Wayfinding and Visitor Information – Analysis and Recommendations

2

Section Overview

Conditions related to visitor information and wayfinding are analyzed in this section of the report. A general inventory and evaluation of the existing signing, wayfinding, and visitor information conditions is presented. The analysis generally covers:

- Information available for advance planning/ pre-trip access
- Information available and signing en route to Springdale from St. George
- Signing, wayfinding, and visitor information in Springdale and the park

Objective of Analysis

The objective of this analysis has been to determine the general availability of signing, wayfinding, and visitor information to Zion Canyon visitors. An inventory of existing signing specific to the shuttle system was conducted, and the methods being used to notify visitors of parking and shuttle options en route to the canyon were identified. The analysis helped to confirm issues and problems related to existing signing, wayfinding, and information dissemination in Springdale and at the park. It also provided a basis for recommendations for resolving these issues and problems.

Analysis Approach

Concurrently to the technical analysis and field work associated with other components of the project, the consultant team completed a general inventory and evaluation of wayfinding, signing, and visitor information conditions. The inventory addressed physical signs and cues to visitors, as well as messaging and information conveyed through other media (highway advisory radio, wayside stops, local CCTV and cable programs, Internet, etc.).

Photographs of existing signs related to shuttle stops, parking, visitor wayfinding and information were taken. Shuttle stop and parking signs were reviewed in conjunction with the pedestrian network analysis and identified in the inventory maps. Refer to Appendix A, Streetscape, Shuttle Stops, and Parking Inventory, for a summary of these field observations.

This type of sign marks the location of a Zion Canyon shuttle stop.

Observations and Findings

The following problems and needs were documented in the technical analysis. Specific recommendations are presented later in this section.

- Visitors are having difficulty understanding where to park in Springdale to access the shuttle. Parking needs to be more visible and identifiable to visitors upon entry to Springdale and throughout town.
- There is a lack of clear and consistent identification of available parking areas or indications of what to look for to park and ride the shuttle. People need to be told and shown very specifically where they can park in Springdale.
- There is a lack of a sense of arrival for visitors entering Springdale, and they do not feel they are "there" until reaching the actual Zion National Park gateway and entrance station. Visitors need to feel they have reached the experience of the park upon entry to Springdale.
- Visitors need to be made more aware that they can leave their car at a parking area in Springdale and conveniently and efficiently ride the shuttle to the park.

Springdale Parking Activities Committee

To address some of these problems and needs related to signing, wayfinding, parking and other topics, the Springdale Parking Activities Committee was formed. The committee includes representatives from the Town Council, planning commission and staff from the Town, PTI, and Zion National Park. The committee has been working to help visitors better understand where to park in Springdale by installing various temporary and permanent signs, banners, and pavement markings, as discussed in more detail later in this section. For more information about the committee and town planning initiatives related to parking, refer to Section 3.

Pre-Trip Communications

Website – Currently, visitors can receive information about the shuttle system at Zion National Park's website, (homepage shown below). However, the shuttle system information is not prominently displayed on the homepage. Prospective visitors can obtain the shuttle information via links listed on the sidebar of the page. Once on the shuttle's webpage, prospective visitors can learn about the history of the shuttle system, how to use the shuttle, parking in town, what to bring to the park, and rules.

A PDF park and ride map, shown on page 2-3, can be obtained by clicking on a link. The map, while graphically clear, is somewhat challenging to interpret. It does not specifically highlight the parking areas that are available to shuttle riders. The information is iconic and not contextual enough to provide a clear sense of orientation. Displaying a reduced image of the map on the shuttle webpage would help people access it more easily. Also, the park should consider updating the map to more clearly indicate where to park through a more detailed map and notes.

The Town of Springdale website also displays shuttle information, but it must be accessed through a link in the menu bar of the homepage.

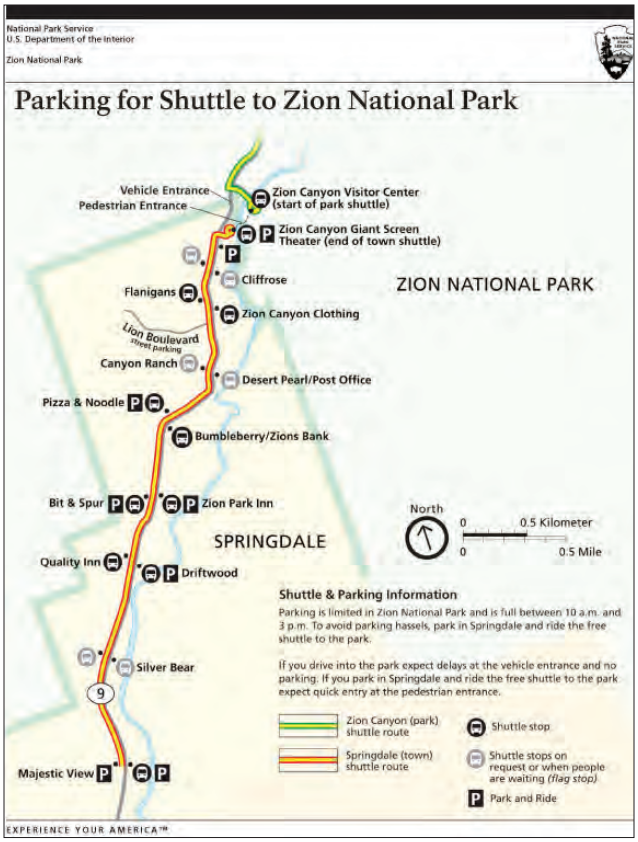
www.nps.gov/zion homepage

There is an image (not downloadable) of the shuttle stops as well as a link to the NPS park and ride map. The following websites include information on the shuttle in varied detail:

- Cedar City Brian Head Tourism Bureau (www.scenicsouthernutah.com/)
- Kane County: (www.kaneutah.com/)
- St. George (www.sgcity.org/)
- East Zion Tourism Council (www.eastziontourismcouncil.org/)
- Zion Canyon Visitors Bureau: (www.zionpark.com/)
- Zion Natural History Association (www.zionpark.org/)

Additionally, the Utah Travel Industry Website (www.utah.com) displays a short summary of shuttle operations under the "Zion Canyon Scenic Drive" section. However, there is not a link available to take browsers directly to the Zion National Park or Springdale sites.

Information about the shuttle is currently not displayed on the Washington County or UDOT websites.



Existing map showing park and ride and shuttle stop locations

En Route Communications

Signs – Visitors en route to Zion National Park are first informed of the Springdale/Zion Canyon Shuttle system at a paved pull off area outside of Virgin, approximately six miles west of Rockville. Three large signs at the pull off area present "Tunnel and Shuttle Information." The font is large enough in size that travelers do not need to leave their vehicles to read them. The signs have been vandalized and have numerous bullet holes.

This pull off area is the first formal pull off area for visitors headed to Zion National Park. While it is being used by some travelers, a few stakeholders have the perception that the pull off is not effective in drawing people to stop. Also the signs provide limited information about the shuttle and are focused on telling people about the Zion National Park tunnel. While they do offer some information about the Zion Canyon shuttle, briefly encouraging visitors to

Zion shuttle information signs at pull off area west of Rockville

Signs southwest of Springdale that provide parking information for northbound travelers

park in Springdale and ride the shuttle, it's a "soft" message, and there are no details about where to park.

Southwest of Springdale, there are three wood signs in the traditional brown and white style, as shown on the following page. These signs are discreet, and the information presented is difficult to fully capture from a moving vehicle. For travelers heading northbound towards Springdale, the signs state, in order:

- "Avoid Parking Hassles Tune Radio to 1610 AM"
- "Parking in Zion NP Full 10 AM - 3 PM"
- "Park in Springdale Ride Shuttle to Zion NP"

The locations of the pull off area and existing signs are shown in Figure 2-1 at the end of this section.

Visitors from East Entrance – Visitors entering the park from the east are often unaware of the parking and shuttle system in Zion National Park. Signs at Canyon Junction direct drivers to the visitor center but do not include expanded information about the shuttle system. Many drivers park in the vicinity of Canyon Junction, if there is space available, to catch the shuttle, when the objective is for them to park in town and ride the shuttle.

Highway Advisory Radio – 1610 AM – En route to Springdale from St. George, travelers are advised to tune into 1610 for Zion National Park information multiple times. The highway advisory radio message provided is clear, audible and fairly brief. While the shuttle is mentioned in the broadcast, visitors are not specifically encouraged to park in town. Visitors are not told where to park, and the benefits of parking in town to ride the shuttle are not mentioned.

On Site Communications (in Springdale and at Zion National Park)

Printed Material – The NPS publishes a newspaper entitled *Zion Map & Guide* for distribution to visitors. The front page describes how to use the shuttle and where to park. Many visitors obtain this publication either at the gate or once they are already within the park, but

some of the information about the shuttle system would be useful for people who are trying to reach the park. Many people do not obtain these until they reach the park entrance gate or visitor center, even though it would be helpful to have the information before they arrive. Also, the maps in the guide are too general and do not show enough detail to guide visitors to the appropriate parking locations.

Some visitors also obtain information from their place of lodging. The shuttle system is very convenient as many shuttle stops are in the vicinity of hotels. The town reports mixed success in getting the word out about the shuttle through businesses and hotels. Some do a better job at this, but most have limited resources. This is one of the best methods to communicate with visitors though, so more needs to be done to improve effectiveness.

Gateways – The strongest sense of arrival to Zion National Park is at the south gate to the park, shown on page 2-6, where the entrance stations and large gateway sign are located. It is presumed that because Zion National Park is the destination of the majority of travelers, they continue to proceed to the park entrance to gain a sense of "having arrived." The Town of Springdale has a gateway sign to Zion Canyon, but it does not convey a sense of arrival to the national park. Therefore, most people continue driving until they reach the park gate and then often are turned around to find parking in town.

Parking Signs – Zion National Park and the parking committee are currently using two types of park and ride signing systems, temporary and permanent. The temporary system consists of blue 3M vinyl sandwich board signs placed in the roadway when needed and banner signs, which are mounted on permanently installed poles. The banner signs are difficult to mount, but effective when mounted. In an effort to better direct visitors, small blue sandwich board signs are placed in locations by Zion National Park staff directing people where to park. The sandwich boards are typically placed near the park entrance, but have also been placed at Lion Boulevard and the lot near the Desert Pearl. A

Photos showing the temporary sandwich board sign, as well as signs in the vicinity of Canyon Junction, directing visitors to the visitor center and Springdale

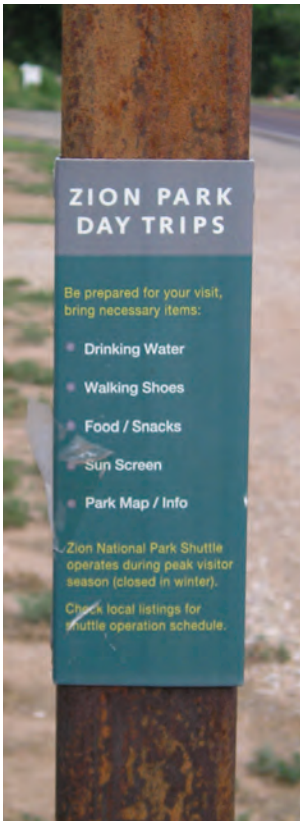
The sign at the main gate to the park provides a strong sense of arrival, and is a destination unto itself. Many visitors take photographs of their parties standing by National Park Service gateway signs.

park service employee will sometimes stand by the sandwich board signs to assist drivers and address questions. While these signs have been somewhat effective in helping to notify repeat visitors to the park, first time visitors may not notice them.

The sandwich board signs are fairly low and may be difficult to see if people are standing in front of them, or if parked cars are blocking them. Also, just by their nature, they appear to be temporary and advertisement oriented, which may cause park visitors to disregard them. These signs are probably not as effective as permanent signs would be.

On Memorial Day weekend 2008, a portable electronic variable message sign was placed in advance of Majestic View Lodge on the side of Zion Park Boulevard. The electronic sign delivered the message to inbound visitors that the parking inside the park was full and that they should pull off "here" to park. This sign was extremely effective in getting people to pull immediately off the highway and park at the Majestic View Lodge parking area.

New shuttle park and ride sign on Lion Boulevard



Shuttle map and safety tips signs

Smaller, permanent park and ride signs have been installed in Springdale. The signs are blue and include the NPS arrowhead. In the *Zion Map & Guide* newspaper, visitors are advised to watch for the shuttle parking signs at the following Springdale businesses:

- Majestic View Lodge
- Driftwood Lodge
- Zion Park Inn
- Bit & Spur Restaurant
- Zion Pizza & Noodle Co.
- Lion Boulevard (street parking)
- Paved lot next to and parking area at the Zion Canyon Giant Screen Theater

These new permanent blue colored signs replaced the older gray and green "P" signs and have been more effective in capturing visitor attention. With the message "Park & Ride - FREE SHUTTLE" and the NPS arrowhead, they have more clearly indicated to visitors where to park to access the shuttle system and get to the park.

On Lion Boulevard the town is also experimenting with painting blue "P" circles on the pavement to indicate where people should park. This treatment has helped to visually highlight where visitors should park; however, it will be difficult to maintain over time, and the circles do not correlate specifically with parallel parking spaces, so visitors get confused. A standard white lane parallel parking system may be more effective and easier to maintain.

Shuttle Stop Signs – The shuttle stop signs in downtown Springdale do not exhibit location information as often as the shuttle signs in the park do. Typically, on the pole of the sign, a sleeve contains a small shuttle map on one side and safety tips on the other side, as shown above. Many of these signs are faded or cracked. Though these signs blend with the context, they are difficult to spot from the shuttle. It is also unclear what direction the shuttle is traveling (to park or away from park). Even though the shuttle stop signs in the park display the stop location, it can be confusing as to what direction the shuttles are heading. This is especially an

Damaged shuttle information sign

issue at the Zion Lodge and Museum stops, where the shuttle stops are located side by side and not across the road from each other.

Other materials found at shuttle stops include schedule information. The majority of these schedules are either missing or in disrepair.

Pedestrian Wayfinding – Currently, Springdale does not have a comprehensive pedestrian wayfinding system. Without this, wayfinding and orientation are a challenge for people attempting to locate the nearest shuttle stop from their parking area. It is also difficult for visitors to determine what direction they need to go to reach the park. It should be noted that there are many international visitors who come to the park each year.

While the shuttle system is somewhat intuitive and the shuttle stops are visible and act as icons for the system, the directional travel and connections of the system can be confusing. Visitors are not always sure that the town shuttle connects to the park shuttle. Sometimes they forget which shuttle stop to get off at to reach where they parked. Shuttle stops keyed to the map by only name can also be confusing,

particularly to people who do not use English as their primary language. Some simple additions related to signing and wayfinding could go a long way to better help visitors understand the system.

Visitors often become disoriented between the Giant Screen Theater stop (last stop of the Springdale loop) and the pedestrian entrance to the park (and transfer to the park shuttle). Trees, vegetation, and obstacles impede sightlines towards the entrance. The route to the visitor center is not direct and could use some improvement and additional signs. The distance can be challenging for some visitors, and the walking route can be difficult to discern for making the transfer from town shuttle to park shuttle. In addition, once visitors leave the park, it is difficult to determine where to catch the shuttle towards town as sightlines again are obstructed. The shuttle stop and shelter are not clearly identified with a sign or other indicator.

Maps in Shuttle Vehicles – The maps displayed in the shuttles are currently out of date and should be updated/replaced.

Lack of Centralized Visitor Information in Springdale – While visitors can obtain information about how to access the park via the shuttle from some hotels, businesses, and restaurants, there currently are limited centralized locations where visitors can obtain information about the shuttle system and parking. The shuttle stops themselves serve as attractive focal points, but there is minimal information at those locations about the shuttle system and how to park and ride. (And once you've reached the stop, you are generally beyond the point of needing that information anyway.) Multiple centralized visitor information hubs are needed, such as small plazas with kiosks, in places where there is extensive pedestrian activity.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for improving and intensifying wayfinding and communications. If successfully implemented, the park and town should see more people using parking areas in Springdale and riding the town shuttle to get to the park shuttle.

Springdale Parking Committee

This committee has been very effective and successful in helping to address some of the problems that occur related to parking in Springdale. The committee should continue its efforts. In addition to its ongoing work related to managing and improving parking and visitor orientation, the committee could expand and take on a broader focus related to Zion Canyon transportation – the shuttle system, parking, pedestrian safety, bicycling, the proposed Zion Canyon trail system, and other transportation issues. The action plan provided in Section 9 could be a starting planning framework for the committee to focus on, updating the plan as conditions change and projects are implemented. It will be important for there to be representation from the Town of Springdale, Zion National Park, UDOT, Visitors Bureaus, town businesses, and perhaps down canyon towns on this committee, at a minimum.

Pre-Trip Communications

Websites – Information on the park and town websites should be expanded and updated to strengthen the "park and ride" and shuttle information messages and make them more prominent and easily accessible to visitors. Information about the shuttle and messages that encourage parking in Springdale to access the shuttle should also be added to/expanded on partner websites (Visitors Bureaus, hotels, businesses, UDOT, Utah Travel Industry, Washington County, etc.).

Website information should include downloadable (PDF) maps for visitors to print out for their use. These maps should provide a detailed picture of where visitors can park and ride in Springdale – similar to how a college campus map looks (see example, Figure 2-7).

En Route Communications

Pull Off Area West of Rockville –The pull off area should be improved as follows:

- Replace upright signs and provide more of an enticing environment to stop with information kiosks and/or low profile interpretive panels that require visitors to get out of their cars to view. This will also reduce drive by shooting/vandalism. The signs should provide more detail and graphics related to the shuttle system and where to park in Springdale, along with all the other information that is important to convey to visitors.

- Explore the possibility of replacing signs with new signs constructed of more robust materials.

- Provide more formalized improvements such as striped parking areas and more landscaping so the area looks more like a finished travelers' rest stop.

- Consider putting a self contained concrete vault restroom unit here, which will encourage travelers to stop even more and also make the site look more like an official place for information. New technology and designs for vault restrooms have become increasingly attractive and context sensitive. Many of these restroom buildings come equipped with solar powered fans and features (such as low odor technology) and require very minimal maintenance.

Brown and White Signs Approaching Springdale – Replace the inbound brown and white signs with slightly larger and more prominent (but not visually intrusive) signs in highly visible locations to more readily capture visitor attention.

Coming from the East Entrance – Visitors coming into Zion National Park and Springdale from the east entrance via Highway 9 need to be given clearer direction about where to park and ride the shuttle. More wayfinding aids and parking notifications should be provided for travelers coming in from the east entrance (the highway advisory radio message and 511 traveler program could help here – see below).

Highway Advisory Radio – 1610 AM – Update the message to include more specific instructions about where to park in Springdale and access the shuttle system. More directly and forcefully encourage visitors to leave their cars in Springdale and ride the shuttle.

511 Traveler Advisory – Work with the UDOT 511 traveler advisory system to provide information Zion National Park on the 511 system and provide signs on approach to Springdale announcing the availability of the information via the 511 program.

Other En Route Sources –Work with partners, stakeholders, and regional interests to increase visitors' awareness of the opportunities to enjoy Zion National Park by leaving their cars in Springdale and riding the shuttle. Work with area visitors bureaus (St. George and Springdale) and Utah Travel Council to emphasize this message to visitors through printed materials at businesses along the route to Springdale and other means.

As conditions change and opportunities develop for people to travel to Springdale via private transit or shuttle services from St. George and other locations, a new campaign should be implemented that promotes Zion National Park as a "car free vacation" destination. (This is also an opportunity related to pre-trip communications.)

The St. George Area Visitors and Convention Bureau could be an important partner in helping to distribute materials and information related to the shuttle system and promoting car free vacation opportunities.

On Site Communications

Printed Materials, Including Visitors Information Packets for Hotels/Businesses and Detailed Maps – Implement a new marketing campaign that encourages visitors to park and ride the shuttle. The campaign should include marketing and advertising activities, as well as development of brochures and other media outreach. Sometimes "low key, low-tech" solutions go a long way. Consider printing place mats that show the detailed maps and encourage

people to park and ride the shuttle. Produce small pins/buttons with clever messages about the benefits of riding the shuttle for people to wear.

Provide a visitor outreach kit to local businesses and hotels with brochures and maps that can be distributed to visitors. Provide enhanced, detailed maps, such as the one shown in Figure 2-7, to help visitors understand specifically where they should park and ride the shuttle.

Part of the focus of the campaign could be on educating visitors and encouraging park stewardship. Messages and tag lines could key in to the environmentally friendly benefits of parking in Springdale and riding the shuttle.

Gateways – Create a stronger sense of arrival to the Zion National Park experience upon entry to Springdale. Consider installing a new gateway sign in the same red rock style as the shuttle system (see example, Figure 2-2). The sign face could be designed to lift up or slide off during busy peak days to expose the electronic variable message sign face (see Figure 2-5).

Zion National Park, the Town of Springdale, and UDOT should work together on the development of the pull off area at the south entrance to town (just south of the Majestic View Lodge). Plans call for development of this site as a trailhead for the Zion Canyon Trail. It could also include an information kiosk and short term parking area, where visitors can stop and learn about the shuttle system and where to park in Springdale.

Signs and Wayfinding Improvements at Visitor Center Transfer Plaza – Additional signs could be added in a few clearly visible locations to help guide visitors from the walk-in entrance gate (just beyond the town shuttle drop off point) through the visitor center plaza area to the park shuttle pick up point. Small maps could be included on the wayfinding signs to illustrate

Figure 2-2. Improved gateway signs would create a stronger sense of entry to the Zion National Park experience in Springdale.

how to get to the park shuttle. The potential to develop a more direct pedestrian route, away from the parked cars, also should be explored

Real Time Variable Message Signs – Provide context-sensitive "real time" variable message signs at key locations to direct visitors to parking. To blend with the environment and strengthen identity, the signs should be designed in a similar manner to the existing shuttle system features. See Figures 2-4 and 2-5. Signs should be placed at just a few key/strategic locations, such as at the south entrance to town in advance of the Majestic View Lodge parking area, in advance of Lion Boulevard, and in advance of any other larger sized parking areas. Property owner agreements for use of privately owned parking areas should be obtained prior to implementation of this project.

Variable message signs can be programmed through a standard personal computer with the appropriate communications software. Park rangers or town staff could be given access to the computer program to be able to update the information on the signs based on parking monitoring (parking capacity conditions either observed by a person or remote sensor technology). Variable message signs can also be programmed locally on the unit's control panel, or units equipped with a cellular modem can be programmed remotely via computer or phone. Wireless communication advances have made it possible to program and change messages remotely.

Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) solutions, including variable message signs, can be implemented at varying levels of complexity. For example, monitoring equipment (such as remote cameras and sensors) can be installed in parking areas to allow remote observation of parking capacities. Strategically located sensors can monitor entering and existing vehicles, or individual parking spaces can be fitted with sensors to detect the presence of vehicles.

It is recommended that the park and town explore the possibility of implementing simpler ITS techniques first, and then move to more complicated systems as needed and funding allows. This could include installing a system of a few variable message signs at key locations that are tied to a centralized personal computer base to allow for updating based on conditions monitored by park staff in the field. The next step would be to add sensors and/or cameras in the busiest parking areas to remotely monitor conditions. The cameras and sensors could be electronically linked to the same centralized pc base as the variable message signs, so the same person can observe parking conditions remotely and update the variable messages accordingly.

Park and Ride Signs and Parking Area Signs– Continue to provide the blue permanent parking signs at locations where visitors should be encouraged to park and ride the shuttle. Key these locations to detailed maps and information distributed to visitors. Consider providing additional signs (with all signs designed according to a consistent, attractive template) for identifying parking areas that customers and park visitors can use, as well as other signs that clearly identify parking areas are ONLY for park visitors –or- ONLY for customers. (See example, Figure 2-3)

Shuttle Stop Signs – Better identify shuttle stops with roof-mounted signs and pedestrian oriented signs that are clearly legible to pedestrians and shuttle passengers and can be read from across the street. It is recommended that shuttle stop signs be color coded (in town and in the park). Signs should clearly display the color indicating direction of shuttle travel and location name. See Figure 2-6 for examples. Consolidate the map, schedule, and safety tips in one graphic sign at each shuttle stop.

Centralized Information Hubs – Centralized information hubs where visitors can learn about the shuttle system should be developed in a few key locations in Springdale. Information kiosks should be installed at these centralized information locations. (Refer to Figure 2-1 at the end of this section.)

Pedestrian Wayfinding – Carefully and thoughtfully enhance signing through Springdale to help visitors find parking and shuttle locations. Important areas to pay attention to

are the Giant Screen Theater location, Majestic View Lodge, Lion Boulevard, and Pizza & Noodle.

Repair or replace damaged shuttle information, including maps, posted at the shuttle stops. Whenever possible, locate the shuttle stops across from the road from each other for ease of recognition and wayfinding for users.

Update the maps displayed in the shuttles to display the correct shuttle stop name and location.

See additional discussions regarding transition between Springdale shuttle and the park pedestrian entrance and park shuttle in Section 4.

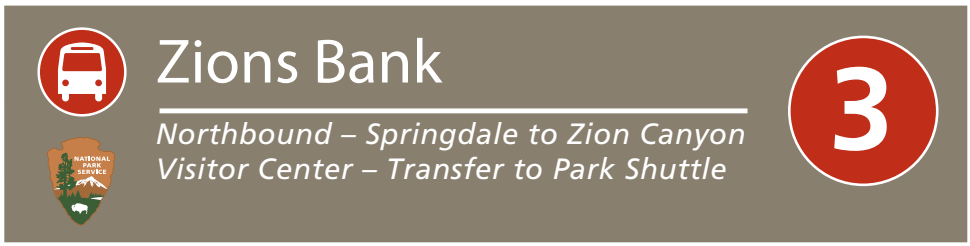
Overflow Parking Signs and Information – Signs and information (perhaps small brochures or flyers) should be provided to people exiting the visitor center parking lot, when it is full and they can't find a parking space. The signs and information could direct visitors (via written description and map) where to park in Springdale if the visitor center lot is full. This would be especially helpful to people coming in from the east park entrance, who are not told where to park when the visitor center lot fills up.

Other Outreach and Communications – Explore the possibility of providing information to visitors related to the "park in Springdale and ride the shuttle" campaign via Closed Caption TV or through the local cable network via public service announcements. Public service announcements via regular network TV and radio should also be explored.

Figure 2-3. These recommended parking area signs could help visitors and customers more readily find appropriate locations for parking.

Figure 2-4 and 2-5. "Real time" variable messaging signs, such as these graphic simulations depict, can direct visitors to parking and strengthen identity.

Figure 2-6. Shuttle stop signs could be improved to be more legible to shuttle passengers as these examples illustrate.



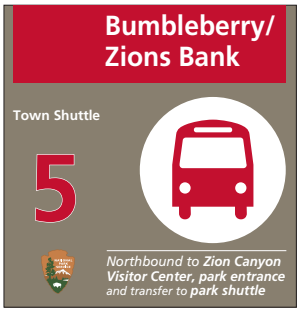
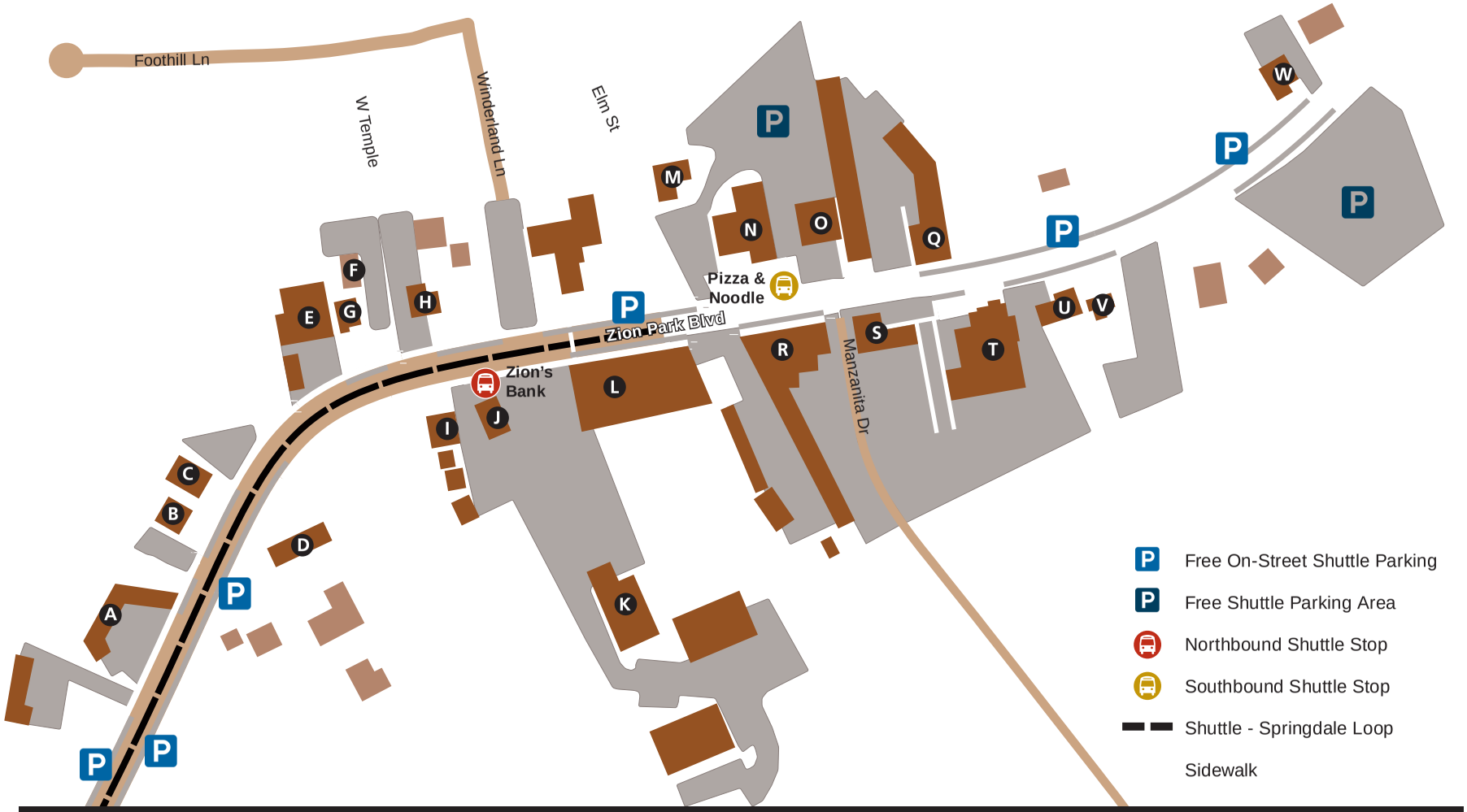


Figure 2-6, continued. Shuttle stop signs could be improved to be more legible to shuttle passengers, as these examples illustrate.



Parking is limited in Zion National Park and is full between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. To avoid parking hassles, park in Springdale and ride the free shuttle to the park.

- A Terrace Brook
- B Red Rock Jewelry and B&B
- C Under the Eaves B&B
- D El Rio
- E Shell Gas Station
- F Oscars
- G Lazy Lizards
- H Mean Bean
- I Canyon Offerings
- J Zion's Bank
- K Bumbleberry Inn
- L Bumbleberry Gift Shop/Restaurant
- M Zion Outdoor Center
- N Pizza & Noodle
- O Zion Park Gift and Deli
- Q Pioneer Lodge / Restaurant
- R Zion Park Motel/Market
- S Indian Village
- T Gift Shops / Fresh Mex Restaurant
- U Asia To Zion / West Gallery / Crystals & Creatures
- V Worthington Gallery
- W Blondie's Diner

Figure 2-7 Example of a detailed map that could be created to help visitors find parking in Springdale

Note: Proposed variable message sign locations are not shown because further analysis is needed to confirm potential sites for these.

Figure 2-1. Map Showing Existing Signs and Proposed Information Kiosk Locations