

TOWN OF TUSAYAN

at the entrance to Grand Canyon National Park



December 22, 2025

Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum
1849 C St NW
Washington, DC 20240

Subject: Concerns Regarding the "America-First" National Park Entry Fee Policy and Its Impact upon the Town of Tusayan and the Grand Canyon National Park Region

Honorable Secretary Doug Burgum:

On behalf of the Town Council of the Town of Tusayan, I am writing to you to address the above-referenced fee policy. Tusayan is a critical gateway community to Grand Canyon National Park, located just one mile from its south entrance. While we understand the need to fund park maintenance and operations, we must express our significant concerns regarding the new fee structure for international visitors, effective January 1, 2026.

Tusayan's economy is completely dependent upon tourism, with international visitors historically comprising a substantial portion of our customer base, as high as 40% in some years.

The additional \$100 per-person surcharge, on top of the standard entrance fee, sends a negative message to our international guests, and creates a significant financial deterrent for families and individuals planning multi-park trips.

We have been observing a steady decline in international visits, as we have struggled through devastating wildland fires on the north rim, government shutdowns, and an overall negative sentiment by overseas travelers to visit the U.S. Notably, post pandemic travel growth has stalled, and 4.5 million fewer international visits are expected in the U.S. this year compared with 2024, according to industry estimates. We anticipate this new fee will further decrease our visitation numbers, directly impacting the livelihoods of small businesses, hotels, service staff, and the overall economic vitality of our region.

Added to the economic impact, the resulting time needed at the entrance gate to administer this added fee structure will certainly have negative impact in terms of increased traffic wait lines that currently extend into the Tusayan town limits during busy season. Staff resources at the park are greatly constrained. All of these factors will diminish the visitors' experience and further deter international travelers from visiting these national treasures.

We urge you to reconsider this policy or work with the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service to implement a system that generates the needed revenue without discouraging the valuable international tourism that supports communities like ours.

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It is our understanding that a new *America Beautiful* Non-Resident Annual Pass will be available starting January 1, which will cover the additional fees for three additional adults in the pass holder's party. While this is a step in the right direction, the added fee remains exorbitant and impactful, and certainly difficult to administer in instances involving large tour bus operations. We recommend that the road-based commercial tours (RBCT) be exempt from this added fee. These operations are already standardized, with an applicable fee structure, under the Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) requirements.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Mayor Clarinda Vail
Town of Tusayan, Arizona