



# **We welcome you to tonight's public scoping meeting for the Newfound Gap Road Rehabilitation Project.**

Gatlinburg, TN - January 15, 2008

Cherokee, NC - January 17, 2008

## **We invite you to:**

- **Sign In**
- **View the Displays**
- **Ask Questions**
- **Provide Comments**



## Park Purpose & Significance

Great Smoky Mountains National Park was established by an Act of Congress (16 U.S.C. § 403) on May 22, 1926.

The Park, located in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee, is designated as a World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve. It is distinguished by an extraordinary diversity of natural resources, an abundance of cultural resources, and the sanctuary it affords these resources. Newfound Gap Road and other roads within the Park are important resources themselves and for the majority of visitors are the primary means by which they experience the Park.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park encompasses more than 800 square miles in the states of Tennessee and North Carolina. It is world renowned for the diversity of its plant and animal resources, the beauty of its ancient mountains, the quality of its remnants of American pioneer culture, and the depth and integrity of the wilderness sanctuary within its boundaries.

The Park's fundamental significance lies in its extraordinary quality as a sanctuary; the mountain ridges, valleys, and streams create unique ecosystems that provide refuges for hundreds of plants and animal species. Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the most biologically diverse area in the entire national park system.



## National Park Service Roads

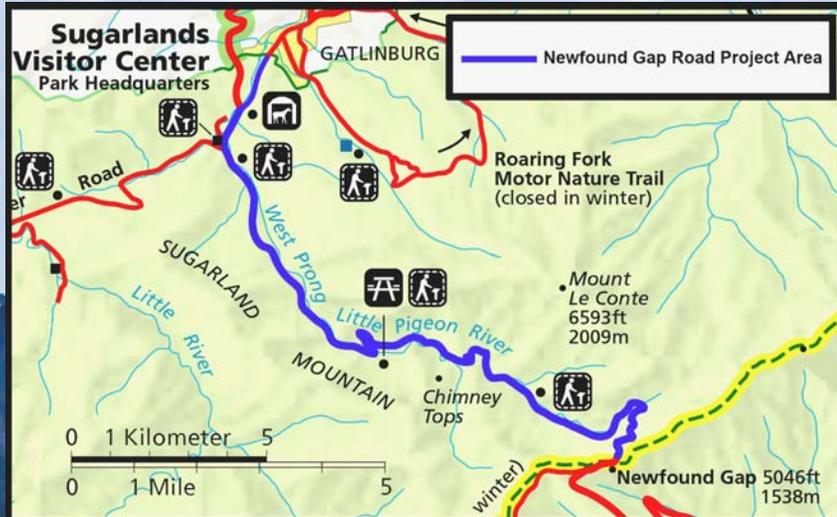
The purpose of park roads remains in sharp contrast to that of the Federal and State highway systems. Park roads are not intended to provide fast and convenient transportation; they are intended to enhance visitor experience, while providing safe and efficient accommodation of park visitors and to serve essential management access needs.

Preserving parks as special places is the cornerstone of national park management. One of the greatest challenges in national park management is the planning, design, and construction of park facilities and roads.

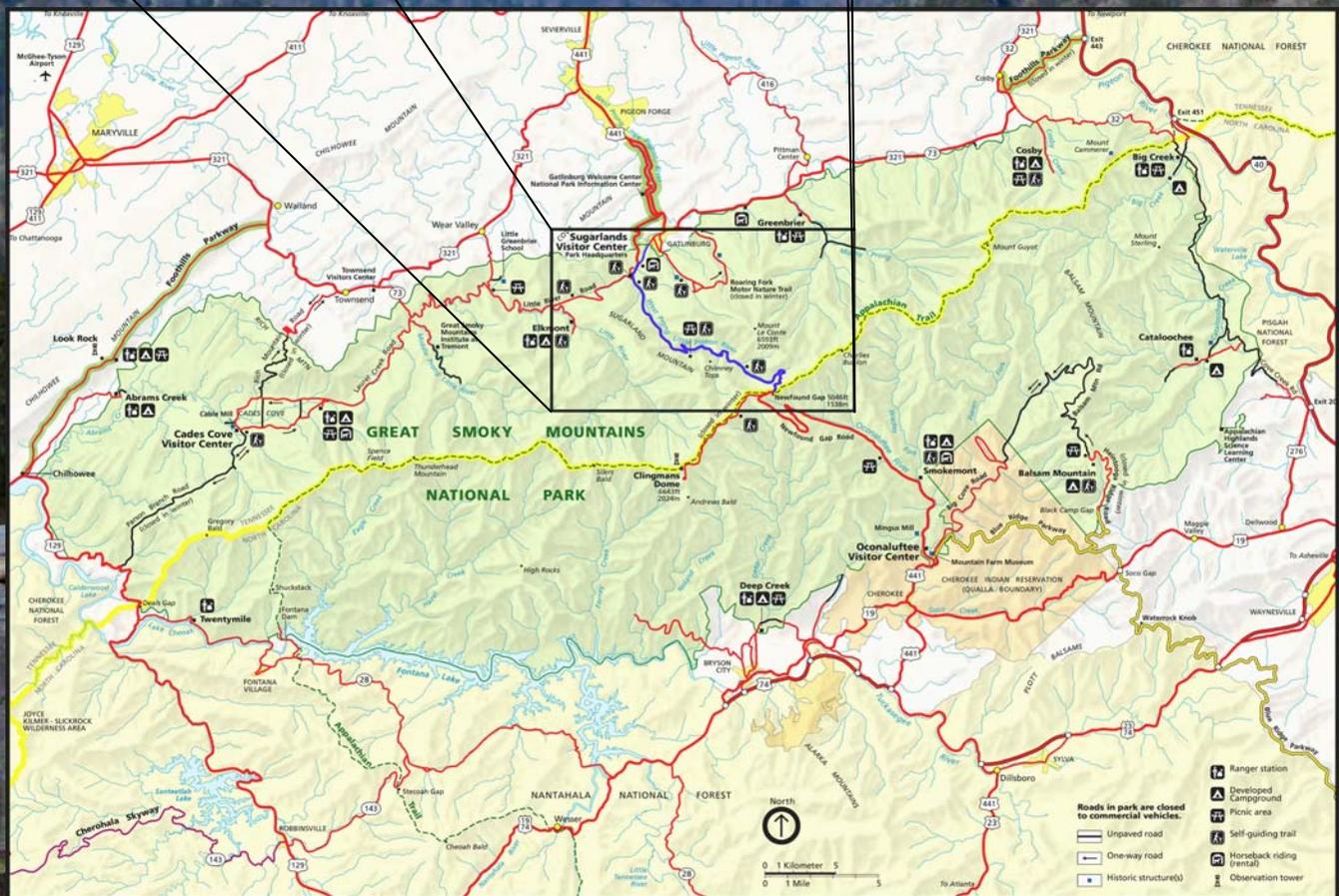
To blend in with the natural and cultural environment of a park, most park roads were designed to lie gently on the landscape and fit the topography of a particular park rather than conform to the standards of alignment, gradient, and curvature applied to other national and state road systems. Walls, curbs, culverts, and other support structures were designed to incorporate native materials and were constructed to blend with, not dominate the environment. Vegetation was left undisturbed along roads to maintain the natural setting and enhance visitor experience.



# Newfound Gap Road Project Area



The National Park Service (NPS), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division, proposes to rehabilitate Newfound Gap Road from the park boundary with Gatlinburg, Tennessee to the Newfound Gap Overlook Parking Area.





## Purpose of the Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to rehabilitate Newfound Gap Road in a manner that protects the resources and values of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and that:

- Improves the overall safety of the road for both Park staff and visitors.
- Preserves the culturally significant features and contributing elements of the road and guardwalls.
- Enhances visitor experience and enjoyment of Park resources.
- Provides a long-lasting driving surface for visitors and Park staff and improves operational efficiency, reliability, and sustainability by decreasing maintenance required to keep the road safe for public use.



## Need for the Action

Rehabilitation of this 14.5-mile section of Newfound Gap Road is needed to improve the condition of the road and improve roadway safety. These improvements are needed to address:

- Deterioration of the road, such as signs of wear along the road edges and traveling surface, and deterioration of mortar joints and loose or missing stones in some guardwalls.
- Safety concerns, such as pavement edge drop-offs, guardwall heights in certain locations, and roadside hazards.
- Circulation and parking problems, resulting in traffic back-ups along Newfound Gap Road and informal parking at high use areas.
- Impacts on the historic character of Newfound Gap Road as a result of the continued deterioration of the road.
- The increasing cost of routine maintenance and intermittent repairs due to the continuing deterioration of the road.

The proposed road rehabilitation would bring Newfound Gap Road into good condition for its intended use, preserve the historic character of the road, enhance visitor enjoyment of the Park, and improve public safety.



## Existing Conditions



Signs of Wear Along the Road Edges and Traveling Surfaces



Low Guardwalls



Deterioration of Stone Guardwalls



## THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires all federal agencies to consider and document the potential impacts of management actions on the human environment. The National Park Service applies NEPA in the planning process to evaluate alternative courses of action and impacts so decisions are made in accord with the conservation and preservation mandate of the NPS Organic Act of 1916.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) is a NEPA document that is prepared to assist in planning and decision-making and to determine if an action has the potential for significant impact.

Public scoping meetings are held to inform the public of the Park's proposed actions, solicit public input, and identify issues and concerns. All public input received will be considered during the environmental assessment.



## NEPA Planning Process

- **Scoping Phase** – Identifies issues and obtains input from the public and interested agencies and organizations early in the planning process (***We are here***).
- **Alternatives Development** – Identifies a range of alternatives that meet the purpose and need for the action (**Note:** *A newsletter will be prepared and distributed to provide another opportunity for public to comment before the EA is prepared*)
- **Preparation of EA and Public Review** – Analyzes the potential environmental impacts of alternatives, and identifies the agency preferred alternative.
- **Decision Document** – A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be prepared, if appropriate. However, if the potential for significant impacts is identified, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared.

It is anticipated that the NEPA planning process will be completed by the summer of 2009.

The construction portion of the project is currently programmed to receive funding in Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011.



## OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMENT

WRITTEN COMMENTS:

**Comment sheets are available at the sign-in table and may be turned in to any project personnel at tonight's meeting.**

COMMENT SHEETS and/or ADDITIONAL COMMENTS MAY BE SENT TO:

**Superintendent  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
*Rehabilitation of Newfound Gap Road – EA*  
107 Park Headquarters Road  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738**

COMMENTS MAY BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY BY FOLLOWING THE LINKS AT:

**<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/GRSM>**

***PLEASE NOTE:*** *In order for your comments to be considered as part of this phase of the project, all comments must be received prior to **February 20, 2008.***