2014-2015 TICKET TO RIDE PROGRAM FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The program spoke for itself. It was the largest in the history of the park...our partners were stunned at the quality of the program, the number of participants, and its success."

- Big Bend National Park

The National Park Foundation has identified a "Continuum of Stewardship" which begins with developing awareness of parks, and then leads to engagement with parks. Ultimately it inspires support for national parks, creating the next generation of stewards that are vital to the future of the park system. The **Ticket to Ride Program** provides that first point of contact for many visitors, raising awareness of the national parks and its resources for substantial group.

In an effort to provide better access to national parks for more youth the National Park Foundation, together with Disney provided generous grants for transportation services in the 2014-15 grant cycle. The 65 participating Ticket to Ride parks received $482,140 in grant funding and brought a total of 70,108 youth to parks (average 1,079 per park). The kids came from a variety of schools and youth organizations including Title 1 schools and underserved areas in American cities and rural areas. The purpose of the grants is to overcome the substantial barriers of transportation costs in getting kids to parks to learn about these magnificent public resources, their natural beauty and the scientific, cultural and historical learning they provide. Throughout the program, rangers estimated that kids travelled an average of 53 miles each way to the parks, sometimes taking as much as two hours each way to reach their destinations.

Programs had as much variety as the national parks implementing them, though a three-aspect model was required that gave youth:

1. An activity or lesson prior to their visit
2. The visit itself (often a full day in the park, but in some cases multiple days), and
3. A follow up activity or lesson.

Nearly every park focused on an educational aspect in designing their program (63 of the 65 parks). In addition, 20 parks had a recreation theme, while several also used Junior Rangers, service learning or a special event or festival for their focus.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The **Ticket to Ride Program** Stewardship Continuum defines five <u>awareness outcomes</u>:

1. Participants visit parks in person or virtually for the first time
2. Participants enhance knowledge related to host national park (and nearby national parks as applicable)
3. Participants express interest in returning/or return to the park for more park experiences outside of the program
4. Partners (teachers or youth group organizations) develop awareness or understanding of parks as a resource
5. Park outreach to public and partners improved

In addition there is a single <u>engagement outcome</u> defined by the continuum:

1. Parks enhance ability to work with and leverage partner(ships)

This summary describes the program findings related to these outcomes. Data were provided from three sources: a representative sample of 161 teachers/group leaders participating in **Ticket to Ride** (for groups with upper elementary and older kids), pre- and post-visit surveys from 1,969 of those teachers' students, and an end-of-program survey of the 65 participating parks' program facilitators.

Outcome 1. Participants visit parks in person or virtually for the first time
According to the parks, participating youth were predominantly preschool and elementary ages (61%) and of varied ethnic and racial heritages; only 35% were white, non-Hispanic youth. Student surveys showed that 33% had never been to any national park before, while a similar number had never been to their **Ticket to Ride** host national park.

Outcome 2. Participants enhance knowledge related to host national park (and nearby national parks as applicable)
Pre-visit surveys showed that just 11% of students felt they knew *a lot* or *a great deal* about the host park, while post-visit surveys showed that 50% felt they knew as much – a significant and substantial shift. Students were asked to describe something they enjoyed learning during their visits to the parks. Many offered something specific about history, events, artifacts or culture (36%) while others mentioned natural phenomena like plants, animals, geology or fossils (26%).

Teacher/leaders are also considered participants for the purpose of these outcomes, and 61% said they'd learned *a lot more* about the park as a result of their visit. Only 6% said they'd learned no more about the park. This is significant considering nearly all the teachers (91%) had previously visited a national park, 66% having been to the host national park before.

Outcome 3. Participants express interest in returning/or return to the park for more park experiences outside of the program)
Many participants for **Ticket to Ride** come from hard-to-reach or lower income areas. For some, the feasibility of a repeat visit to the park is insurmountable. We asked participants to disregard their circumstances and simply tell us "If you could, would you like to come back to the host park again in the future?" The majority (55%) said they *definitely would* and another 23% said they *probably would.* Just 5% responded on the negative side of the scale, saying they either *probably* or *definitely* would not want to return.

Outcome 4. Partners (teachers or youth group organizations) develop awareness or understanding of parks as a resource
Partners in the **Ticket to Ride** program are predominantly teachers, but about 20% come from other types of organizations, many of which serve children and youth. The National Park Foundation wants these partners to understand and use the resources of the national parks, which are at their disposal. Teacher/leaders were asked how much they'd learned about using the national parks as a resource for their organization and 73% said they'd learned *a lot* or *a great deal.*

Outcome 5. Park outreach to public and partners improved
Two measures informed parks' progress on this outcome, including self-reported use of new promotional and communication strategies and teacher/leaders' perceptions of the effectiveness of the parks' outreach. Nearly all the parks (91%) said they had used new and different strategies to recruit participants and 28% noted new strategies for reaching out to partner organizations. Seventy-nine percent of teacher/leaders described the parks as *extremely* or *very effective* in reaching out to organizations like theirs and 76% said they were as effective reaching out to the public.

Engagement Outcome: **Parks enhance ability to work with and leverage partnerships**
Parks tallied a total of 3,339 partners, mostly teachers, who helped with **Ticket to Ride**. Of those, 1,460 (44%) were new partnerships. Nearly all the parks (91%) said that **Ticket to Ride** enhanced or changed their ability to work with partners or leverage partnerships. Enhanced abilities to raise additional funding was a prominent theme among their responses. For example, at Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, rangers said, "Because of the success of our Ticket to Ride program, our Friends' Group is totally 'on-board' in terms of advocating for us to gain dollars through other grants. The program has enhanced my ability to work with the Friends' Group to leverage money." All told, the parks leveraged an additional $534,033 in financial contributions and another $281,498 in in-kind donations as part of their **Ticket to Ride** programs, creating an additional $1.69 for every dollar received from the grants. Parks also benefitted from 16,269 hours of volunteer time from their partner organizations valued at $375,326 (independentsector.org).

CONCLUSION

"Without this transportation assistance, these students, living just 31 miles from Point Reyes National Seashore, would not have been able to visit the park or attend the program. This new partnership, therefore, was only possible with the support of the NPF TTR program."

- Point Reyes National Seashore

The 2014-15 **Ticket to Ride** program brought more than 70,000 youth to America's national parks at a cost of just $6.88 per participant and just 13-cents per mile. These students reported significant gains in their understanding about national parks, substantial learning and a pervasive interest in returning to their national park in the future. In addition, parks' relationships among organizations and schools in their communities grew and developed to the point of leveraging more than 16,000 volunteer hours and $815,531 in financial and in-kind donations. Both parks and teacher/leaders repeatedly emphasized the critical and essential value of having in-hand transportation funding, both to gather partners and ease the way for participants.

Program results suggest several opportunities to continue to build on **Ticket to Ride's** impact. Many students spread the word about their experiences by doing presentations as part of their post-visit activities. While this wasn't a requirement of the program, the pervasiveness of this approach warrants attention as it has the potential to create even more value for the NPS in building awareness of its resources. This is particularly noteworthy since only about half of the teacher/leaders reported having a post-visit activity as part of their involvement in **Ticket to Ride.** Those that experienced the full three-aspect model were enthusiastic about the impacts and fit for their classrooms. Encouraging parks to provide strong engagement in the post-visit phase of the program could result in even more robust results.

Although parks leveraged substantial in-kind and cash contributions as part of **Ticket to Ride**, most parks did not report any contributions. As part of the capacity building opportunities this grant provides, the National Park Foundation could provide mentorship and coaching to help more parks realize additional gains from their grants. Even as simple a gesture as compiling an FAQ or Tips and Tricks worksheet with contributions from parks that had success in leveraging additional contributions could aid parks in getting more from their participation in the program.

"This is a great program. Without your help we would not be able to provide the transportation for these youth to come. Approximately 71% receive free and reduced lunches. Some of the youth even came through homeless shelter networks and foster child programs that were established."

- River Raisin National Battlefield Park

"Many thanks again for the support of the National Park Foundation! Together, we are helping to reach new audiences and make our national parks accessible and relevant to all."

- Golden Gate National Recreation Area

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INTRODUCTION

"Receiving the Ticket to Ride grant was crucial in making [the students'] visit to the park a reality... Having this grant money available allowed us to introduce the park to the students and chaperones, most of who are not from the traditional visitor population to Grand Canyon or other national parks. For many, it's a once-in-lifetime opportunity to be introduced to the national park concept and experience."

- Grand Canyon National Park

One of the greatest barriers preventing American youth from experiencing the national parks around them is lack of transportation and funding. The goal of the **Ticket to Ride** program is to provide efficient transportation support for students to visit national parks annually and to engage the youth in meaningful activities once there. Once in the parks, a world of learning unfolds as young people discover their natural, cultural and historical heritage, participate in volunteer and service-learning activities, enjoy recreational opportunities, develop an appreciation for nature and most importantly, begin a lifelong relationship with their national parks. The National Park Foundation, with support from Disney, awarded grants to 65 national parks, totaling $482,140. Grants ranged in amount from $1,000 to $8,000 and each aimed to serve from 30 to 10,000 youth with more than 70,000 youth served.

CONTINUUM OF STEWARDSHIP

As part of its ongoing organizational development, the National Park Foundation has identified a "Continuum of Stewardship" for all programs. It begins with people developing an awareness of parks, then prompts engagement of people with parks, and ultimately inspires people's support for national parks, creating the next generation of park stewards that are vital to the future of the park system (see figure 1). The **Ticket to Ride** program is particularly focused on developing awareness of parks for large numbers of people. Table 1 shows that National Park Foundation's Continuum of Stewardship, with the **Ticket to Ride** targets in brown/bold.

Table 1. Expected outcomes of National Park Foundation programs – Ticket to Ride in BROWN

AWARENESS	ENGAGEMENT	SUPPORT
First Introduction	*Deeper Level of Experience and Caring*	*Giving Back*
1. Participants visit parks in person or virtually for the first time **2. Participants enhance knowledge related to host national park (and nearby national parks as applicable)** **3. Participants express interest in returning/or return to the park for more park experiences outside of the program** **4. Partners (teachers or youth group organizations) develop awareness or understanding of parks as a resource** **5. Park outreach to public and partners improved**	*1. Participants knowledge about and comfort using the host national park and the broader NPS system is enhanced* *2. Participants are motivated to share/do share their experience with others and/or bring others to the park(s)* *3. Participants feel sense of ownership/stewardship of their host park, and/or that national parks are relevant to their lives* *4. Partners have increased ability to and or are utilizing park resources independent of the program* *5. Parks increase understanding of what partners/participants need; helping make the park more relevant, visible and valuable to the community* **6. Parks enhance ability to work with and leverage partner(ships)**	1. *Participants gain knowledge and ability to help the host national park and NPS system* 2. *Participants reach out to others in support of the park (awareness building, stewardship, utilization)* 3. *Participants are motivated to conserve and protect natural, cultural and historical national park resources outside of the program (service)* 4. *Partners intend to make utilization of parks part of their organizational fabric (ongoing)* 5. *Park facilities, services, programming and/or resources improved or expanded upon*

This report describes the progress made with regard to the expected program activities and outcomes over the course of the grant period. In many cases the National Park Foundation views not only the youth as participants, but also the teachers or group leaders who bring them there. As a result, teachers and group leaders are treated as both participants and partners in considering the program outcomes. The program's outcomes were assessed in several ways:

- Park reports filed at the end of their program activities – for most that was May and June of this year (n=65)
- A random sample of teachers – 1-3 from each site – completed brief surveys at the end of their experience (total n=161).
- The sampled teachers also administered pre- and post-visit surveys to their students. (total matched pre- and post-program surveys n=1,969)

Program evaluation is conducted by Applied Research Northwest (ARN), a social science research firm based in Washington State. ARN brings expertise in quantitative analysis and survey design to a broad range of evaluation methods that are implemented throughout the program year.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The following were the **Ticket to Ride** program's intended activities that reflect the logistical elements of the program:

1. Get youth outside in the fresh air. Transport kids to parks (bus, boat, train or public transportation or alternative such as biking, walking).
2. Engage "new" students in the project.
3. Implement a "three-aspect" project that includes pre-site, on-site field day, and post-site elements.
4. Share the news – tell the story of the great need to support transportation for today's youth and the great things that happen when children visit national parks. Present and disseminate projects to external audiences (press release at minimum).

The three-aspect project was an important addition to the **Ticket to Ride** program model, and it had some clear benefits. For example at **Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area** they said, "The TTR program has challenged us here at Bighorn Canyon to approach schools with a new framework. Traditionally, we just did 'one and done' type school programs, where we visit a classroom once, or they come visit our park once, and we never follow up. Now, thanks to this program's requirements, we have become quite comfortable doing programming with schools that is more targeted, and takes place over several meetings."

The following presents how the three aspects of the program were implemented as described by the grantees.

Pre-visit activities

Three themes emerged from the parks' descriptions of the pre-visit activities. Most commonly, grantees either provided park and visit specific materials to classrooms (website links, brochures, maps, videos and PowerPoint presentations) - many parks left it to the teachers to integrate the materials into a pre-visit experience for the kids. A more robust model included a visit from park staff to discuss the specifics of the park, the kids' visit and to answer questions. For example, at **Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site,** "A ranger was sent to the school and gave a Power point presentation was given on what to expect on their field trip. Then Junior Ranger booklets were passed out to everyone along with park brochure and the students were given instructions to bring the booklets with them on their on site visit."

Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area had a similar structure: "The pre-visit is a ranger-led program, given to the grade level, to help students learn more about the National Park Service and about the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. A discussion is also involved to help students understand more about the fieldtrip itself...what is involved, how the day will run, expectations for dress, expectations for behavior, etc."

Nicodemus National Historic Site elaborated on this model with a little dramatic flair: "Each pre-visit involved a 20-minute talk, including: in introduction to Nicodemus' history (who settled, why, when) by Nicodemus Historical Society Executive Director Angela Bates, an introduction to the National Park

Service by NPS Education Technician Jonathan Winskie, and an impersonation of Reverend Simon Roundtree by living historian Victor Williams."

Other parks combined basic information with relevant curriculum pieces – some of which were developed specifically for the **Ticket to Ride** groups/classrooms, either independently by the parks or in consultation with school teachers and principals. Other curriculum pieces were leveraged from existing work the parks did. For example, **Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park** touched on a variety to disciplines and subject matter: "The Canal Classrooms program includes a suite of more than a dozen curriculum based education program, each designed in collaboration with local teachers. All programs have specific pre and post visit materials that include one or more of the following: reading, primary sources, historic photo analysis, math, writing, art, and STEM activities. "

Fifth graders visiting **Eisenhower National Historic Site** began with "lessons in the Molding of a Leader character education program that define traits that make someone a person of good character. Students read several stories of Ike's life and identify character traits that Ike developed or displayed. They created a family time line with events that have helped them build character."

Others parks focused primarily on curricular subject areas, grounding it in the park characteristics, but staying very much on target for the subject matter. Some were quite innovative. For example 4th graders participating in **Ticket to Ride** at **Cuyahoga Valley National Park** enjoyed "actively dressing up as historical characters from the 1800's to create energy for exploring life on and along the Ohio and Erie canal. Utilizing entire class engagement, they act out what a "Lock" is and how it was used, as well as exploring how a canal was created and with what tools it was constructed."

At **Gateway National Recreation Area** classes "played a pollinator game where students played pollinators and plants and learned about plant/pollinator relationships. They then dissected squash and saw the results of pollination."

Fort Larned National Historic Site brought The Fort Larned Traveling Trunks for students to explore. "All nine of the trunks are based on Santa Fe Trail travel in the 19th century and include a story with related artifacts to be handled by the students."

At **Lowell National Historical Park** "The pre-trip classroom activity helps students understand how water moves through watersheds. In the activity, 'Crumpled Paper Watershed,' students crumple of a piece of paper the unfold it and use markers to draw along the ridge lines. They recrumple the paper and spray it with water - representing rain - to see how landforms are affected by rain water and run-off.**"**

A different model was used by two parks that brought teachers together to prepare them to administer the pre-visit curriculum and materials.

On-site activities

Nearly every park focused on education in designing their program (63 of the 65 parks). In addition, 20 parks had a recreation theme, while several also used Junior Rangers, service learning or a special event or festival for their focus. Just six parks had volunteer service as a focus.

Table 2. Themes of completed Ticket to Ride Programs (n=65)

	n	%
Education	63	97%
Recreation	20	31%
Service Learning	10	15%
Junior Ranger	9	14%
Special Event or Festival	9	14%
Volunteer	6	9%
Other (please specify)	10	15%

Among the "other" themes identified were:

- Getting kids comfortable being in nature
- Historical lessons
- Overall awareness building of the National Park System
- Themes specific to characteristics of the host national park

The programs in many cases were elaborate and extremely varied. Students engaged in recreation activities, experienced varied modes of transportation, travelled back in time to interact with historical artifacts and actors portraying historical figures, and studied science, history, art, music and other disciplines as part of their visits. Below, we highlight some of the descriptions provided by the grantees about the students' experiences.

At **Buck Island Reef National Monument**, students rode buses to the site then boarded boats for Buck Island. After arriving on the island, they went on a two-hour ranger-led hike, spent one hour swimming and having lunch on the beach then returned to school by boat and bus.

At **Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve** students visited "the encampment of living history actors to learn about how people worked, fought, and lived during times of war. This year, not only were American and British troops represented, but so were women, youth, civilians, and American Indians**.** Students also participated in hands-on activities designed to show skills used during war time or regular life circa 1815. These activities included cooking over fires, starting fire from flint and steal, learning how to tie tignons- the head wrappings of free women of color and enslaved women- cultural dances from American Indian nations, and watching black powder musket and cannon firings. This 'Battle of New Orleans University' brought the history of the battle to life for the visiting students."

Biscayne National Park held an "Expedition camp" – three days and two nights camping and immersing themselves in "resource studies through snorkeling, night hikes and camp fire programs." **Point Reyes National Seashore** also ran an extensive outdoor program: "Clem Miller Environmental Education Center School Program participants …spent three- to five- field days, evenings, and nights in directed exploration and discovery activities including ecological field study, wildlife viewing, wilderness backpacking, canoeing, hands-on conservation science, and nature writing & illustration," at Point

Reyes. “All slept in rustic pine cabins, attended campfire programs, took an evening hike, and went on an extended wilderness hike. For most, the majority of these activities were first-time experiences.”

Rather than just focus on its own resources, **Fort Scott National Historic Site** introduced students to a wide variety of sites around Topeka including Brown vs. Board, the Kansas State Capitol Building, and the Ritchie House (a stop on the underground railroad).

Science and water quality studies were themes at some parks. For example at **Homestead National Monument of America**, “Students put on waders and climbed down into the creek where they take measurements and collect samples. [Other] students developed a device that accomplished a task and then they were tested against each other. For example students had to develop a vehicle to transport a hedge apple down a zip line and then they raced against other students.” At **Zion National Park** students studied “geologic processes (5th grade) or the importance and diversity of microorganisms (8th grade)… The programs emphasized the benefits of studying science in an outdoor environment and the stewardship of natural resources.” At **Lowell National Historic Park** students “travel by boat on the Merrimack [River] to collect water samples, test them for various elements, and then analyze the data. In a hands-on experiment, they “pollute” and filter water in a “geo-cup” model to investigate how pollution moves through ground and surface water. They also explore a river front park to consider how humans have impacted the ecosystem.”

Like Zion, many other parks varied their programs depending on the ages of the students and the fit to the curriculum. For example, **Cuyahoga Valley National Park** had different emphases for fourth graders compared to eighth grade students. “During the field day, 4th grade Students explore the economic and human impacts of the Ohio & Erie Canal on Ohio, and become familiar with techniques used to discover information about the past. [It] begins with an introduction/welcome and lock demonstration, and flows to a discussion of why locks were needed on the canal. Then students participate in an (optional) touch table lock demonstration, scavenger hunt and outdoor hike. Instructors then conduct an extended hike or lead a discussion about canal benefits/detriments referencing Canal Exploration Center Exhibits. [Alternatively,] 8th grade students examine how the Ohio & Erie Canal impacted growth of the Ohio’s economy and population, and how the canal connected Ohio to the larger nation. They also explore how the Ohio & Erie Canal provided opportunities for entrepreneurship. The 8th grade program begins with an introduction and lock demonstration, and moves to a discussion of the function of the towpath, interaction with a lock model. After an outdoor hike, instructors cover topics such as engineering the canal, canal boats and how the canal system led to increased entrepreneurship.”

Multiple programs for different grades were also featured at **Amistad National Recreation Area**. “…The [fourth-grade] kids were outside for several hours in Chihuahuan Desert and southwest Texas canyons habitat. They learned about the prehistoric people of this area as well as geology, ancient hunting techniques, pictographs (painting their own) and, after a lunch break, a hike down into Seminole Canyon to see the 4000 year old pictographs. … [the fifth-grade] field trip brought the students here to Amistad National Recreation Area for a Hiking and Houseboat educational day. The kids, guided by a Ranger, hiked the Sunrise Trail here in Amistad National Recreation Area - they learned about the activity of hiking, safety, etc. as well as about adaptations of plants and animals. After the hiking portion of the field trip, off we went to board the houseboat to finish the field trip out on Lake Amistad on a houseboat, with the sun shining on us and the breeze blowing against us. After the kids finished their lunch break, they were instructed in the use of binoculars and also learned about food chains while out on the water.”

Sometimes science curriculum would alternate with cultural curriculum. For example at **Lava Beds National Monument**, “Students rotated through five activities and locations where they learned about plate tectonics using Oreo cookies. Students made prediction and observed a shield and compost volcano erupt. They toured a cave, made rocks out of candle wax and learned about convection and the continental drift. …[Alternatively,] Students learned about traditional Modoc life from members of the Klamath/Modoc tribe. Learned what life was like for a Pioneer traveling along the Oregon trail in a wagon. They learned what you needed to know to survive as a Fur Trader during the 1820's. Students were "enlisted" in the US Army during the 1870's and watched a blacksmith make a nail.”

Language arts paired with history lessons in some cases. At **National Mall and Memorial Parks** “One school included a lesson on Dr. King and wrote their own speeches that they shared at the Lincoln Memorial.”

Weir Farm National Historic Site blended art with nature observation: “Most teachers included Take Part in Art, creating art outdoors en plein air, and some type of Ranger-guided tour or introduction plus an activity or lesson they developed and led. For example, Columbus Magnet teachers led a pond habitat exploration and observation activity at Weir Pond and Brien McMahon students had specific art lessons and activities to complete on-site.”

Fort Larned National Historic Site followed their travel trunks pre-visit with more engagement with artifacts and attire from the period. Students “discover what unit a cavalryman was in, what country he was originally from, his age, and plans for the future once his enlistment was up. … Students also participate in trying on uniforms, fort chores - such as making hospital beds and carrying wood into the mess hall, and walking down a tunnel to reach a well.”

Mississippi River National Recreation Area provided three distinct experiences for visiting students. “One station had groups discovering geocaches at locations around the park with items inside related to the chosen themes. [Students also built] shelters out of materials they could find in the flood plain forest, with a slight spin on the connection to American Indian shelter or the needs of animals for shelter depending on the theme. The third rotation taught them how to build and light a safe fire, split with a nature/history hike to Hidden Falls itself.”

Many parks worked to put the students in the shoes of the people whose experiences are the focus of the park. For example at **Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site** “The students [were] walking in the footsteps of Elizabeth Eckford, the first of the Little Rock Nine to arrive and try to enter the school in September 1957 … Inside the school, students [discussed]what the Nine experienced once they were allowed to go to classes. Students are encouraged to ask questions and to reflect on how they would have felt as a student at Central in 1957 - if they were one of the 9, if they were one of the segregationists students, if they were a student who befriended the 9 and if they were one of the majority of students who were silent witnesses - never openly showing how they felt about their schools. Students also discuss whether they feel their schools are integrated today, if they feel every student in their school today feels treated equal.”

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park brought the students back in time as well. “At the LBJ Ranch students hear presentations about President Johnson, soil conservation, and agricultural products, witness branding and milking demonstrations, and participate in interactive activities such as rope-making. At the Johnson Settlement students learn from 19th century costumed interpreters and

volunteers about President Johnson's grandparents and cowboy history, witness frontier skills and explore the log cabin of Sam and Eliza Johnson."

More like this was continued at **Eisenhower National Historic Site** where fifth-grade students role play, portraying Ike Eisenhower "at different times in his life when he had character developing experiences. At the conclusion of the program, the students have toured the entire farm while having met Eisenhower from boyhood through to retirement. .. [they] also visit the Gettysburg battlefield and Gettysburg Museum of the Civil War." Eighth grade students "engage in hands-on science amid the farm's cropland and wetlands. [They] are introduced to local geology, conduct a field study to analyze soil samples for chemical, biological and physical structure, and learn how farmers effectively manage croplands; they learn about the water cycle and watersheds, and conduct a stream study including chemical analysis and invertebrate census."

The **Blue Ridge Parkway** provided "hands-on activity where students learn to barter to make cornbread; Hands on activities where students explore using simple machines and why SW VA has a rich musical heritage while dancing, singing and making their own instruments."

The diversity of the national parks shines in the **Ticket to Ride** program. Consider the experiences of students at **Everglades National Park**. "The Shark Valley day program for 4th grade students uses an open-air tram to transport the students into the heart of the Everglades ecosystem, the Shark River Slough. … [On ranger-facilitated hikes through varied terrain] Students observe Everglades wildlife such as alligators, wading birds, turtles, and sometimes even snakes." **National Park of American Samoa** showed off its varied areas too: "Students were taken to a variety of stops including a fruit bat roost, a scenic overlook of two National Natural Landmarks that relate to cultural stories, and a hike through a tropical rainforest. This tropical rainforest also was a place of discovery--to find clues to the how Samoans lived thousands of years ago. Some trips also provided opportunities for students to identify and learn about the various native trees and birds of American Samoa."

River Raisin National Battlefield Park combined recreation programming with environmental education. "Youth were divided into teams upon arrival … Half of the youth then learned about kayaking and experienced kayaking on a newly established 1.5 mile trail. The second half of the group learned about water quality and did sampling, [learned] the history of the water ways connected with the War of 1812, [more about] the War of 1812, Motor Cities National Heritage Area, early eatable and medicinal plants, and fur trading. The groups then switched places after lunch."

Post-visit activities

Many post-visit activities involved asking students to reflect on what they did and learned. At **Kings Mountain National Military Park** "the students completed a post-site activity that strengthened their connection to the Kings Mountain story: they wrote a journal entry about their Education Day experience: what activity they liked best, why, and one thing they learned at Kings Mountain."

Many students spread the word about their experience and their learning as part of their post-visit activities. While this wasn't a requirement of the program, the pervasiveness of this approach warrants attention as it has the potential to create even more value for the NPS in building awareness of its resources. For example, at **Yellowstone National Park** "as a follow up activity, students used arts, language arts, and presentations to creatively share their experience with their schools and

communities. This is a requirement for participating in Expedition Yellowstone. Estimated reach by these students was over 1,000 people."

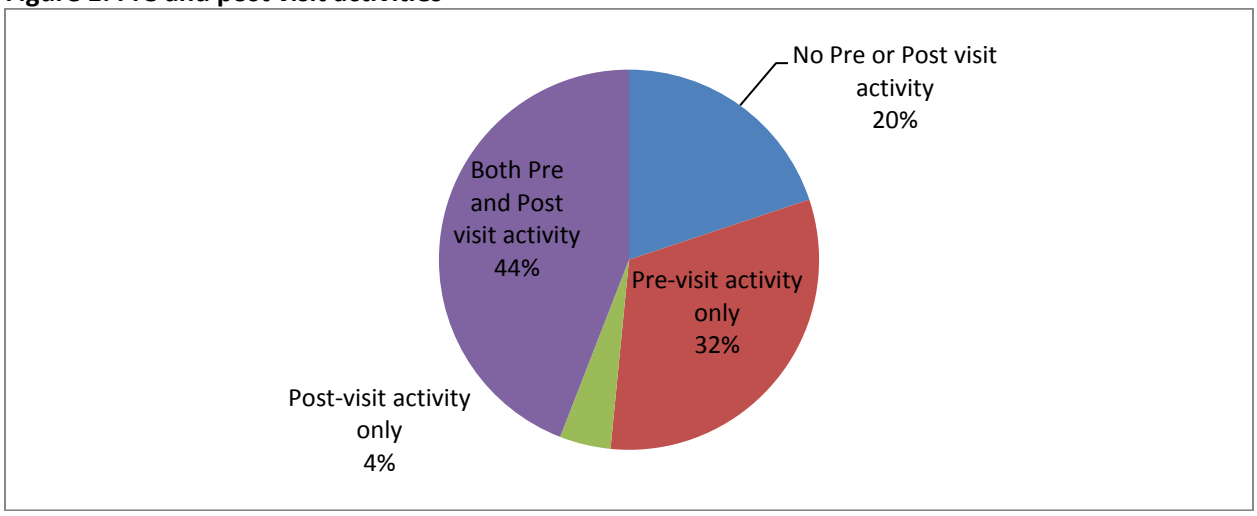
War in the Pacific National Historical Park used the post-visit to both cement the student experience and reach out beyond what the students did. "For the post site-visit activity, students were required to create an 8½ x 11 poster that showcased what they learned at the field day. They put together a visual representation that addressed the question, 'What does my national park mean to me?' Students were encouraged to be creative and to use various kinds of art mediums. All posters related to the NPS Centennial theme that helped others redefined their understanding of what 'park' meant and invited others to 'Find Your Park!' In the Spring of 2015, the park held a free Ticket to Ride Art show at a local mall on April 19 & 20. Displaying student work in a common area of the mall communicated to parents, youth, and community partners why their park is important to Guam. It helped island residents see how the park can add value to their lives every day."

Some post-visit activities were strictly curricular, focusing on the learning objectives of the trip. Some parks provided additional materials, in many cases simply providing additional resources for teachers to use if they chose to after the visit, but not engaging with the teachers or students directly. For example, **Appotomax Courthouse National Historic Site** gave teachers "copies of the Silent Witness book to read in class (The Silent Witness was a doll that was in the room during the surrender meeting), a set of the park's trading cards explaining significant areas of the park, and copies of the parole passes issued to the Confederates as a result of the surrender." Similarly, at **Ozark National Scenic Riverway** "students and teachers returned to class with information packets and goodie bags to facilitate further discussion in the classroom." One park did no follow-up with their participants. **Harpers Ferry National Historic Park** had no pre- or post-visit program activities.

Some parks engaged with students beyond the visit. For example at **Jimmy Carter National Historic Site** where students had visited Rosalynn Carter's Butterfly trail, "The NPS Ranger brought various plants and help the class plant their butterfly gardens. Photo opportunities were available for the parents, school board, community stakeholders, to help them better understand how the national park serves as an alternative classroom. Each student was given a book of butterfly stickers and a book on Monarch butterflies for their classroom. They planted the butterfly garden expanding the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail in their community."

The full three-aspect model was used by many parks– only three parks did not at least have a pre-visit activity of some kind. But the model was either applied unevenly or ineffectively in some cases. According to the representative sample of teachers surveyed (n=161), most did something with the parks in advance of their trip (76%) and almost half reported doing both a pre- and post-visit activity (44%). A portion of them (20%) didn't experience either a pre or post visit activity. The lack of post-visit activity recognition may be due to the nature of the materials provided by the park (not seen as useful, lost or not understood to be used after the visit). It is likely that more direct engagement is needed to fully realize the **Ticket to Ride** program goals.

Figure 1. Pre and post visit activities



n=161

Getting kids outside

Parks were asked to describe how they met the goal of using **Ticket to Ride** to get kids outside in the fresh air. At **Big Bend National Park** rangers said, "Our program was an out-of-doors venue held at a large park campground and picnic area. Participants were entertained with music, band concerts, and folklorico dance troupes as well as presentations by park staff, partners, and school groups. Activities were focused on things to do outside to include games, walking trails, and learning about nature." At **Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area** "Students hiked the 'Two Ponds Trail' on PEEC property with an activity clipboard and a list of items they could find in the out-of-doors that were related to the things they saw in the Eco-Zone (a hands-on exploration and discovery room at PEEC.) The items they looked for on the scavenger hunt hike included a beaver lodge, evidence of bear activity, nests, fossils, turtles, snakes, birds and fish." Many of the historical sites included outdoor activity as part of their **Ticket to Ride** visit activities. For example at **Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site** "We have developed a creative walking tour of the Shaw area, were many famous African American once lived. The tour itself is about a mile."

Nearly all of the parks incorporated outdoor activity in the form of a hike, a picnic, a walking tour or other recreation, though some were unable to describe any substantial outdoor activity.

FINDINGS

This section of the report describes the program activities and resulting outcomes for teachers and parks.

The 65 **Ticket to Ride** parks brought a total of 70,108 students to parks (average 1,079 per park). Two had no participants - **Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area** and **Moores Creek National Battlefield -** due to logistical problems. The largest program was implemented at **Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail** where they entertained nearly 10,000 students. Throughout the program, rangers estimated that kids travelled an average of 53 miles each way to the park, though 32 miles was more typical (the median). Some parks commented that even short distances could be grueling – for example at **Golden Gate National Recreation Area**, the 15-mile average for students to get to the area could take

as much as two hours to travel. Some came on buses, but the boats that brought students from **Buck Island Reef National Monument** took an hour and a half to cover the round trip from the shore. Students visiting **Channel Islands National Park** travelled 30 miles on a boat to reach the islands. **Chaco Culture National Historical Park** described the transportation barriers for visiting their park a little differently: "Students, teachers, parent/sponsors must be adventurous when traveling into Chaco Canyon for a field trip. Entering Chaco from the north or south, the final 20 miles is over rough dirt roads (washboard, rocks, etc). Signs along road include 'Rough roads can be impassable during inclement weather'; 'Open Range' and 'Slow Down Watch for Livestock on the Road'. Open range means sheep, goats, cattle and horses roam freely along and in the roads. Other types of wildlife can also be encountered along the roadway as well. Flat tires are common for all types of vehicles. Cell / mobile phone service is very limited to none."

Table 3. Participation and distance traveled (n=65 parks)

	Total	Average	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Participants	70,108	1,078.6	540	0	9,680
Distance traveled (one way, in miles)	3,432	52.8	32	0	357

For some, estimating distance travelled was challenged by the geography of the park. For example at **Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor** the "boundary includes more than 520 linear miles of navigable canals, as well as, the 230+ municipalities directly adjacent to the canal system. Our program includes 10 museums strategically situated within this long region. Ideally, schools shouldn't need to travel more than 45 minutes to reach a site. However, we do still have some gaps in Western NY and in the Mohawk Valley where travel time could be more than an hour."

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Parks were asked if the participants were a new audience for the park and 83% of the parks said they were. Many were new visitors – simply groups that had never experienced the parks before – some from new schools, new districts, or new teachers. Some were groups from areas that were not proximate to the parks, for example on the island of Guam, students from the north end of the island rarely can travel to the south end, where **War in the Pacific National Historical Park** was able to host. Several parks described how students presented information about their trips to other members of their school or community, raising the profile of the parks to an even larger audience.

New partners brought new audiences in the case of **Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve** where the Houma Indian Nation, Marine Corps Band and University of New Orleans History Program brought richer interpretive skills and information to the park. Others described social and ethnic groups that visited as part of their **Ticket to Ride** program. For example at **Fort Scott National Historic Site**, schools that came to the park were from areas with varied ethnic, racial and social characteristics including groups that were predominantly African American, Hispanic, American Indian or low-income. American Indians were often included; for example Arapahoe and Shoshone students visited **Grand Teton National Park**, Navajo students went to **Chaco Culture National Historical Park,** and **Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site** hosted students from the Hopi Reservation.

For some parks, the new audiences were primarily new age groups. For example, at **Channel Islands National Park** and **Lava Beds National Monument**, junior high and high school students visited where

typically only elementary aged kids had been. At other parks like **Little River Canyon National Preserve** existing partners bring new participants every year.

Many parks mentioned the value of the three-aspect requirement making the program a better fit for education partners.

"Ticket to Ride funding allowed students to come all summer long to engage in service learning projects aimed at creating park stewards. Students participating in our NPF funded Growing a Wild Brooklyn and Queens were able to come to the park for the first time to collect native plant seeds to grow in their classrooms over the winter for planting in the park this spring. Without TTR funding these classes who had not been involved in Gateway before would have found it too time consuming and difficult to arrange for bus transportation to and from a park they had never visited before. TTR funding coupled with NPF funding for Growing a Wild, made this service learning project a success."

- Gateway National Recreation Area

"Many children who come to this program are unaware that a national park exists so close to their own communities, and once they experience it, some continue to visit the park throughout their lives. In addition many of the teachers ask for additional programs for current students and become repeat visitors with new classes of students each year."

- Cuyahoga Valley National Park

"Several of the various schools involved designed and displayed their KEY Project activities - photos taken, drawings, etc. lined the hallways of their elementary school campuses, making other non-involved grade levels and parents a new audience.

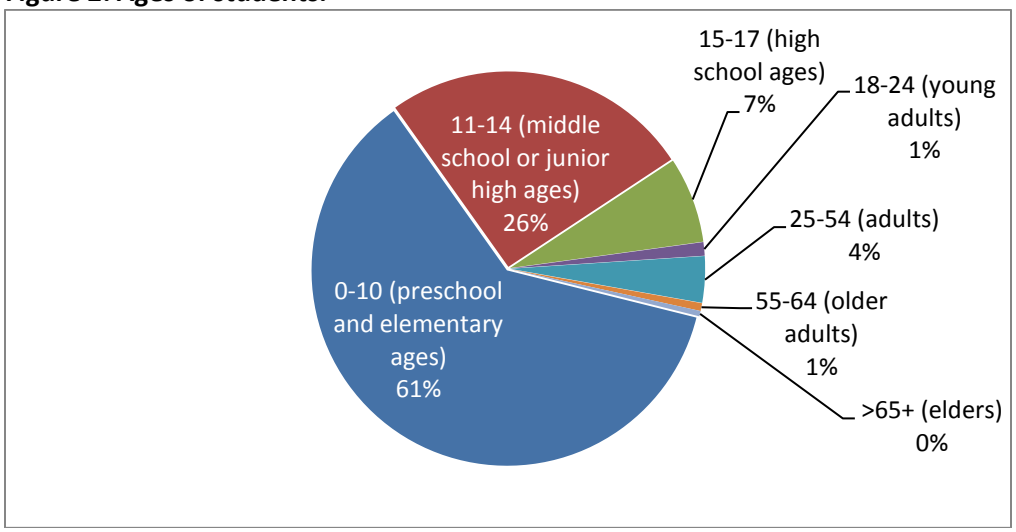
- Amistad National Recreation Area

"*Each of the NOCA youth programs supported through Ticket to Ride are built to reach audiences that are typically under-represented among National Park Service visitors. Through the Concrete Summer Learning Adventures day-camp, low-income rural youth living in the park's gateway communities visited their neighboring national park. Similarly, the Darrington Middle School students who camped out for a night in NOCA come from another low-income, rural school near the park. Low-income, Hispanic youth from a nearby farmworker community visited the national park with the Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Youth Program. Finally, the Youth Leadership Conference brings diverse youth from all over Washington and Oregon to reconnect with NOCA. Over half of the participants were first time visitors to the park and the repeat visitors were exposed to new curriculum and experiences*."

- North Cascades National Park

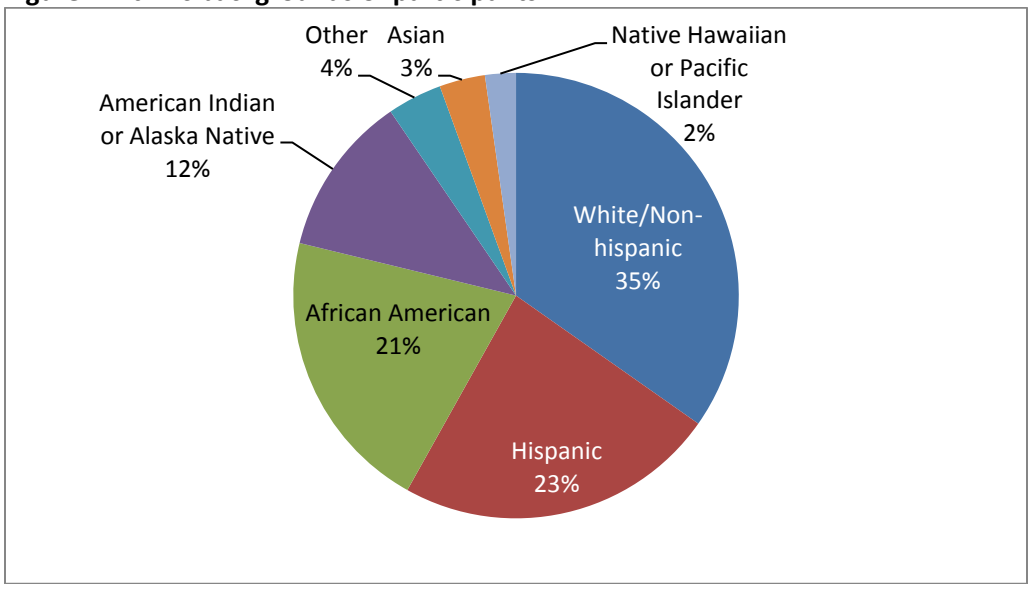
Grantees described the ages of the people served as part of their **Ticket to Ride** program, and the majority were elementary or preschool aged (61%). A small portion were adults age 25 or more (5%). The balance was middle school, high school aged and young adults (34%). Students were from diverse ethnic backgrounds; the majority were from non-white backgrounds as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Ages of students.



n=63 parks describing 70,108 participants

Figure 4: Ethnic backgrounds of participants



n=63 parks describing 70,108 participants

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

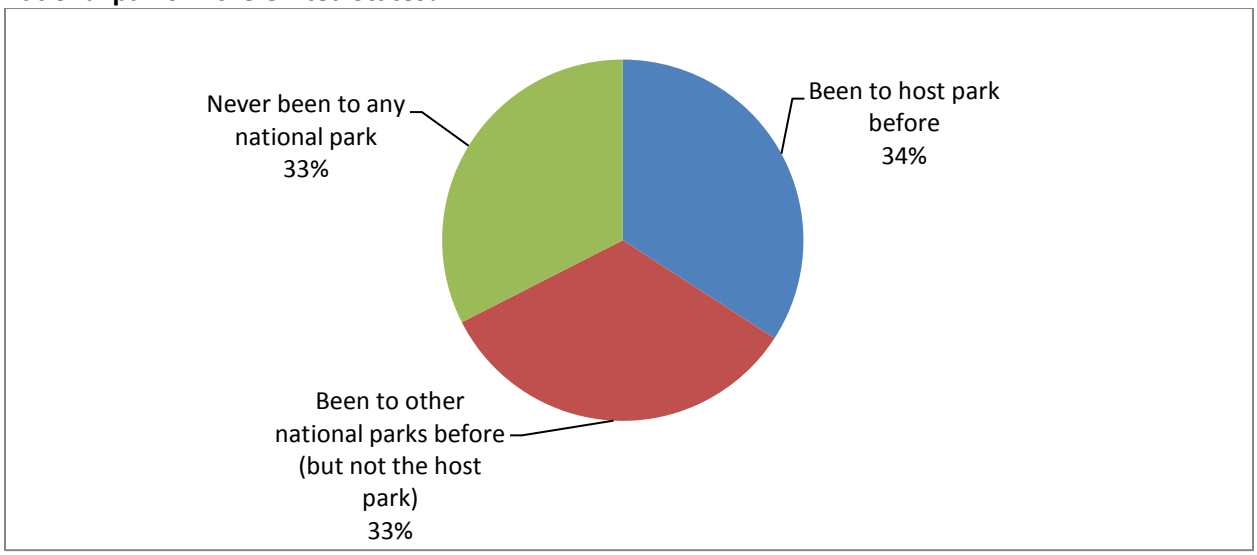
This section describes the results of the evaluation in light of the key outcomes for participants described in the NPF Continuum of Stewardship.

Outcome 1. Participants visit parks in person or virtually for the first time

An important goal of the **Ticket to Ride** program is to bring people to the park for the first time. Often children such as those targeted in **Ticket to Ride** come from areas and communities where basic transportation costs prohibit them from ever experiencing a nearby national park. A total of 1,969 pre- and post-visit (matched) participant surveys were collected from 42 parks, from groups selected at random from among all the groups (5th grade or older) participating in **Ticket to Ride.** An average of 47 matched surveys per park (median=44) were reviewed and analyzed for the report. The sample size provides for very precise estimates with a margin of error of ±2.2%. These tend to be from older students than served by the program overall, which is necessary since they must be proficient at reading and writing to participate in the evaluation.

Students were asked if they had ever been to their host park before, and if they have ever been to any other national parks in the United States. Figure 5 shows that roughly one-third had been to the host park before, another third had been to other national parks before, and the remaining third had never been to any national parks before.

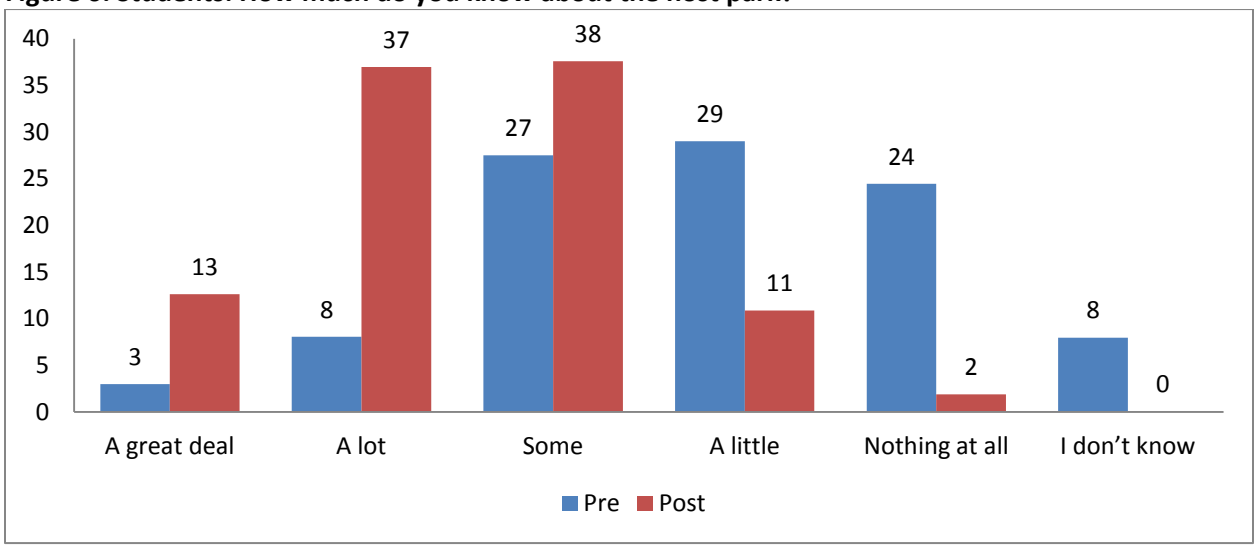
Figure 5. Students: Have you ever visited the host park before? Have you ever been to any other national parks in the United States?



n=1,969

Outcome 2. Participants enhance knowledge related to host national park (and nearby national parks)
Part of participants building their awareness of parks is to learn something about the park as a result of their visit. Students were asked how much they know about their host park. This question was posed before they engaged with the **Ticket to Ride** program, and again afterwards. Figure6 shows that the proportion who said they knew a lot or a great deal increased dramatically. Statistical testing found that the change was significant. Figure 4 below shows that only 11% of participants said they knew *a great deal* or *a lot* prior to participating in **Ticket to Ride**. After the program 50% gave such high ratings. In addition, the portion of students who said they *don't know* or knew *nothing at all* shifted from 32% to just 2%.

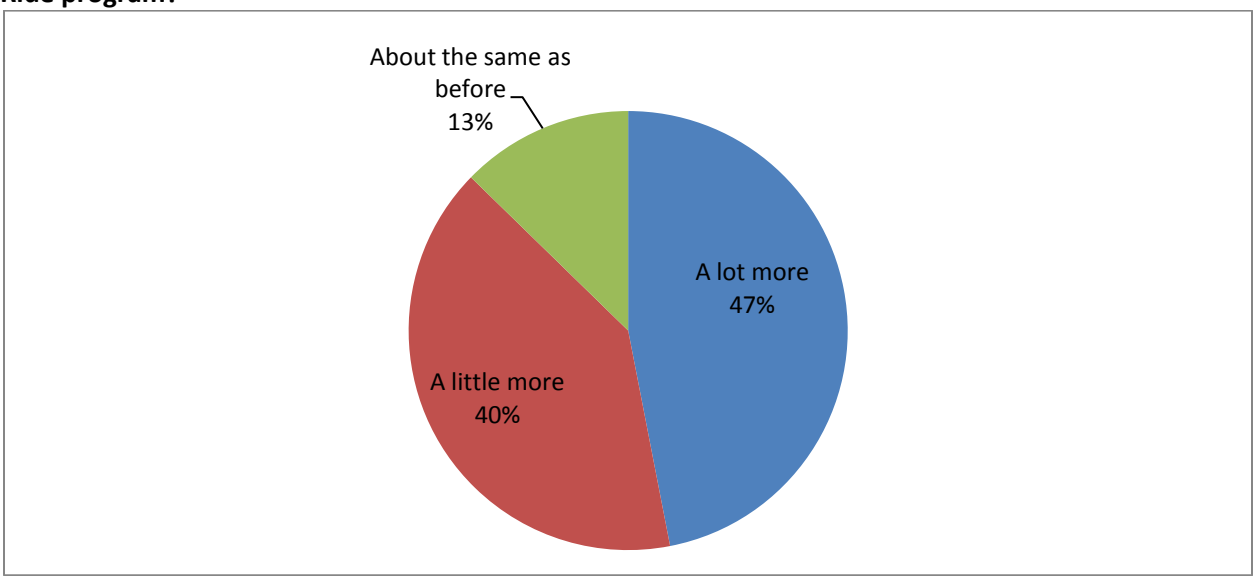
Figure 6. Students: How much do you know about the host park?



n=1,969

Students perceptions of how much they knew grew as well; 47% said they knew *a lot more* about their national park as a result of the **Ticket to Ride** program.

Figure 7. Students: How much more do you know about your national park as a result of the Ticket To Ride program?



n=1,969

Students were asked to describe something they enjoyed learning during their visits to their parks. Many offered something specific about history, events, artifacts or culture (36% - likely these were visitors to cultural and historic parks); others mentioned natural phenomena like plants, animals, geology or fossils (26%). For example, a student from **Mississippi River National Recreation Area** said they enjoyed, "1. Experiencing what it was like to be in the fur trade. 2. Or how American Indians built their huts." Or this student from **Biscayne National Park** who said "About the fish and their habitats. It explained a lot to me. I know much more about fish then I did at first."

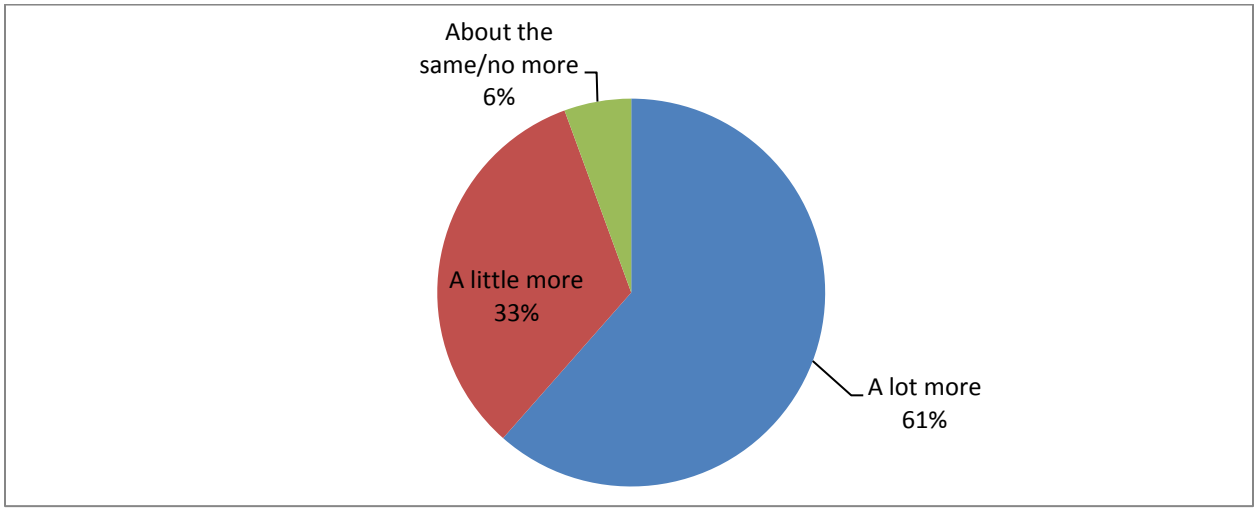
Table 4. What was something you enjoyed learning during your visit to your park? (n=2,008 students completing post-visit surveys)

	n	%
Specific history sites, events, artifacts, culture	759	36%
Specific nature, animals, plants, geology, fossils	535	26%
Games, rides, hands-on activities (not testing), hikes, stations	443	21%
General nature, ecology, environment	183	9%
Scientific testing, techniques, gps	94	5%
Social bonds, friends, rangers	86	4%
Specific park or NPS learning	40	2%
General history/culture	38	2%
Movies, videos	34	2%
Other	120	6%

"Other" responses were mostly generally positive; "I enjoyed the whole thing," wrote a student from **Lava Beds National Monument.**

Teacher/leader participants were also asked how much they'd learned about national parks as a result of **Ticket to Ride** and 61% said they'd learned *a lot more.* Another 33% said they'd learned *a little more* – exceeding the impacts for youth participants. This finding is especially notable given that nearly all of the teacher/leaders were already prior visitors to national parks.

Figure 10. Teacher/leaders: How much more do you know about this national park as a result of your participation in Ticket to Ride?

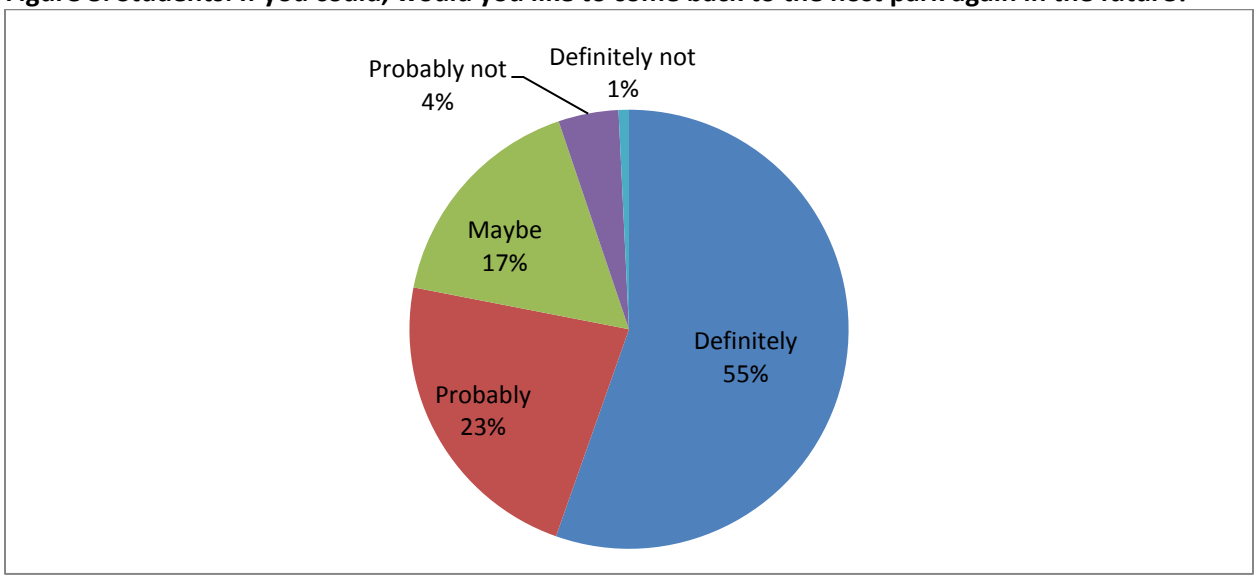


n=161

Outcome 3. Participants express interest in returning/or return to the park for more park experiences outside of the program

Many participants for **Ticket to Ride** come from hard-to-reach or lower income areas. For some, the feasibility of a repeat visit to the park is insurmountable. We asked participants to disregard their circumstances and simply tell us "If you could, would you like to come back to the host park again in the future?" The majority (55%) said they *definitely would* and another 23% said they *probably would.* Just 5% responded on the negative side of the scale, saying they either *probably* or *definitely* would not want to return.

Figure 8. Students: If you could, would you like to come back to the host park again in the future?

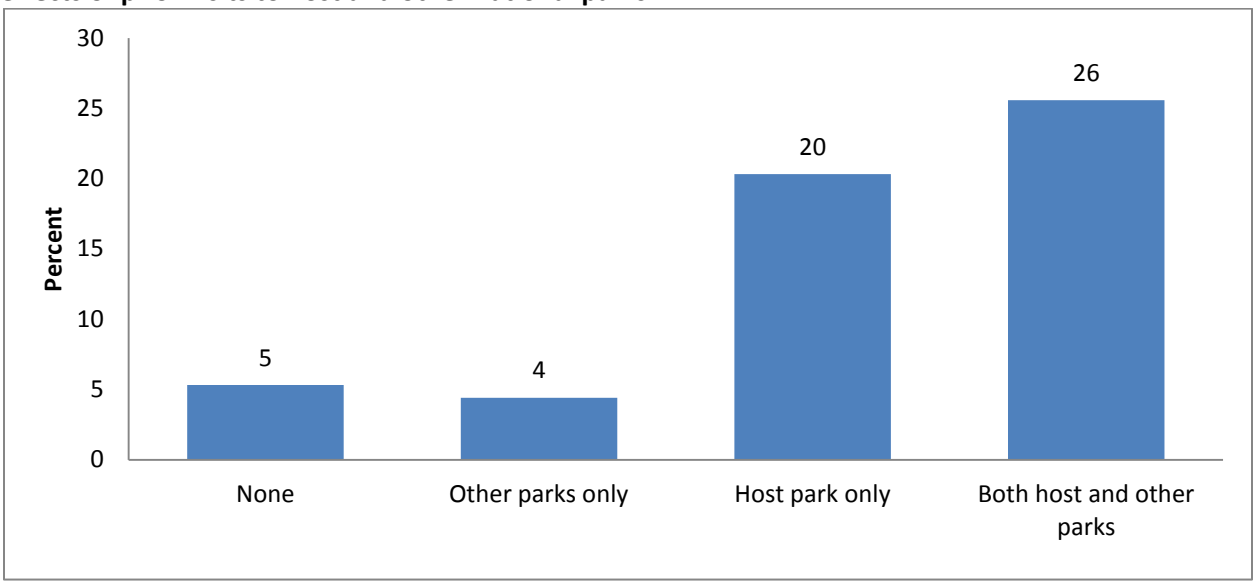


n=1,964

Of the 161 randomly sampled teacher/leaders who were surveyed, the large majority (66%) had been to both the hosting park and other national parks and 18% had been only to national parks other than the hosting park. Just 9% had not been to any national park prior to the program.

The effects of visiting national parks on participant knowledge are clearly demonstrated in the data. Before the program started, participants who had already been to the host park or the host park and other national parks were four to six times more likely to say they knew *a great deal* about national parks prior to the **Ticket to Ride** program (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Percent of student participants knowing *a great deal* prior to Ticket to Ride: effects of prior visits to host and other national parks.



n=1,969 participants

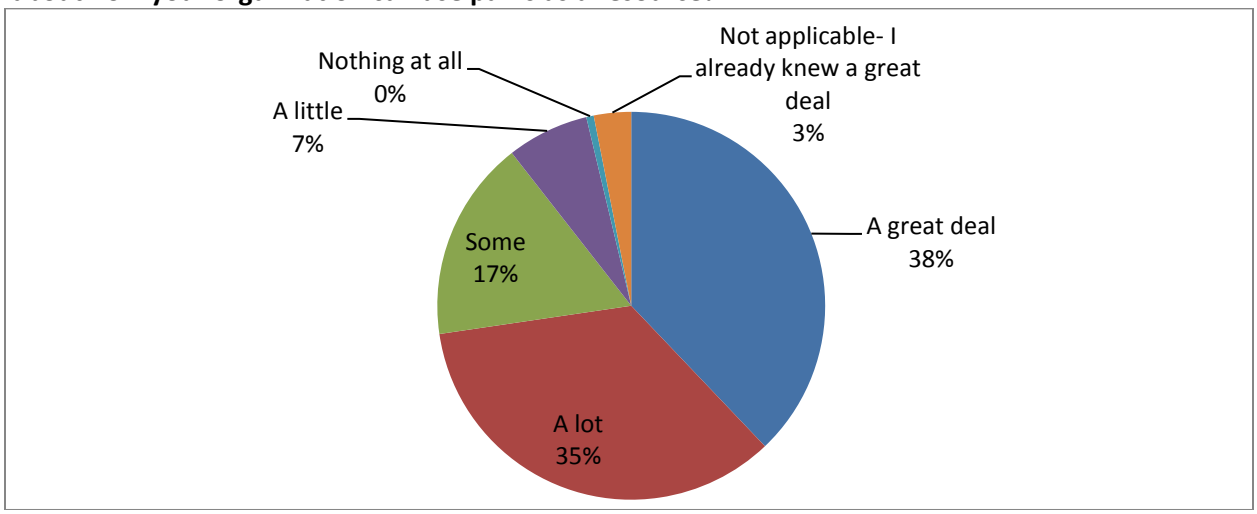
PARTNER OUTCOMES

This section describes the findings from the evaluation that relate to outcomes for partners according to the NPF Continuum of Stewardship.

Outcome 4. Partners (teachers or youth group organizations) develop awareness or understanding of parks as a resource

Partners in the **Ticket to Ride** program are predominantly teachers, but about 20% come from other types of organizations, many of which serve children and youth. The National Park Foundation wants these partners to understand and use the resources of the national parks, which are at their disposal. Partners were asked how much they'd learned about using the national parks as a resource for their organization and 73% said they'd learned *a lot* or *a great deal.* Interestingly, only 3% said they already knew a great deal prior to participating in **Ticket to Ride**.

Figure 8. Teacher leaders: Since your involvement with Ticket to Ride, how much have you learned about how your organization can use parks as a resource?



n=161

We asked partners to describe what resources they found useful. Many emphasized the value of **hands-on activities** for the kids. Web resources including virtual tours, programming, pre-visit videos, and simply the park website.

They were delighted with the **personal contacts** they made with the rangers, and for those who had in-person visits, those were particularly praised. Partners said that **curricular materials** were very helpful and were at the appropriate academic level for their participants.

"I had no idea that anyone could visit the park and use art materials for free! The artist in residence was great! It was nice for students to see how a working artist uses the space."

- Teacher from Weir Farm National Historic Site

-

"Visiting the park itself! There is nothing like being able to actually take students to such an amazing place. Other useful resources are the live web cams on the Channel Islands Park Website and the

curriculum and resources available there. Other useful resources would also include the park visitor center in the Ventura Harbor and classroom visits from park rangers."

- Teacher from Channel Islands National Park

Partners noted that all of these enriching experiences would not have been possible without the much-appreciated **funding for transportation**:

"The most useful resource was the ability to actually touch the monuments. To be there live, instead of seeing it on a TV, was such a valuable resource. We wouldn't have been able to make sure a visit without the bus being provided."

- Teacher at National Mall and Memorial Parks

-

PARK OUTCOMES

This section describes the evaluation findings with regard to the two outcomes for parks, identified in the NPF Continuum of Stewardship.

Outcome 5. Park outreach to public and partners improved

One way that partners can learn more about the resources available to them is if parks improve their communications and outreach to organizations. One indicator of improving their outreach is to try new strategies. Parks made good use of media and social media in their publicity for the program, with a majority using Facebook for promotions (58%), as well as email, e-newsletters, blog posts, websites and Twitter.

Table 5. Media channels used in outreach about Ticket to Ride programs (n=65 parks)

Media Channel	# of parks	% of parks
Facebook	38	58%
Print Newspapers	29	45%
Emails or email blasts	28	43%
E-newsletters or e-magazines	18	28%
Blog posts or announcement on NPS website	17	26%
Radio	14	22%
Television	13	20%
Print Newsletters	12	18%
Other website	12	18%
Twitter	11	17%
Not publicized at all	4	6%
Print Magazines	3	5%
Other publicity, please specify:	28	43%

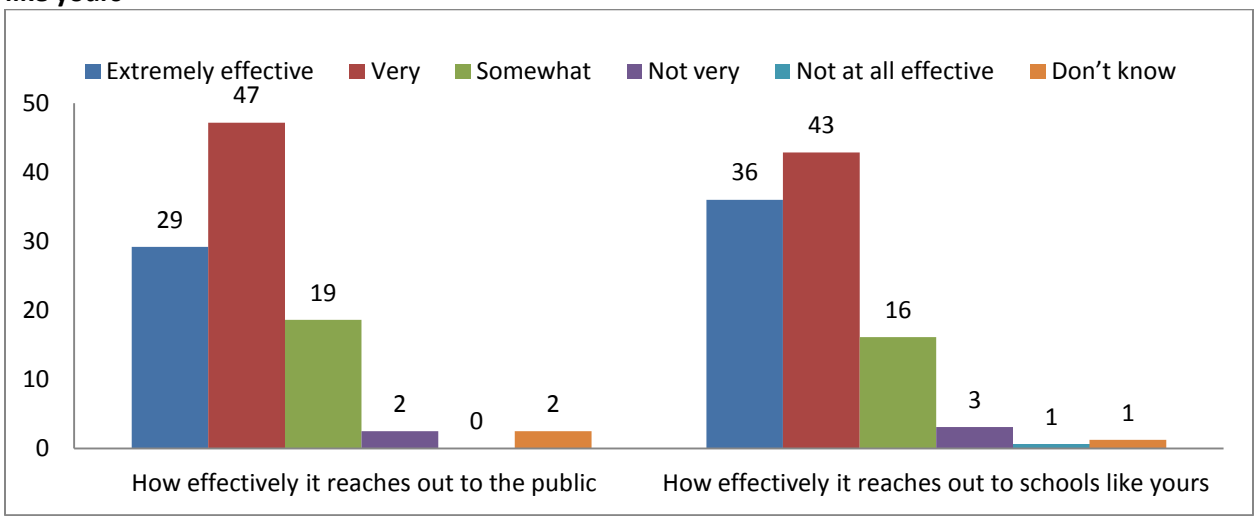
Twenty-eight percent of the parks said they'd tried something new or different to reach out to partner organizations. For example, at **Yosemite National Park**, webinars brought 150 park service educators and program managers together to hear about **Ticket to Ride**. **Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park** posted their activities on the NPS internal website for the first time, and posted information and pictures throughout their park. For many of the others, simply using press releases or posting information was a new outreach strategy. More mentioned using Facebook to engage outwardly than any other form of communication. **River Raisin National Battlefield Park** said they spent more time in the community networking, while **Devils Postpile National Monument** spent more time with the tribes in their area to enhance tribal members' sense of the relevance of the park. **Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve** engaged with musicians, dancers and other performing artists to enhance visitors' experience of their park.

Parks were asked if they'd done anything new or different to recruit participants to their **Ticket to Ride** activities and nearly all of them said they had (n=59; 91%). For some, it was using high-touch methods, such as calling and emailing schools directly at **Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area. Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site** used workshops and conferences to connect with schools and saw good results. **Great Smoky Mountains National Park** spent time teaching in their **Ticket to Ride** schools to broaden and deepen those relationships. **Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park** employed an in-school ambassador for their program: "During this project year, a Paulding County fifth-

grade teacher who was also a KMTC volunteer acted as the school system liaison and she recruited participating schools. She also maintained an ongoing liaison relationship with the schools, the Park staff, and the partner volunteers. This proved to be a very effective method of recruitment and her involvement improved the efficiency of the program." Also innovative was **Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor** which found that reaching out to school district administrators proved much more fruitful than going to teachers directly. Most of the parks provided strong examples of deepening and strengthening their relationships with organizations and people who ultimately brought kids to the parks.

To provide a different perspective, teacher/leader partners were asked to describe how well the parks reached out to organizations like theirs and 79% said they were *extremely* or *very effective.* A similar portion (76%) said they were as effective reaching out to the public as well.

Figure 9. Please rate the park in terms of how effectively it reaches out: to the public and to schools like yours



n=161

Engagement Outcome: **Parks enhance ability to work with and leverage partnerships**
Partners were defined as schools or youth organizations that brought participants as well as the teacher and other organizations that supported **Ticket to Ride** activities. Some parks reflected that schools and teachers are thought of as an *audience* for the program, much like the students, though NPF tends to think of teachers and schools as partners, with teachers having a dual status of also being a participant in the program. Clearer definitions of partners, participants and audiences will be helpful in future iterations of **Ticket to Ride.**

Parks tallied a total of 3,339 partners, mostly teacher partners, who helped with **Ticket to Ride** in the year of the grant. Of those 44% were new partnerships and 100 were existing partnerships that were expanded.

Table 6. Partnerships

	Sum	Average	Minimum	Maximum	Median
Total Schools	783	12.0	0	116	7
New Partners (schools)	294	4.5	0	45	3
Title 1 Schools	802	12.3	0	100	7
Total youth organizations:	66	1.0	0	24	0
New Youth Orgs	40	0.7	0	23	0
Total teachers:	2,299	35.4	0	232	25
New Teachers	1,070	16.5	0	90	12
Partners (Other)	191	2.9	0	25	2
New Partners (other)	56	0.9	0	8	0
Expanded partnerships	100	1.5	0	15	1
Total Partners	3,339				
Total New Partners	1,460				

Expanded partnerships descriptions
With 100 expanded partnerships, parks were asked to describe how those relationships had changed or grown. Many mentioned adding a single new partner within an organization or existing partners taking on new roles. They noted improved or increased administration with an overall theme of creating greater efficiency with their partners. Having transportation funding in hand streamlined their work so they could focus on programming and relationships; the **Ticket to Ride** three-touch model of pre-visit, post-visit and on-site visit interactions made for better developed programming that was seen as more relevant to educators. Another theme commonly mentioned were the outreach efforts to rarely served populations of kids who are predominantly from poor areas. The following examples touch on several of these factors in their description of how their partnerships changed:

*"By having bus transportation, we were able to initiate the service learning citizen science projects that our partner designed, immediately. Our partner was able to implement the project, involve students and study the data much sooner than if we had relied on teachers to find their own transportation and time to do our plastic debris street and marine surveys. We made new partnerships with the New York City Housing Projects. In the past their students would not participate in summer programs at the park because we could not provide them with transportation. The Ticket to Ride Grant allowed 70 students from three different housing projects to come to the park by metro bus all summer long engage in a ranger/sca guided program about sustainable living and creating a more resilient park ecosystem***."**

- Gateway National Recreation Area

"The T2R program previously utilized existing Civil War educational programs and living history interpreters. For this grant, the KMTC partner incorporated a new educational focus on the historic remains of a Civilian Conservation Corps Camp located at KEMO. The partner organization researched, developed, and presented the multi-faceted interactive CCC program to the students. This included accessing archival materials, internet resources, and other sources to produce a PowerPoint presentation and scripted material for KMTC volunteer interpreters. Students hiked to the camp location and interacted with interpreters at six markers around the camp area as they learned about the CCC program at Camp Brumby. Volunteer interpreters enhanced the experience for the students by displaying props and wearing period costumes."

- Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park

"[We] continued to work with 2 teachers that were already a part of the A Park for Every Classroom program at the park. These teachers had brought students in the past, but through this grant were able to more deeply integrate [the park's] themes, stories, and resources into their curriculum and use the park as a classroom in new and innovative ways."

- Weir Farm National Historic Site

"In 2015 [we] engaged the help of two VISTA volunteers who were able to work more directly with partners than in the past. These two individuals conducted needs assessments, attended meetings with partners that [our] staff were not able to attend and were able to meet more frequently with participants in their schools and communities. … Through ***Ticket to Ride****, NOCA was able to support more of the Concrete [School District] Summer Learning program this year and make that program more of a success. We used funding for transportation and for meals for students. Having grant support made it easier for us to plan and develop the program instead of looking for transportation funding and funding for meals."*

-North Cascades National Park

"In late spring of 2014 ERIE formalized a relationship with NYSUT, New York State's educator's union with a membership of more than 600,000. In the 2014/2015 school year this relationship blossomed through NYSUTs commitment to helping us reach new audience and creating state-wide awareness within the NY Teaching community. We posted two full page advertisements in NYSUT United, their monthly membership magazine valued at $22,000; and we participated as a "vendor" at the past two NYSUT Representative Assemblies (NYC and Buffalo) to provide TTR program materials to participating teachers. One teacher that had participated in the day programs in previous years expanded her participation by attending the camping program teacher workshop and then bringing her students to the park for a 3-day, 2-night camping experience. This is a big step for a teacher to take."

- Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor

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"We were able to engage Nashua schools at the district level. In the past, we've only had one school from the Nashua district come to our environmental programs. This project allowed us to extend it to multiple fifth grade classrooms in the district. We hope the district will see the value in having students attend our programs, and therefore continue to fund then from their own budget annually."

- Lowell National Historic Park

Parks were asked if their experience with Ticket to Ride enhanced or changed their ability to work with partners or leverage partnerships and 91% said it did. Here are some other examples of what they noticed:

"The experience with the Ticket to Ride program enhanced our ability to work with partners because it helped us realize that communication with school administrators and teachers was very important. The park created a strong relationship with the Social Studies Department teachers by meeting with them at the end of the last school year and again in the beginning of the current school year. This allowed us to go over the program timeline as well as answer questions concerning artwork and expectations of the field trip. The support of the teachers was crucial to the success of the Ticket to Ride program. Since the school's teachers believed whole-heartedly in the program, they aligned their grading system with the Ticket to Ride art project requirement. This motivated the youth to produce their best work possible."

- War in the Pacific National Park

"This program has given NPS unprecedented visibility. People expect programming from their parks now, whereas before we were never in the dialogue. We have since developed other TTR programming based on this same model as promoted by NPF using other partners for our other parks."

- Buck Island Reef National Monument

"… the park is building on the momentum of this robust group of partnerships, established curriculum, pre-designed and tested educational activities and efficient program styles. These partners provide site locations, educators, staff, equipment, program outreach, professional development workshops and other necessary resources."

- Manassas National Battlefield Park

"Thanks to the support of the National Park Foundation's Ticket to Ride program, we were able to build more trust with our partners and work more in-depth with the three partners on this project. Having this trust established opens the door for us to reach other organizations and partners within the community."

- Golden Gate National Recreation Area

"Without the assistance of Ticket to Ride, these successful programs would still reach many young people, but would not include a trip to the park. The Ticket to Ride funding allows NOCA to increase awareness of the National Park Service among young people and teach students about the importance of public lands. NOCA is able to leverage these successful partnerships to develop life-long stewards of public lands through the Ticket to Ride assistance."

- North Cascades National Park Complex

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"Enhanced! We are eager to work together, knowing that tackling transportation means we can engage more youth in our programs. It has built a stronger relationship between our programs--including with field staff and administration, who team up to complete reports."

- Yosemite National Park

"Biscayne NP (BISC) worked closely with South Florida National Parks Trust (SFNPT) to manage and disburse TTR grant funds. SFNPT is much more efficient at distributing transportation funds and both the teachers and transportation companies appreciated the ease of booking and payment of transportation services."

- Biscayne National Park

This was the first time we developed curriculum with the help of Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) Curriculum and Instruction managers. It opened doors for us to be invited to present/ teach a session at the CMSD yearly professional development conference, the Blue Institute, which will take place in July 2015.

- Cuyahoga Valley National Park

"It has had a domino effect of interest, especially in the new community being served in Mesquite, NV. The schools were very enthusiastic partners and hope that this program will continue to give their youth a community a chance to connect with nearby national parks."

- Zion National Park

"The Friends of Peirce Mill and Rock Creek Park are more committed than ever to serving the school community together as we continue to collaborate on ways of supporting each other and showcasing the historic mill."

- Rock Creek Park

This park noted some **capacity building** effects of the grant:
"It has helped me to be more accountable for record keeping, communicating and the overall management of the program. I have learned a lot and am more decisive and committed to the success of the program and the working relationships with partners."

- Fort Larned National Historic Park

In addition to qualitative aspects of relationships changing, parks reported a total of$534,033 financial contributions coming to their parks as a result of **Ticket to Ride** – an average of $8,125 per park. It should be noted though that most parks did not see any additional financial contributions and ran the entire program on the funds provided by NPF.

Table 7. Contributions to parks received as part of Ticket to Ride (n=65 parks)

	Sum	Average	Minimum	Maximum	Median
Financial Contributions	$ 534,033.00	$ 8,215.89	$ -	$ 117,500.00	$ -
In Kind Donations	$ 281,498.00	$ 4,330.74	$ -	$ 58,000.00	$ 500.00

And these noted that there were **funding benefits** to the grant:
"The positive experiences of the youth and their mentors has provided much good will with our community. So much so that they have raised funds to provide a similar program in 2015."

- Lincoln Home National Historic Site

-

"This program has become an example of positive relationships between the NPS and local tribes and has encouraged parks involved in the program to provide additional support in the form of staffing and partner funding."

- Devils Postpile National Monument

-

"We are trying to expand Jefferson National Park Associations role with our agency as a more active partner with fundraising and grant administration. Their role in helping administer the Ticket to Ride Grant this year gave them a better understanding of what we offer schools and what needs we have to better serve schools."

- Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site

"Absolutely. In fundraising, we open our conversations with foundation staff with the Ticket to Ride program. This is an extremely positive program and allows us to establish immediate credibility as an organization that truly cares about the residents of the region."

- Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor

Parks also benefitted from 16,269 hours of volunteer time from their partner organizations (average 250). These volunteer hours can be valued at $375,326 (independentsector.org).

Table 8. Volunteer and staff participation in Ticket to Ride; n=65 parks

	Total	Average	Minimum	Maximum	Median
Volunteers overall	1,787	27.5	0	644	5
Volunteer hours overall	1,154	17.8	0	644	1
Volunteers from partner organizations	26,855	413.2	0	4,126	50
Volunteer hours from partner organizations	16,269	250.3	0	4,000	4
NPS Staff	563	8.7	0	68	5
NPS Staff hours	28,456	437.8	0	11,520	120

"*Without the support of our volunteers and volunteer interns these events would not happen and they are all committed to returning year after year as long students keep coming."*

- Lava Beds National Monument

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Parks were asked if they'd encountered any challenges as part of their **Ticket to Ride** Program and 65% said they had. A few mentioned weather. Several mentioned staffing problems, illness and turnover – either at the park or in their partner school district. The challenge of administering the grant funds to schools was a common theme, though not as common as learning to navigate the needs and propensities of schools and teachers, such as the challenges of scheduling buses, fitting into changing school schedules, and negotiating timing with mandatory testing. Another dominant theme was basic communication challenges, either with unresponsive teacher partners or other school administrators. Some of the solutions they developed may be useful for other parks to consider in their own **Ticket to Ride** implementation.

1. For those with substantial post-visit activities, be certain that administrators in the school are supportive and understand the need for follow through.
2. Take the time to build strong rapport with schools in advance of the program activities starting. In some cases you may find a champion who helps carry some of the workload and streamline the program logistics for you.
3. Try direct contact with school finance departments instead of counting on teachers to know how to submit bus invoices for reimbursements. Ask teachers to add the contact information for the schools' accounting departments when they register for the program. Alternatively, rely on a Friends group or partner agency to process funds.
4. Recruit partners to promote the program activities.

5. Undocumented children and parents may be reluctant to complete forms or travel with the school, especially to a federal site. Assuring teachers and parents that there are no implications for them on the trip is important.
6. Stay flexible in scheduling. Prepare to have more volunteers and staff than you expect to need.
7. Schedule potential make up days in advance in case visits have to be cancelled. Similarly, have an indoor back up plan in case of poor weather – one suggests having presenters/staff visit schools in lieu of the schools visiting the park.
8. Teachers are generally unwilling to schedule trips in the fall.
9. Look for enthusiastic partners/teachers. Involve enthusiastic park staff who understand and appreciate the goals of the program.
10. Help schools find additional funding – they seem to need more every year.

CONCLUSION

"The program spoke for itself. It was the largest in the history of the park...our partners were stunned at the quality of the program, the number of participants, and its success."

- Big Bend National Park

The 2014-15 **Ticket to Ride** program brought more than 70,000 youth to America's national parks at a cost of just $6.88 per participant and just 13-cents per mile. These students reported significant gains in their understanding about national parks, substantial learning and a pervasive interest in returning to their national park in the future. In addition, parks' relationships among organizations and schools in their communities grew and developed to the point of leveraging more than 16,000 volunteer hours and $815,531 in financial and in-kind donations. Both parks and teacher/leaders repeatedly emphasized the critical and essential value of having in-hand transportation funding, both to gather partners and ease the way for participants.

Program results suggest several opportunities to continue to build on **Ticket to Ride's** impact. Many students spread the word about their experiences by doing presentations as part of their post-visit activities. While this wasn't a requirement of the program, the pervasiveness of this approach warrants attention as it has the potential to create even more value for the NPS in building awareness of its resources. This is particularly noteworthy since only about half of the teacher/leaders reported having a post-visit activity as part of their involvement in **Ticket to Ride.** Those that experienced the full three-aspect model were enthusiastic about the impacts and fit for their classrooms. Encouraging parks to provide strong engagement in the post-visit phase of the program could result in even more robust results. This teacher highlights the value of the three-aspect model:

The park service has been wonderful helping us to coordinate the entire trip. The before and after activities were a very nice addition to the adventure the students had. We are just a few miles off the coast and most of our students don't even go to the beach much less Islands off the coast. Some parents were very leery about sending their children as they thought it was another country. It was such an adventure for these 7th and 8th graders. The post activity let them reflect on all they had done and seen and really helped with the learning process. It was an absolutely wonderful experience from start to finish.

- Teacher at Channel Islands National Park

Although parks leveraged substantial in-kind and cash contributions as part of **Ticket to Ride**, most parks did not report any contributions. As part of the capacity building opportunities this grant provides, the National Park Foundation could provide mentorship and coaching to help more parks realize additional gains from their grants. Even as simple a gesture as compiling an FAQ or Tips and Tricks worksheet with contributions from parks that had success in leveraging additional contributions could aid parks in getting more from their participation in the program.

Many parks had feedback for the National Park Foundation. Suggestions nearly always included expanded or continued funding, as well as the need for more secure funding from year-to-year so that partnerships can grow, as illustrated by this quote from Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site: "Making it possible for schools to afford field trips is I think one of the most important things that NPF could do. We did have more schools apply than we could fund. Increasing the amount of field trip grants and making this an annual assistance for parks would be my recommendation."

Other suggestions included:

- Providing a longer timeline for application
- Providing staff need training and support for working with at-risk, diverse and underserved youth, who may constitute a new audience for many parks and are the desired audience for the program.
- More assistance using social media to promote the program throughout the year in addition to the single requirement of the press release.

Validation for changes to the program came from a few parks as well, for example, expanding the program to fit the entire academic year (especially since most teachers were unwilling to schedule field trips in the fall). Another was appreciation for enabling partner organizations (such as Friends groups) manage the reimbursement funds to schools and youth organizations, which alleviated a good deal of logistical work for parks that did this.

Grantees also provided feedback for Applied Research Northwest. Their suggestions are being reviewed and incorporated into the project management for this year's grantees.

Please keep the funding coming so we can better serve children. Many schools have little or no money for student transportation for out of school educational experiences.

- Rock Creek Park

"Keep the dollars flowing and we'll keep the kids coming! Would love to have Mickey come march with us one of these years!"

- Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

"The Ticket to Ride is a powerful program, and is highly successful at our park. Please continue funding parks for this valuable "tool" to help kids connect with the outdoors and with their neighbor national parks."

- Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPATING PARKS

Park Name	Grant Amount	Kids Served
Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail	$8,000	9680
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor	$8,000	7400
Grand Canyon National Park	$8,000	776
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park	$8,000	428
Glacier National Park	$5,000	1948
Blue Ridge Parkway	$1,000	522
Manassas National Battlefield Park	$8,000	6197
Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site	$8,000	2932
Fort Larned National Historic Site	$8,000	1217
Great Smoky Mountains National Park	$7,000	2488
Lava Beds National Monument	$6,000	1133
Everglades National Park	$7,600	2048
Yellowstone National Park	$8,000	238
Big Bend National Park	$8,000	700
Zion National Park	$8,000	800
Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site	$8,000	492
Tonto National Monument	$1,200	169
Fort Scott National Historic Site	$3,800	331
Colorado National Monument	$6,300	2226
Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park	$8,000	2366
Kings Mountain National Military Park	$7,714	1800
Amistad National Recreation Area	$8,000	2538
Eisenhower National Historic Site	$3,360	494
Biscayne National Park	$6,300	1600
Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area	$8,000	400
Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park	$7,960	735
Point Reyes National Seashore	$8,000	535
River Raisin National Battlefield Park	$8,000	1010
Chaco Culture National Historical Park	$8,000	363
Nicodemus National Historic Site	$8,000	347
Yosemite National Park	$8,000	256
Little River Canyon National Preserve	$7,993	748
Golden Gate National Recreation Area	$7,800	1500
Ozark National Scenic Riverway	$4,968	475
Jimmy Carter National Historic Site	$7,992	361
Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve	$8,000	1098

National Park of American Samoa	$8,000	904
Devils Tower National Monument	$7,927	75
Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park	$6,000	700
Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site	$7,232	194
North Cascades National Park Complex	$7,900	222
Appomattox Court House National Historical Park	$2,535	138
Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area	$7,980	814
Washington Service Office - Natural Resources Stewardship (Denver green school)	$7,695	120
Lowell National Historical Park	$8,000	600
Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area	$8,000	502
War in the Pacific National Historical Park	$8,000	630
Redwood National and State Parks	$7,900	256
National Mall and Memorial Parks	$8,000	330
Cape Lookout National Seashore	$7,989	425
Cuyahoga Valley National Park	$8,000	540
Channel Islands National Park	$7,965	185
Buck Island Reef National Monument	$8,000	720
Gateway National Recreation Area	$8,000	554
Weir Farm National Historic Site	$7,954	268
Homestead National Monument of America	$8,000	421
Grand Teton National Park	$8,000	27
Independence National Historical Park	$7,920	1068
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area	$8,000	724
Rock Creek Park	$8,000	946
Devils Postpile National Monument	$8,000	30
Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site	$7,390	307
Lincoln Home National Historic Site	$8,000	57
Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area	$7,596	0
Moores Creek National Battlefield	$7,850	0

APPENDIX D: ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL PARK SERVICE INITIATIVES

The following table shows that the **Ticket to Ride Program** is well aligned to many NPS initiatives.

Were any of your project activities tied to any of the following major NPS/DOI initiatives?		
	n	%
A Call to Action: Advancing the NPS Education Mission	56	86%
A Call to Action: Connecting People to Parks	55	85%
Secretary of Interior Initiatives: Learn	43	66%
Healthy Parks, Healthy People	36	55%
Secretary of Interior Initiatives: Play	25	38%
A Call to Action: Preserving America's Special Places	19	29%
Secretary of Interior Initiatives: Serve	7	11%
A Call to Action: Enhancing Professional and Organizational Excellence	3	5%
Secretary of Interior Initiatives: Work	3	5%
None of the Above	1	0%