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Book review

R. Manning, S. Lawson, P. Newman, J. Hallo, C. Monz (Eds.), Sustainable Transportation in the National Parks: From Acadia to Zion, 2014, University Press of New England, Hanover, ISBN: 978-1-61168-552-7 ($50.00, Paperback)

Global tourism growth has raised important questions about the demand for accessibility to, and mobility within, national parks, the environmental implications of increases in visitor numbers, and concerns about whether we are "loving" our national parks and recreation areas to death. This new compilation of 21 articles, 18 of which have been previously published, aims to understand the management challenges of moving visitors to and through parks and the myriad transport implications of innovative sustainability strategies. The compendium presents a set of principles and best management practices that can be adapted more widely to recreation areas around the world. With most visitors to U.S. national parks arriving by private vehicle, readers might expect a fairly detailed analysis of transport mode distribution, environmental impacts through congestion or emissions, and vehicle interactions with flora and fauna (accidents, etc.). These analyses are not forthcoming, unfortunately. This is perhaps the most significant weakness in stitching together a selection of articles that touch generally on many of these issues but do not deliver any definitive explanations or definitions of strategies such as park-resource protection.

The most useful discussions are in the opening and closing chapters that do a good job of contextualizing the articles that follow. Structured around three core themes – transportation and recreation, as a management tool, and within the parks themselves – the various articles overlap on many key issues, yet are well suited to link these three core themes together. Most useful to the reader, and perhaps to park managers, are the 21 management principles summarized in the concluding chapter. Transport geographers and others with a spatial bent will notice the absence of maps or graphics that could provide a more useful interpretation of the internal dynamics of a park. Although most readers would be familiar with the general location of Yosemite, Cape Cod, or Zion, for example, they might be less familiar with the internal flow dynamics of that particular case study. The editors could easily have updated these previously published articles with better graphics – the case study of Zion cries out for a good map that illustrates why the goal of "tranquility" is important and how physical mobility in the park is managed. How can readers understand the argument about transportation systems as cultural landscapes in Yosemite absent meaningful visuals to explicate the underlying themes?

There is little doubt that growing stress on U.S. national parks is inextricably intertwined with how visitors get to these destinations. Thus, a surprising omission from the discussion in this book is any acknowledgment of, or deeper engagement with, the wider debate over climate change, emissions, and pollution challenges generally. Another weakness is a failure to debate the tensions between "managed" mobility in the parks, provided primarily by shuttle systems, and the marketing of these destinations' scenic routes, which mostly require personal vehicles to reach the most spectacular spots. Overall, there is not much new to glean from this volume. The key argument that potential exists for alternative accessibility and mobility approaches within the park system is already well known, and this collection of articles did not advance this argument in new or creative ways. A more integrated and structured set of analyses, perhaps drawing on new spatial technologies, more creative visitor data sets, and broader-based visitor surveys, would be helpful in a future edition of this book. In the meantime, academics, practitioners, and park managers will enjoy reading this collection, as it reinforces and contextualizes the challenges faced in maintaining the value, beauty, and accessibility of one of America's most precious resources.

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