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Comments: To Whom It May Concern,

In general, it is my firm belief that access to public lands is essential to the people's mental, spiritual, and physical wellbeing. Expanding access to underserved communities is a laudable objective that I fully support. If this project can also reduce the carbon footprint of individual vehicle traffic, its aims are all the more commendable.

On its face, the proposal appears to align with the goals of equitable access and sustainable transportation. However, the plan, as currently drafted, fails to adequately consider or address the foreseeable environmental impacts of increased visitation. Any visitor to the canyon can readily observe that the area is already experiencing significant ecological strain due to high levels of recreational use.

The Forest Service has, over the last decade, concentrated most of its resources at trailheads while systematically removing key infrastructure deeper in the canyon. Restroom facilities have been pulled out over the last 5-10 years, resulting in increased defecation in and near watercourses-posing a direct threat to water quality and public health. Over the past 25 years, trash cans have also been removed from campgrounds and popular destinations such as waterfalls. Consequently, trash-frequently including hazardous waste like used diapers-is commonly found in and around waterways. The number of recreational rangers regularly assigned to the Chantry area is minimal, and mitigation efforts for litter and sanitation are infrequent and insufficient.

While visitor education campaigns like "pack it in, pack it out" have been implemented, the on-the-ground reality-evident to anyone who visits the falls-shows that these efforts alone are ineffective in preventing pollution and resource degradation.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Forest Service is obligated to thoroughly assess the cumulative environmental impacts of increased access, including impacts on water quality, wildlife, and recreational overuse. The current plan does not appear to address these impacts in a meaningful or enforceable way. It is also unclear whether the agency has sufficiently evaluated or disclosed how increased visitation will be managed in a manner consistent with its responsibilities under the Clean Water Act and other applicable environmental protection statutes.

If the proposal were revised to include increased funding and staffing for sanitation infrastructure, routine litter removal, and meaningful enforcement of environmental protections, I could support it. As currently presented, however, the plan does not demonstrate adequate consideration for the ecological consequences it is likely to exacerbate. For this reason, I urge the Forest Service to reevaluate its proposal and ensure compliance with its statutory obligations before moving forward.

Respectfully,

Patrick Kelley