



N CR-25



National Park Service
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

Environmental Assessment for Wabash Avenue/Porter Access Area



1. PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENTS:

- The existing site has a number of current problems that need to be addressed, including vehicle and pedestrian circulation, lack of ADA compliant accessibility to the beach and restrooms, no ADA compliant picnic or seating area, inadequately designed parking lots, no formal picnic area, and maintenance and safety issues.
- Create an attractive and distinctive venue that will complement the adjacent residential area and showcase the national lakeshore.
- Restore damaged dunes and prevent future dune damage by developing appropriate visitor facilities.
- Harmonize with the Town's purpose for the beach area (i.e., the Town's "front porch").
- Be compliant with state and federal laws relative to the shore, state trust lands, and national parks.



2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce the impacts of traffic and visitors on residents through better facility design.
- Improve emergency access for fire, police, and ambulances to the beach and to local residents.
- Provide better traffic flow for everyone.
- Create a “showcase” destination, for the NPS and the community that will benefit all.
- Eliminate or reduce vehicle and pedestrian circulation problems, and include ADA access and safe pedestrian access.
- Develop a formal picnic area (including a picnic shelter and platform) that provides lake views, easy access to the beach and is ADA compliant.
- Emphasize better visitor accommodation for existing levels of visitation; the project is not designed as an effort to increase the number of visitors.
- Reduce Town maintenance costs related to erosion, facilities maintenance, and periodic sand removal.
- Improve the use and management of parking areas.
- The previous Town Council asked that the site have provisions for food service/concessions. The NPS is neutral on this element and will defer to the Town’s interest in this particular attribute.



3. DRAFT ISSUES:

- Adjacent landowner concerns (including State Park management plans) – this is a national park and state trust beach.
- Visitor use (numbers, safety, accommodation, available facilities). Visitor use continues to increase and this trend is likely to continue. This is due to increased population, not NPS efforts to attract visitors.
- Traffic (circulation, parking, safety). Difficult for residents to get to and from their homes when traffic is heavy. Emergency vehicles cannot access the site during high-use times.
- The beach is public property under Indiana state law and the public want, and have the right, to use it.
- Dunes damage and sand movement (the dunes continue to slough off into roads and parking lots).
- Maintenance (mainly from dune damage, with maintenance costs to Town). Sand plowing from the parking lot is depositing asphalt, garbage, and toxic fluids onto NPS beach.
- Safety (the current inadequate sidewalks and poorly-designed shower lead to unsafe pedestrian routes)
- ADA compliance. Town and NPS are both required by law to provide ADA access to the waterline. There are no ADA accessible seating or picnic areas. Handicapped parking spots must meet the legal requirements for slope and safe access to the restroom and the beach.
- The Town is now forced to expend law enforcement time and costs in traffic management.
- Natural resources (especially Threatened and Endangered species and state sensitive species, designated habitat)
- Cultural resources
- Town does not want to lose revenue opportunities of their paid parking lot. NPS does not have an authority that allows NPS to charge a parking fee.
- Steep slopes



4. THE PLANNING PROCESS:

- Step 1. Define purpose and need, goals and objectives, and issues (internal scoping)
- Step 2. Conduct external scoping (we are here)
- Step 3. Prepare draft alternatives and impacts
- Step 4. Prepare environmental assessment
- Step 5. Public review of environmental assessment
- Step 6. Analysis of public comment
- Step 7. Prepare decision document
- Step 8. Release decision document to the public