

Funding for roads, bridges, and tunnels comes largely from the Highway Trust Fund, while other maintenance and repairs are funded through annual appropriations.⁶² Larger projects are supported through the Park Service’s construction account, which received just \$209 million in 2017 — 62 percent less than in 2001 and 19 percent less than 2010, after adjusting for inflation.

Smaller projects and ongoing maintenance are funded through the Operation of the National Park System account, which also covers personnel and other operating costs. Over the past decade, appropriations for the operation account have not kept pace with the growing number of people visiting Park Service facilities. The problem has worsened in recent years: between 2010 and 2016, funding fell by 5 percent in inflation-adjusted terms, while the number of visitors grew by 18 percent.⁶³

The Park Service estimates that maintenance needs are roughly double the annual funding provided to address them; as a result, the maintenance backlog continues to grow.⁶⁴ (It grew by \$410 million just between 2014 and 2015, after adjusting for inflation.) Without sufficient funding to substantially reduce that backlog, facilities will likely continue to deteriorate, impairing services to visitors and protection of historical and cultural assets — and increasing future costs for repair and replacement.

⁶² Only annual appropriations are subject to the 2011 Budget Control Act caps. Funding provided by the Highway Trust Fund is outside the caps.

⁶³ Data for number of visitors from NPS, “Annual Summary Report,” <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/National>.

⁶⁴ See “NPS Deferred Maintenance Reports.”