along with a completed study of local access routes surrounding each state park across the state.

¹ Defined as “a right-of-way, including a bike or pedestrian path, that is normally used to travel to or from a state park.”

² May include maintaining and constructing local roads, bicycle lanes, shuttle operations, and multimodal access routes.



What are the requirements of SB23-059?

SB23-059 directs CPW to develop the mechanism and approval process for a local governmental entity with a local access route to a state park to apply for up to a \$2 additional fee to be applied to daily vehicle passes for that park. The fee is intended to serve as a method of providing transportation access funding for local access routes to the park that may be impacted by park visitation and operations³. The fee does not apply to annual or lifetime passes, and CPW can retain up to three and one-third percent of the fee for administration costs⁴.

Beginning January 1, 2025, CPW can start collecting the additional fee on each daily vehicle pass that allows access to a state park for which the additional fee has been established and shall transfer the collection of this fee (minus the administrative cost allowance) to the local government for transportation infrastructure support.

What must CPW do to successfully implement the bill?

Prior to implementation and collection of any fees, CPW must conduct a study on local access to state parks. The bill instructs CPW to collaborate with local governments to identify the following:

- 1) Deficits or potential deficits with local transportation infrastructure and services used by visitors to access state parks;
- 2) Sources of funding and partnerships to address the deficits or potential deficits as referenced above;
- 3) The use of and effect on local transportation infrastructure and services of visitors traveling to and from state parks;
- 4) Infrastructure costs incurred by local governments in supporting the state in managing state parks and the appropriateness of CPW or other persons, including users, to help support infrastructure funding;
- 5) Economic and community benefits and negative effects of state parks on local economies and the difference in benefits and effects incurred by counties and municipalities;
- 6) Existing local government revenue, including fees, assessments, and taxes, and payments by CPW in lieu of taxes;
- 7) Methods of providing guidance to determine which local access routes should be eligible for any identified funding;
- 8) Past examples of issues with providing local transportation infrastructure and services used to access state managed recreational land and opportunities to work with CPW in addressing these issues;
- 9) Current resources available for and dedicated to a community's local transportation infrastructure and services for a baseline of existing maintenance budgets, new sources of funding or partnerships to assist in the maintenance of local access routes to and from state parks, and the predictability and reliability of the sources;
- 10) The local government's financial demands of maintaining transportation infrastructure and services needed to access state parks in relationship to the financial demands of

³ Such a fee must not exceed \$2, but the Commission shall adjust the fee every five years to account for inflation or deflation, and the adjustment may allow the fee to exceed \$2 (and is rounded to the nearest dollar).

⁴ This administrative cost is to be evaluated annually to determine the net incremental rate of the fee.

maintaining other local transportation infrastructure and services within the local jurisdiction;

- 11) The effects of local transportation conditions on local access routes serving the state parks on the visitor experience.

The above items are to be identified through a comprehensive study of current access to state parks, which will include discussions and engagement with local government stakeholders, collection of secondary data gathering, and an evaluation of local access routes to state parks across Colorado.

OUTLINE OF CPW'S 2023/2024 LOCAL ACCESS FUNDING STUDY

In October of 2023, CPW contracted a Consultant Team (RRC Associates, Fehr and Peers, and SE Group) to conduct the local access funding study and accompanying local engagement process. The project is designed to cover three distinct phases, which are described in the following sections. These phases align with SB-23-059's timeline requirements, including the deadlines to finalize the process/criteria and study. A more detailed timeline is included in the appendix to this memo.

Phase 1: Project Kickoff, Project Management Plan, and Contact Building

Phase 1 establishes the foundation for the study and involves both internal coordination, namely outlining the study plan and identifying key stakeholders, and external collaboration management, including initiating communication with some stakeholders. Phase 1 is mostly complete, with some ongoing coordination lasting for the duration of the project. The major tasks in this phase include:

- Task 1 - Project Kickoff Meeting and Planning
- Task 2 - Project Management Plan Development
- Task 3 - CDOT, DOLA, and other Local Government contact list creation

After launching the project and defining immediate next steps, the project team concentrated on setting up a comprehensive project management plan with a detailed timeline of key milestones and deliverables. As an ongoing effort, we have compiled an overarching contact list between CPW staff, state park managers, other State employees, and potential local government contacts that will be updated throughout the life of the project.

Phase 2: Development of Fee Criteria, Presentation to Commission for Approval, Local Government Collaboration, & Draft Study Development

The largest and most detailed tasks of the study are included in Phase 2. This phase involves concurrent work on the two discrete tasks required by SB23-059. First, the Consultant Team will assist with the development of a process for local governments to request an additional state park access fee, along with the criteria used to evaluate and approve such requests. The criteria are currently being developed collaboratively between CPW staff and the Consultant Team. The criteria serve two primary functions:

1. Assisting local governments in determining if their local access route qualifies under the bill's definition of a "local access route" and has the potential to be considered for an additional fee on daily vehicle passes;

2. Defining the data sources and information that local governments are required to provide to CPW to justify the additional state park access fee.

CPW will present the draft criteria to the Commission during its March 2024 meeting for review. Based on the Commission's feedback, CPW will present a finalized set of criteria during the May 2024 Commission meeting for approval. Per the enabling legislation, the Commission must establish the process and criteria by July 1st, 2024. CPW aims to publish the criteria in the summer/fall of 2024 to guide local governments in their applications for the additional state park access fee.

Proposed Local Access Funding Study Approach

The second major component of Phase 2 involves conducting an in-depth study of local access routes across Colorado for CPW's 43 state parks. The Consultant Team will first facilitate meetings with CDOT and DOLA to discuss the overall study strategy and stakeholder communications plan, and allow CDOT and DOLA to provide input on the proposed study approach prior to any local government engagement. CDOT will provide insight on local transportation issues, while DOLA will provide insight on park funding mechanisms and the financial benefits associated with state parks.

Starting in early 2024, the Consultant Team will reach out to various local government stakeholders, using contacts gathered from various sources, to initiate discussions on available data sources and information on state park visitation, as well as to assess the various local access routes near state parks. This collaboration with local governments that manage local access routes near state parks is a critical aspect of this study and will serve to meet the following objectives:

1. Inform the comprehensive assessment of transportation infrastructure and services that currently provide access to each of Colorado's 43 state parks, including:
 - a. Who uses transportation infrastructure and services (proportions of passthrough traffic, local park users, and non-local park users)
 - b. How visitors traveling to/from state parks impact transportation infrastructure and services, and in turn, how these impact the visitor experience
 - c. Costs incurred by local jurisdictions to maintain access to state parks
 - d. Outstanding maintenance needs and how to prioritize allocation of additional funding
2. Rigorously analyze the funding of transportation infrastructure and services used to access state parks, including:
 - a. Understand existing sources of revenue, budgets, and deficits
 - b. Identify additional funding mechanisms and/or partnerships
3. Determine other positive and negative impacts of state parks on local jurisdictions, including:
 - a. Economic impact on local communities
 - b. Impact on local residents

Interviews conducted with key stakeholders, interested parties, and local governments will continue throughout early 2024 and into the summer to provide insights into the prevalence of local access issues and the extent to which local governments may consider applying for the additional fee.

In addition to the quantitative and qualitative data compiled throughout the stakeholder engagement process, a variety of secondary data sources will be incorporated into the study to build a more complete understanding of state park access. Questions to be addressed through additional secondary data include (but are not limited to):

1. What are the current transportation infrastructure and services used by visitors to access each Colorado state park, and are there any access deficits?
2. How do local transportation and access conditions impact the visitor experience at each state park?
3. How do visitors traveling to/from state parks use and impact the local transportation infrastructure and services?
4. How do state parks impact and benefit local communities?
5. More specifically, how do state parks impact and benefit the economies of local counties and municipalities?

Experiential assessments will be based on not only the project team's collective experience working on various visitor use projects across the country but also on any available data on visitor experiences across Colorado's public lands. Economic assessments will follow a similar pattern and use current visitation data from state parks to explore both the positive and negative effects of park visitation on the surrounding local area.

The final major dataset and analysis for the study will consist of mobile location data to understand vehicle use patterns across Colorado's state parks. Mobile location data and connected car GPS data has become widely used in various industries to determine transportation patterns and trends by providing temporal and geographical data on individual movement within a selected area. Data passively collected by both mobile phones and cars with connected GPS units are anonymous in nature, identifying dwell time within an area, device/vehicle origin (e.g., county where the person lives), patterns across various seasons, and more. Analysis of this data can be conducted at multiple scales and across diverse geographies for defined time periods. Utilizing mobile device data to better understand visitor use and travel patterns provides a more robust data set across different time periods and is an easier and more cost-efficient method of answering planning questions than data from traditional methods (such as intercept surveys or manual counts).

All collected data will be compiled into a comprehensive Draft Study of key findings and recommendations. The end product will be a balanced and holistic study fortified by data-driven insights and realistic suggestions, primed to inform legislative recommendations.

Phase 3: Study Finalization and Presentation to Commission

After bringing all the above study elements into a Draft Study in Phase 2, the Consultant Team will finalize the remaining details into a completed Final Study. This will include local access summaries for each of Colorado's 43 state parks, each of which will include all the available collected data for a park's jurisdiction, an assessment of the local access routes used to reach state parks, as well as recommendations for next steps if local government entities choose to apply for the additional state park access fee. CPW will rely on these summaries in discussions with local government entities that choose to apply for the additional fee. After finalization, the Consultant Team will present the study to the Commission no later than November 30th, 2024.

NEXT STEPS

The purpose of this memo and accompanying presentation was to inform the Commission about SB-23-059 and its requirements for implementation. We also sought to detail the process that CPW staff and the Consultant Team are undertaking to address the necessary components of the bill, and outline the key components that will be presented to and approved by the Commission. We look forward to your thoughts and comments throughout this process as we present various aspects of the study and local engagement process over time.

APPENDIX

The overall project schedule for the study and local engagement process is presented below:

Phase	Task	Status	Anticipated Date	Notes
Phase 1: Oct-Nov 2023	Task 1: Project kickoff meeting	Complete	October 2023	Completed in October 2023
	Task 2: Project management plan development	Complete	Early November 2023	Completed in November 2023
	Task 3: Presentation of proposed study approach and local engagement process	Complete	January 2024	Completed in January 2024
Phase 2: Dec 2023 - Sept 2024	Task 1: Draft criteria/process development, review, and approval	In progress	December 2023 - March 2024	Draft criteria presented in March; final criteria presented in May
	Task 2: Meet with CDOT and DOLA to discuss study plan	Upcoming	Winter 2024	None
	Task 3: Local government engagement and data collection	Upcoming	Winter/Spring 2024	None
	Task 4: Stakeholder data standardization and consolidation	Upcoming	Spring/Summer 2024	None
	Task 5: Additional secondary data collection and analysis	Upcoming	Spring/Summer 2024	None
	Task 6: Develop Draft Study	Upcoming	Summer 2024	None
	Task 7: Potential Commission updates (if needed)	Upcoming	Summer 2024	None
	Task 8: Draft Study review and revisions	Upcoming	Summer 2024	None
Phase 3: Oct-Nov 2024	Task 1: Finalize study	Upcoming	Fall 2024	None
	Task 2: Presentation of the Final Study to Commission	Upcoming	Fall 2024	Final Study presented in November