
CHAPTER 1



PURPOSE AND NEED

APRIL 2002

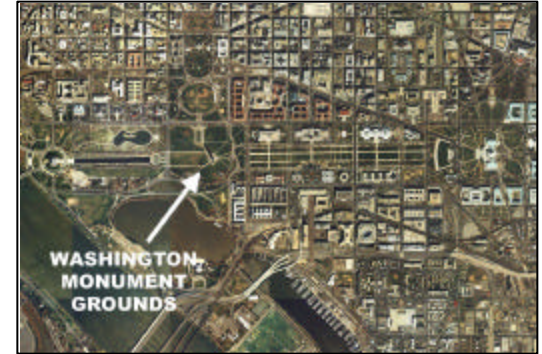
1.1 Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) is considering a series of improvements to the current temporary security systems at the Washington Monument and its Grounds and related revisions to the 1993 Development Concept Plan. These improvements would include the construction of a permanent visitor screening facility to replace the interim visitor screening facility, and the installation of a permanent vehicle barrier system to replace the temporary concrete jersey barrier system. The program also includes general improvements to the Monument Grounds. These proposed improvements are the subject of this Environmental Assessment (EA).

The NPS has prepared this EA in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA [40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508], the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA), and the NPS Director's Order-12 (as reflected in the DO-12 Handbook). This EA was prepared in cooperation with the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). NCPC is the central planning agency for the Federal government in the National Capital Region and is responsible for reviewing the proposed action.

This EA seeks to identify two action alternatives and determine the potential impacts and recommended mitigation measures related to their implementation, as well as identify a No Action Alternative as required by CEQ. The EA addresses short-term construction-related impacts and long-term effects, as well as the cumulative impacts that would result from this and other projects that have been completed recently, are currently under development, or are proposed within the study area.

The Washington Monument and its Grounds are Federal parkland under the jurisdiction of and maintained by NPS. The Monument Grounds occupy a 106-acre area in the heart of Washington, DC's monumental core. The area is bounded by the Tidal Basin to the south, Constitution Avenue to the north, 14th Street and Raoul Wallenburg Place to the east, and 17th Street to the west. The portion of the area that is studied in this report is generally considered the historical Grounds of the Monument. This 73-acre site is bounded by Independence Avenue to the south, Constitution Avenue to the north, 14th Street to the east, and 17th Street to the west and provides a setting for the great obelisk monument to memorialize George Washington.



The Washington Monument and Grounds are located in the Monumental Core of Washington, DC.



Aerial view of the Monumental Core and the Washington Monument.



The general study area for the Washington Monument and Grounds.



The Washington Monument is a national icon with nearly one million visitors per year.

The general study area for the proposed action consists of the several blocks surrounding the Washington Monument. This study area is intended to serve as an area of emphasis within which short-term, long-term, and cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed action are analyzed. The study area may expand or contract for each resource discipline depending upon the potential for a specific impact to affect a given geographic area.

1.2 Purpose of the Proposed Action

A series of objectives were established by the NPS to guide the development of the proposed action. These objectives define the programmatic expectations for the design and construction of the security improvements. The objectives include the following:

Improvement of Security – Due to the high visibility and importance of the Washington Monument and because of increased national security concerns, the Monument requires protection against acts of vandalism, terrorism, and espionage. Required security elements include (1) a facility to screen individuals and separate them physically from people outside the secured area and (2) a vehicle barrier system located at least 200 feet from the outer corner of the Monument that can meet standards for stopping moving vehicles, while still allowing access for service and emergency vehicles.

Improvement of Visitor Flow – Ticketing functions and visitor services, including educational and interpretive areas, bookstore, visitor queuing areas, and restrooms shall be consolidated with visitor screening requirements to improve the visitor experience and enhance the delivery of essential visitor services. The vehicle barrier system must allow pedestrian as well as bicycle traffic to flow through the barrier at numerous points, and encourage users to follow established paths between the Monument and surrounding streets and access points, while not precluding walking across the Grounds.

Retention of Outdoor Activities – The Monument Grounds are a critical open space element of the monumental core. The Grounds are used for a wide variety of public activities, including First Amendment demonstrations, special events, concerts, and recreation, including softball,

jogging, and kite flying. Improvements to the Monument Grounds must retain the ability to continue these activities

Preservation of Cultural Landscape Quality – The prominence of the Monument and its setting are critical in the design and development of any landscape improvements or additional features on the site. Setbacks, topography, adjacent roadways, aesthetic quality, and viewsheds to and from the Grounds are all important considerations in the design process. Improvements to the Grounds include removal of the 16th Street parking lot and completion of the German-American Friendship Garden.

Improvement of Accessibility – Building areas and facilities shall improve accessibility for physically challenged individuals and shall be in accordance with applicable published codes and standards.

Preservation of the Monument Structure – The preservation of the Monument is to remain the highest priority of the project. Neither modifications nor attachments or appendages of any type shall be allowed to the exterior surfaces of the structure. Geotechnical issues must be addressed to ensure that the stability of the Monument is not compromised.

1.3 Need for the Proposed Action

To address immediate physical security issues at the Monument, the NPS has installed temporary barriers of various types to address vehicular threats. These temporary security barriers have ranged from a snow fence and a chainlink fence in the past, to the current system of concrete jersey barriers. To address the potential takeover of the Monument itself, an interim visitor security facility has been constructed at the eastern entrance to the Monument to electronically screen visitors who wish to gain access to the Monument. In addition, the U.S. Park Police have stationed officers at the site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. While the physical barriers and a heavy police presence have been successful in deterring threats, the form and location of the concrete jersey barriers and the interim visitor screening facility obstruct important vistas to and from the Monument and Grounds, and disrupt pedestrian circulation patterns. In addition, the heavy personnel staffing requirements have been taxing on the U.S. Park Police.



The setting of the Washington Monument is an important cultural landscape.



The existing temporary vehicle barrier system consists of concrete "jersey" barriers.



Visitors seeking access into the Washington Monument must wait outdoors prior to their reserved tour time.

The pathways and facilities on the Monument Grounds also require updating. Walks and paths to the base of the Monument need to be made more accessible for persons with physical disabilities. The German-American Friendship Garden is an important cultural resource that has not been completed. It was established in 1983 to symbolize friendship between the peoples of Germany and the United States and to commemorate 300 years of German immigration and contribution to America. Concession facilities on the site are inappropriately situated. Restroom facilities are inadequate. Conditions currently do not allow the provision of educational and interpretive programs and visitor services to meet NPS standards. Finally, visitors to the Monument, while waiting to obtain tickets or to ascend the Monument, are completely exposed to the weather.