

**Statement of Lauren Cosgrove,
Senior Program Manager, National Parks Conservation Association
Before the Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
February 27, 2020**

Chair Haaland, members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify on the Green Spaces, Green Vehicles Initiative. I am Lauren Cosgrove, Senior Program Manager for the Northeast Region of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). Founded in 1919, NPCA is the leading national, independent voice for protecting and enhancing America's National Park System for present and future generations.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our views regarding H.R. 3681, the Green Spaces, Green Vehicles Act of 2019 sponsored by Congressman Levin. This legislation is critical for facilitating the installation of zero-emission vehicle infrastructure on National Forest System land, National Park System land and certain related lands.

We appreciate the subcommittee's attention to this important bill. NPCA recognizes that climate change is perhaps the greatest threat national parks have ever faced. As the leading advocate of our national parks, we work tirelessly with Congress and federal land managers by supporting and promoting efforts to reduce climate emissions and air pollution both on Capitol Hill and in the field. We are alarmed by the destructive impacts already underway on our national parks, from storm surges that erode coastlines and threaten cultural resources to melting glaciers and compromised wildlife habitat.

This bill is one small, but important way Congress can ensure our national parks, national forests and public lands' management agencies are utilizing responsible, sustainable operations to protect the places Americans treasure the most.

National parks protect our nation's most treasured stories and irreplaceable landscapes, providing unforgettable experiences for upwards of 300 million visitors every year. From Acadia National Park in Maine to Channel Islands National Seashore off the southern coast of California, these special places present a remarkable opportunity to educate millions of people about the importance of sustainability including zero-emission transportation as a vital component of addressing the global climate crisis that threatens both communities and ecosystems.

According to the National Park Service's Green Parks Plan published in 2016, 30% of annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from national park operations comes from transportation. In this Plan, the National Park Service (NPS) set goals to "transform our fleet into a new generation of fuel efficient, low GHG-emitting vehicles" – but this work is extremely difficult without supplemental funding, traffic studies and partnerships. Given the staffing constraints and funding shortfalls NPS faces, NPCA recognizes that the agency cannot achieve these goals on its own.

For this reason and many others, NPCA supports H.R. 3681 and we urge members of the subcommittee to support it as well. Not only does the bill facilitate the installation of zero-emission vehicle infrastructure on NPS land, but it creates a platform to grow partnerships and involve electric vehicle experts who can assist NPS in successfully rolling out the program.

The bill sets out bold yet achievable targets to be met by 2030 under the establishment of the Green Spaces, Green Vehicles Initiative, including that 25% of all federal vehicles and shuttle operations within the agency be zero emission. NPCA believes this is a necessary target to ensure that America's national parks, national forests and public lands are a catalyst for reducing GHG emissions.

The establishment of a Green Spaces, Green Vehicles Initiative would allow the Secretary of the Interior to enter into agreements with public, private or non-profit entities for the acquisition of zero-emission vehicles, installation of charging and fueling infrastructure on or adjacent to NPS land and operation of such infrastructure. It is imperative that the National Park Service be able to work in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors to institute this program. By working with zero-emission vehicle experts and local partners, the Park Service can capitalize on the wealth of knowledge that already exists in this industry and utilize proven best practices at the onset of implementation.

H.R. 3681 also considers appropriate locations for new zero-emission vehicle infrastructure. By working with NPS staff and transportation experts at the Denver Service Center, Volpe Center and others, federal land managers can determine strategic locations for new infrastructure that compliments existing hub-and-spoke transit hubs in parks, based on current and anticipated traffic patterns and market demand.

In the previously reference Green Parks Plan, NPS "defines a collective vision and a long-term strategic plan for sustainable management of NPS operations." Vital to implementation of the Plan "will be informing and engaging park staff, visitors, and community partners about climate change and sustainability to broaden opportunities to foster change." As new zero-emission vehicle infrastructure is proposed in and around national parks, NPCA recommends a thorough and transparent process that includes opportunities for public feedback on appropriate use and location of such transit infrastructure to ensure any future development does not compromise the integrity park resources or the visiting experience.

If passed, H.R. 3681 would authorize \$50 million each fiscal year to be appropriated to purchase zero-emission vehicles and acquire, install and operate zero-emission vehicle infrastructure on NPS, US Forest Service and other federal public lands. NPCA appreciates this additional investment to initiate the program and encourages members to ensure this initiative is funded annually in the proper appropriations bills. We understand first-hand how crippling funding cuts are to the health and operation of America's national parks. An appropriation of \$50 million it crucial for the success of this program.

We commend Congressman Levin for dedicating up to 30% of these funds for urban areas. America's urban populations suffer greatly from air pollution. This harms community health, having the gravest effects on communities of color and people of lower socioeconomic status. It also undermines local economies, driving up healthcare costs and making it harder for children to learn and play and for adults to work.

In one small by mighty way, H.R. 3681 works to address the challenges of air pollution for urban areas. Dedicating up to \$15 million for urban areas is an important way to consider justice and equity while working to reduce emissions and build smart infrastructure that uses clean energy.

To encourage further emission reduction and in attempt to alleviate traffic congestion in America's most overcrowded national parks, NPCA urges Congressman Levin and the subcommittee to consider

dedicating a percentage of these funds to facilitate the efficient transport of large numbers of visitors to the most frequently visited sites within parks. With funding prioritized to emphasize group transport, this bill can help the Park Service achieve emission goals in the Green Parks Plan – such as building “strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled” and take traditional single-ride passenger cars off the road.

In conclusion, NPCA and our many partners concerned with the future sustainability of America’s national parks are grateful that this subcommittee is prioritizing zero-emission vehicle infrastructure by taking up this important bill. This is one critical way America’s public land agencies can set an example for the rest of the American people and the future of our nation’s clean energy economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration of our views.