

Great Smoky Mountains
National Park

Cades Cove Opportunities Plan

Appendix J
Public Involvement Plan

October 2004

United States Department
Of the Interior
National Park Service

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Introduction

This document identifies the steps and tasks in the public involvement process that were taken during the three contracted phases of the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan. This public involvement plan featured five rounds of public gatherings held throughout the process as well as printed materials, a website and media outreach efforts.

This plan is based on the principles that public outreach must be:

- Held early and often
- Carefully planned from the outset
- Imbued with respect for the community's contributions
- Designed to "level the playing field" between professional and lay participants (avoiding jargon and being understandable to all participants)
- Integrated into all aspects of the planning process
- Designed with varied formats to recognize the different ways that people communicate
- Planned carefully to avoid "meeting burnout," while generating varied opportunities for people to participate (through selection of times, dates, locations and meeting formats)
- Reliant on clear, brief and attractive publications as well as face-to-face meetings

One potential drawback of a meeting-based public involvement plan was that local residents are more likely to participate in local meetings than are members of the general population, despite the fact that the non-local population visits the Cove in greater numbers. The website proposed in this plan was a tool to help overcome the inevitable local bias of public meetings. A paper form, created by National Park Service staff to obtain comments by Park users and distributed throughout the summer of 2002, was also designed to augment the number and geographic representation of participants.

The NEPA Process

This public involvement plan, and indeed the entire planning process, was designed to dovetail with NEPA requirements. In fact, the intensive public scoping sessions in Phases I through III exceeded NEPA requirements. During all three phases, NEPA actions were documented. These include the NPS Environmental Screening Form, the development of a Compliance Coordination Plan, as well as Agency Scoping meetings that were held after the first public scoping session of Phase III.

Media Outreach and Coverage

Local media were notified of all public meetings. Table 3-1 is a listing of the broadcast and print media outlets that were provided press release information about the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan. Table 3-1 also highlights media outlets that produced news stories and/or provided coverage of meetings. Copies of print media articles were compiled and maintained in a separate project binder (Cades Cove Opportunities Plan Media Coverage).

Coverage generally was fair and substantive. Reporters were well-versed in the planning process and in the Cades Cove area. However, some negative public reaction to the planning process was reported in the news (and heard in public meetings) as several people voiced concern that the process was designed to impose a single, pre-conceived solution (in this case, mass transportation) to the issue of heavy traffic during peak visitation periods.

Later coverage reflected a growing public awareness that the plan was not skewed toward any conclusion. Coverage also reflected the range of public reaction to the planning process and development of alternatives. Reaction ranged from people who were highly critical and some who were supported the ideas identified in the alternatives.

During the planning process, a group known as the "Save Our Cades Cove Coalition" formed, motivated primarily by concerns over field management and mass transportation as a solution to congestion in Cades Cove. Through a brochure handed out at public scoping meetings, this group received media coverage as well. A copy of the brochure has been included in this appendix.

Table 1: Regional Media Mailing List

Broadcast Media	Print Media
Television	Associated Press
Channel 2 WSKT – TV, TN (News coverage ¹)	Knoxville News Sentinel, TN (News coverage)
Channel 6 WATE – TV, TN (News coverage)	The Daily Times, TN (News coverage)
Channel 8 WKXT – TV, TN (News coverage)	The Mountain Press, TN (News coverage)
Channel 10 WBIR – TV, TN (News coverage)	Newport Plain Talk, TN
KOP/WSJI, TN	Local Yocal, TN
WLOS – TV, TN	Oak Ridger, TN
Radio	Powell Times, TN
Tennessee Radio Network <i>Knoxville, TN</i>	South Community Times, TN TN Star Journal, TN (News coverage)
WIVK, TN	UT Daily Beacon, TN
WBMK, TN	The Enlightener, TN
WINZ, TN	The Knoxville Journal, TN (News coverage)
WSJK, TN	Powell Post, TN
WNOX, TN	Tri-County News, TN
WUOT –NPR, TN	Union News Leader, TN
WITA, TN	Volunteer Valley Business Journal, TN
WOKI, TN	Farragut Press Enterprise, TN
WMYU, TN	Johnson City Press, TN
WGAP, TN	Smoky Mountain Times, NC
WBCR Blount County TN	Asheville Citizen Times, TN (News coverage)
WSEV Sevierville, TN	Smoky Mountain Times, TN (News coverage)
Asheville, NC	Mountaineer, TN (News coverage)
WSKY, NC	Cherokee One Feather, NC
KISS, NC	The Sylva Herald, NC
WCQS, NC	The Graham Star, NC
WWMC – NPR, NC	Smoky Mountain News, NC
WHCC-WQNS Waynesville, NC	
WFSC Franklin, NC	
WRGC Sylvania, NC	
WBHN Bryson City, NC	
WCVP Murphy, NC	

National Media

Because this project involved a national resource and meetings were only held locally, the project team decided to undertake a national outreach strategy. NPS staff identified media outlets in states and cities where large numbers of visitors originate. The project team then prepared a press release to inform these media outlets about the Opportunities Plan, seeking additional public input through stories developed from the release. A listing of the national media outlets is provided in Table 4-2. To date, no articles have been found resulting from

¹ News Coverage notation indicates that major media outlets attended one or more meeting and stories were produced.

this effort, but it is anticipated that interest will increase after more detailed alternatives are released.

Table 2: National Media Listing

Birmingham News	Alabama
Huntsville Times	Alabama
Montgomery Advertiser	Alabama
Atlanta Journal-Constitution	Georgia
Columbus Ledger-Enquirer	Georgia
Augusta Chronicle	Georgia
Savannah Morning News	Georgia
Jacksonville Florida Times	Florida
Tallahassee Democrat	Florida
Gainesville Sun	Florida
Ft. Lauderdale/S Florida Sun-Sentinel	Florida
Miami Herald	Florida
Winston-Salem Journal	North Carolina
Greensboro News & Record	North Carolina
Durham Herald Sun	North Carolina
Raleigh News & Observer	North Carolina
Cleveland Plain Dealer	Ohio
Columbus Dispatch	Ohio
Dayton Daily News	Ohio
Akron Beacon Journal	Ohio
Cincinnati Enquirer	Ohio
Lexington Herald Leader	Kentucky
Louisville Courier Journal	Kentucky
Paducah Sun	Kentucky
Bowling Green Daily Enterprise	Kentucky
Biloxi Sun Herald	Mississippi
Jackson Clarion Ledger	Mississippi
Pascagoula Mississippi Press	Mississippi
Tupelo Daily Journal	Mississippi
Charleston Post & Courier	South Carolina
Columbia – The State	South Carolina
Greenville News	South Carolina
Spartanburg Herald Journal	South Carolina
Chicago Tribune	Illinois
Peoria Journal Star	Illinois
Springfield State Journal Register	Illinois
Chattanooga Times Free Press	Tennessee

Outreach Efforts

Efforts to educate community groups and maintain media coverage (between public scoping meetings) were carried out by the NPS and TPO team staff. The objective of these presentations was to inform the attendees about the efforts being undertaken to develop a holistic approach to solving problems in Cades Cove.

The following groups were contacted as part of the outreach effort:

- ◆ Sevier County Transportation Board Joint Elected Officials Dinner (October 2001)
- ◆ Kiwanis, Gatlinburg (April 2001)
- ◆ University of Tennessee Graduate School of Environmental Studies (February 2002)
- ◆ Live at Five program (WBIR – TV Knoxville, TN) (May 2002) discussed the purpose of the project and issues and concerns meeting.
- ◆ Leadership Sevier (May 2002)
- ◆ Webb’s Teachers Program (July 2002)
- ◆ Townsend City Council (October 2002)
- ◆ Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere Program (November 2002)
- ◆ Joint meeting of the Tennessee Society of Public Administrators and Students Promoting Environmental Action in Knoxville (November 2002)
- ◆ FHWA, Federal Eastern Lands (November 2002)
- ◆ Live at Five program (WBIR – TV Knoxville, TN) (March 2003) discussed draft alternatives and forthcoming public meetings
- ◆ Knoxville Regional Transportation Organization Technical Committee (April 2003)
- ◆ Blount County Transportation Board (April 2003)
- ◆ Knoxville Regional Transportation Organization Executive Committee (April 2003)
- ◆ Regional Clean Air Action Summit (April 2003)
- ◆ Leadership Blount County (May 2003)
- ◆ Adult Fellowship Group at Church Street United Methodist Church (May 2003)
- ◆ Tennessee/North Carolina Joint Park Commission (Updates at scheduled meetings)
- ◆ Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Coalition (Updates at scheduled meetings)
- ◆ Monthly project updates were made to the Sevier County Transportation Board
- ◆ Tuckaleechee Cove Advisory Board, and the East Tennessee Clean Fuels Coalition

Other agencies were kept informed about the project through mailings, including:

- ◆ Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- ◆ Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians (Tribal Historic Preservation Office)
- ◆ Chickasaw Nation (Cultural Preservation Office)
- ◆ Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- ◆ Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT)

Public Scoping Meetings

Five public scoping sessions were held during the process. The first session focused on identifying issues and concerns related to Cades Cove. The second set of meetings focused on the development of project goals and objectives. The third gave participants an opportunity to comment on the list of ideas and concepts that had been developed for the project, as well as evaluation criteria to be used for developing alternatives.

Meeting formats, times and materials are listed in Attachment A. The presentation boards developed for the meetings are in the possession of Park staff and are available on the project website.

The following sections discuss the meetings in more detail necessary to create the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan.

Phase I: Issues and Concerns

During Phase I, public involvement focused on providing community members and interested parties with opportunities to identify issues and areas of concern. As the first public scoping session was being planned, it was determined that a questionnaire would be distributed during the meeting and included on the project website. The comment form was drafted by the consultant and refined and produced by the NPS to serve as a continuous source of input for the project. With this decision, the project team determined that survey items would be put on hold until Phase IV.

The introductory public meeting, held in Townsend on May 23, 2002, took the form of a brief welcome by the Park Superintendent, remarks by HNTB's project manager and a short question-and-answer period facilitated by the Superintendent. This formal opening was followed by an "open house" with displays of information and opportunities for participants to discuss their issues and concerns with consultants and NPS/TPO staff. A court reporter was made available to take statements from the public (10 participants used this service) and questionnaires were provided. Attendance was more than 130.

Comments Received - Open house participants were given a number of opportunities to provide comments and ask questions about the project. Members of the consultant team, as well as TPO and NPS staff members, were available to take comments and answer questions. The meeting room was set up with large display boards that provided participants with information about the purpose of the project, the Cove's natural and cultural resources, and transportation and visitation trends. Maps and writing tablets also were available. Staff members from the project team utilized the large tablets to note comments from participants.

Comments from the May public scoping meeting focused on education/enforcement, roadway improvements, communication, access restrictions, bicycle/pedestrian trails and mass transportation.

Four comments were made relative to visitor education and/or enforcement. These comments included one that suggested that an alternative to driving on the Loop Road be provided. Others suggested writing more tickets (for motorists stopping in the roadway) and informing visitors of other areas of the park where they might visit.

A few people suggested increasing the number of lanes and/or pull-off areas around the Loop Road. In this case, one lane could be for stopping and viewing wildlife, while the other could remain open for driving.

A few ideas were suggested on intelligent transportation technologies. One suggested that changeable message signs be placed at Tremont or outside the Park to help visitors make decisions about their visit in light of traffic conditions.

Several people suggested restricting the total number of vehicles allowed on the Loop Road. At least one person noted that such a measure could be paired with mass transit service.

Three comments were made regarding bicycle/pedestrian facilities. These included a suggestion to separate bicyclists and pedestrians from motorized vehicle traffic and another to connect the gateway communities to Cades Cove via a trail.

One of the most frequently discussed issues during the meeting was mass transportation. Eight comments were made on this topic. Three were negative, as people indicated that mass transit should not be considered as an alternative because it would reduce the "personal experience" of visitors and that the parking facilities for transit would sit empty from December to March when the service is not needed. Positive comments on mass transit focused on the ability of transit service to reduce traffic congestion. Transit would also have the advantages of being easy to board and de-board, in addition to serving people with

disabilities and working in tandem with a reservation system to allow private vehicles to use on a less-congested Loop Road.

A project questionnaire entitled “Your Views—Cades Cove Opportunities Plan” also was developed. This included 13 questions related to issues, ideas, visitation activities and the management of Cades Cove. The questionnaires were first distributed at the May 2002 meeting and 38 of these were returned. A complete list of comments has been compiled and is available upon request. A summary is included below.

One question on the form asked: *“What do you see as a major issue/concern facing the National Park Service related to the management of Cades Cove?”*

The answers to this question fell into three areas: overcrowding/congestion, resources and education.

In terms of overcrowding and congestion, respondents indicated that some motorists lack consideration for others when they stop in the middle of the road to look at wildlife; others noted that they were inconvenienced because of Loop Road congestion (causing them not to be able to complete a tour in a reasonable amount of time). Still others voiced concern about the deteriorated condition of the roadway and how this related to traffic congestion. Many concerns were raised about the air pollution generated by the vehicles traveling the Loop Road.

Comments related to resources included a concern about litter and vandalism spoiling the cultural setting as well as the dangers to people and wildlife resulting from inappropriate visitor behavior (such as chasing bears). Another sentiment was voiced about the importance of maintaining open fields to promote views of wildlife.

Comments related to visitor education stated that information about the history, wildlife, and rules of Cades Cove should be conveyed to visitors through many means. Many comments noted that enforcement within Cades Cove should be improved.

Meeting Recap - After the May public scoping session, the project team evaluated this input as well as how participants reacted to the materials and meeting rooms. The team determined that the meeting room crowded too many people into a single space, making it difficult for individuals to hold meaningful discussions.

Phase II Goals and Objectives

During Phase II, the project team worked with the Core Team to develop draft project goals and objectives that were developed and presented at a second set of internal and public

scoping meetings. These goal statements covered cultural and natural resources, visitation, resource education, safety and facilities.

For this phase, the meeting format was changed to a facilitated breakout session to enable in-depth discussion of the issues. In planning for this type of meeting, it was determined that 10-12 staff would be required to serve as either a facilitator or recorder for the breakout groups. The consultant team developed a training program on how to facilitate a meeting and presented this program to Park employees who were interested in serving as facilitators. This training program was held at the Sugarlands training room on July 11, 2002.

The public scoping sessions were held in July 2002. These meetings generated public input on goals and objectives as well as preliminary ideas for elements of the sketch alternatives.

Two meetings were held, first at the Candy Factory in Knoxville (July 22) and then at the Townsend Elementary School (July 23). Approximately 75 people attended the Knoxville meeting, while approximately 110 attended the meeting in Townsend.

Both meetings included a presentation, breakout groups and "reporting out" by members or leaders of the groups. Facilitator and recorders were drawn from the planning team staff and NPS and TPO staff.

The key question addressed during the breakout sessions was "*How do we achieve the goals?*" For each small group, one staff person acted as facilitator and one served as recorder, using tablets so participants could view how their comments were being summarized. A court reporter was available to record individual comments, and questionnaires were distributed to allow for submission of written comments. No comments were taken by the court reporter at the Knoxville meeting, however, although eight participants at the Townsend meeting did use the service.

A number of participants in the second meeting complained about the breakout group format, indicating a desire to have questions answered in the full group setting. In response, the HNTB project manager facilitated a question-and-comment session following the established agenda. A number of participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the smaller groups, and reaction at the end of the evening generally seemed favorable.

The positive response to the meeting format prompted the team to use it again in the next round of meetings.

Comments Received - The facilitators reported that the comments received at the break-out sessions tended to focus on solving problems in the Cove rather than on the content of the goal statements.

The facilitators recorded comments on large tablets of paper. Meeting participants were provided with a project newsletter (Newsletter No. 2) and a comment form so they could submit written comments. The full listing of comments is provided in Attachment B.

The comments at the July 22 and 23 meetings generally focused on congestion, overcrowding, education and enforcement. Only a few related directly to project goals and objectives. The project team interpreted this to mean that the goals and objectives were on target.

Meeting Recap - The project team discussed the public scoping meetings and determined that the meetings were effective when participants were given a range of opportunities for making comments.

It was decided that the next series of meetings would begin with a brief introductory presentation followed by small group sessions and a full group question-and-comment period at the end. It also was decided that the Candy Factory space was adequate in size but unsuitable for future meetings because of a loud air conditioning system. The Townsend Elementary School meeting space was also determined to be too small, due to the large attendance and space requirements for breakout groups. New meeting locations would be identified for the next scoping session.

Phase III Alternatives Development

Original Public Involvement Approach - The public involvement approach for Phase III originally called for a survey of input on alternatives, an alternatives development charrette and two public meetings. The format of the public meetings was to present and update the public on the progress of alternatives development and obtain feedback on alternatives. These meetings typically included a formal presentation followed by a question and answer period.

Revisions to the Public Involvement Plan - A major change to the Phase III public involvement plan was to eliminate the charrette as a tool for alternatives development. The project team decided it was not possible to develop a workable process for fairly selecting a small group to participate. By agreement between the NPS/TPO and consultant team, the charrette meeting was replaced by the public scoping session on Problems, Options and Screening in September 2002. Another change discussed in the Phase I section of this document was the elimination of the survey in favor of the "Your Views" comment form. The meeting format also was changed to incorporate the breakout sessions rather than formal presentations for two of the three Phase III meetings.

Alternatives Development Scoping - Preparation for this meeting began in early August with the project team's development of presentation boards listing all the problems (issues) and options (solutions) as documented through both internal and public scoping activities. These boards were organized around the four topic areas. The objective was to ensure that all of the problems and options were identified before developing the alternatives. The option/alternative screening criteria also were presented and public comments were sought on the criteria.

Meetings were held at the Heritage Middle School in Maryville (September 18, 2002), and at Cokesbury Center in Knoxville (September 19, 2002). Both sessions included a brief presentation, breakout discussion sessions, a question and answer session and a wrap-up.

Attendance in Knoxville was approximately 50 people; and attendance in Maryville reached about 80. The key question addressed during the breakout sessions was: *"Did we get all the necessary information?"* Each breakout group included two staff members. One was assigned as the group facilitator and the other served as the recorder. In addition, each session had a court reporter available to record individual comments. Less than four people decided to use the court reporter at each meeting.

The small group sessions featured lively discussion and wide participation. Participants were told that the meeting materials and comment forms would be posted on the project website to encourage the participation of people from as wide a geographic area as possible. The NPS also set up a "Listening Session" in Asheville, North Carolina. This meeting was held in October 2002 and included a presentation to participants as well as a question and answer session.

Comments Received - Comments received during the breakout sessions were recorded on large tablets. Comments also were obtained through the distribution of a newsletter and a comment form (Project News Issue No. 3) given to participants as they came into the meeting. A summary of comments recorded on the tablets is provided below:

Many people agreed that congestion in Cades Cove is a problem, though the tolerance of traffic by visitors appeared to vary. Several suggestions were made to manage congestion, including providing advanced information about traffic conditions, providing short routes/short cuts to allow people to get out of traffic and utilizing alternative vehicles such as emergency vehicles and transit shuttles in the Cove. Some people voiced the opinion that motorists should be allowed to drive private vehicles on the Loop Road at designated times, while, at others, a transit shuttle would operate on the road. A number of people expressed concern that alternative transportation options would destroy a key facet of the visitor experience in the Cove.

There was general agreement that the deterioration of natural and cultural resources was a problem in Cades Cove. At least one comment suggested that the NPS increase maintenance of historic structures.

One person suggested that the community establish a fund to repair historic structures. Another said the Cove could be left as it is if the Park would identify and promote alternate viewing areas.

The fact that the Loop Road is narrow and winding creates conflicts between motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists, several comments noted. Resolving this issue could involve opening closed roads and farm traces to bicycles and pedestrians and/or making the road wider to accommodate them. Others suggested that the road be closed to vehicles and that no new trails should be developed.

From the comments, it was clear that having the primary visitor center at Cable Mill did not result in effective visitor orientation. Many people suggested that a visitor facility with restrooms be developed at the beginning of the Loop Road. There also was a sense that many visitors are misinformed about Cades Cove. A visitor center at the beginning of the Loop Road could provide important and useful information and help to inform visitors about Park rules. Some people suggested that it be mandatory to stop at the visitor center before entering the Loop Road.

Parking and pull-off areas were identified as another problem, although people were divided about how to solve these problems. Many people indicated that parking lots should not be developed in the Cove because they would detract from the historic and natural setting. Others suggested restricting access based on parking availability. Still others suggested moving the maintenance facility to a location outside the park and using the facility grounds for parking would be helpful.

Inadequate utilities and infrastructure prompted many comments. Many people stated that the primitive nature of Cades Cove is one of its key features, one that should be maintained. Others felt that better communications were needed to respond to emergencies on the Loop Road. Others were concerned that the restrooms were inadequate.

The general tenor of the comments indicated that, if improvements were to be made, they should be done in a manner that does not result in over-commercialization and maintains the historic character of the Cove.

Meeting Recap - Generally, the feedback from these meetings was positive. Participants said the material presented at the sessions had incorporated the comments received at previous sessions. Some people noted that, although there was not a consensus about how

to solve the Cove's problems, the issues, facts and options/ideas for solving them had been fully developed.

After the September scoping session, project activities consisted of a series of internal sessions involving the project team and the NPS core team. These activities included the development of an options/alternatives matrix, screening options and combining options into a draft set of alternatives.

Draft Alternatives Scoping

A key aim of the public participation plan is to make sure that the public understands the planning process. As one senior planner, academician and former public official recently observed, this kind of planning calls for more public trust than almost any other public process. One cannot assume that the public will be able to follow the details of the process. As alternatives begin to describe a future reality, they take on a wider definition. In this way, draft alternatives resemble scenarios.

Even when alternatives remain conceptual, however, they are still more complex than what the public usually has been exposed to. Therefore, in this process, the material presented at the first public scoping session of Phase III needed to be connected in the public's mind with the work done in Phases I and II.

It was critical that careful attention be given to presenting the alternatives/scenarios in a manner that showed the public a clear connection between the input received and the alternative being proposed. Without this "thread," the fears expressed during the early part of the process "that there is a preconceived decision that will be revealed in a later part of the process" can resurface.

There were two rounds of public scoping meetings in Phase III. The first round was held to present the draft alternatives. The objective of these meetings was to provide a holistic presentation of the elements that made up the alternatives. Participants were expected to provide input on the draft alternatives, input that would inform the final alternatives.

The final round of public input sessions in Phase III presented the final alternatives in a series of open house meetings with the NPS, TPO, consultant team members and the court reporter available to take comments. These meetings were "drop-in" style forums that provided interested citizens an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments.

Draft Alternative Scoping Meetings (First Round)

Four meetings were held in late March/early April 2003. The first was at the University of Tennessee Conference Center in Knoxville (March 31, 2003). The second was held at

Heritage High School in Maryville (April 2, 2003). The third was held at the Pigeon Forge High School, Pigeon Forge (April 3, 2003). The fourth and final meeting was held on April 4, 2003 in Cherokee, NC at the Holiday Inn.

The meeting dates were selected to accommodate the greater time required by both the NPS/TPO and the HNTB planning team to create, review and refine draft alternatives. The decision to shift more time to this part of the schedule was made in September, in response to the long and complex set of problem statements, issues, and options compiled during the early months of the project.

Comments Received - Comments received at these sessions were recorded on large tablets. Participants were given copies of the Project News Issue No. 4 newsletter that included detailed information about the alternatives as well as a comment form. A summary of comments recorded on the tablets is provided below:

Alternative 1, the “no-action” alternative, brought forth several concerns and dislikes from meeting participants. Concerns about this alternative centered on the assertion that “doing nothing is a liability.” Some people were concerned that doing nothing would cause long traffic lines and delays to continue.

Participants liked some elements of Alternative 1. A number of people liked the fact that the Cove would remain unchanged. Some people believed that congestion on the Loop Road is in fact self-limiting in terms of the number of motorists who decide to tour the road.

Alternative 2, which includes roadway and pull-off improvements along with a visitor communications program, was viewed as having merit. A number of people noted that having more pull-offs would provide more opportunities to view wildlife. Moreover, a communications program that would provide visitors with traffic and travel time information also was viewed as beneficial. Participants noted that the combination of these elements would improve traffic flow.

Positive statements were made about the proposed visitor center at the beginning of the Loop Road. A number of people favored a simple design that would blend into the Park and not be overly commercial. Similar comments were made about the addition of signs to the Park.

Concerns related to Alternative 2 centered on the observation that it would not be much better than Alternative 1 in terms of managing traffic. Others were concerned about how the pull-offs would be designed and about the alternative’s lack of a separate bike path. At least one person noted that traffic is often congested because of wildlife, not because too many cars fill the road.

Alternative 3 would include many of the elements of Alternative 2, as well as a reservation system for peak visitation periods. Participants liked the fact that this alternative would reduce the volume of vehicles on the Loop Road during peak periods but allow for unrestricted access during the rest of the year. A moderately-sized visitor center also was viewed positively, with the caveat that it not be too big or affect the Cove's visual appearance.

Local residents did not like the possibility that Alternative 3 would limit their access to the Cove, however. Moreover, the reservation system would require ample parking areas and a large visitor center could detract from the visitor experience, according to some comments.

Alternative 4 would build on Alternative 3 by establishing a voluntary transit shuttle system linking the gateway communities to the Cades Cove visitor center as well as adding shuttle service along the Loop Road. Participants liked the fact that some people would be able to access the Loop in their own vehicles, while visitors who could not obtain reservations would be able to use the shuttle service.

Participants noted that the transit vehicles should be comfortable, convenient (providing easy on/off access), have education/interpretation opportunities, and utilize clean fuels. The visitor center at the beginning of the Loop Road would provide restrooms as well as space for displaying Cove artifacts. Other restrooms (primitive type) distributed around the Loop Road were also considered as positive aspects of this alternative.

Meeting participants generally did not like the costs associated with developing and operating the transit system. Negative comments also were recorded in respect to the parking lots proposed in the gateway communities and in the Cove, as well as the impacts that a large visitor center would have on the Cove. Some feared that a voluntary shuttle would be the first step toward eliminating private vehicles from the Cove. Other concerns related to how the transit shuttles would operate with private vehicles on the Loop Road. If a wildlife jam occurred, would the shuttle be stuck in traffic?

The comments related to Alternative 5 were similar to those of Alternative 4. Many people said that, if the shuttle service is the preferred alternative, it should be operated in a manner that reduces its impacts on the Cove and does not change the rural character of the road. Others were concerned that mandatory shuttle service would commercialize the Cove and add to the cost of a visit.

Meeting Recap - After this meeting, the project team reviewed the results and created strategies for the final public input session. Because the next step in the process was to incorporate internal and public scoping comments and develop final alternatives, it was decided that the final meeting would be an open house format.

Final Alternatives Scoping (Second Round)

A final round of public scoping meetings was held to gain input and build public consensus around the refined alternatives that would be examined further during the EIS phase of the project (Phase IV).

Four open house sessions were held. The first two were held at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Knoxville and at Heritage High School in Maryville on June 3. A third was held at the Civic Center in Sevierville (June 4), while the fourth was held at the Holiday Inn in Cherokee, NC (June 5).

The sessions included a welcome station for participants to sign in and pick up a newsletter and comment sheet. A second station included a PowerPoint presentation that provided an overview of the project from the beginning to current efforts. Two to four identical stations were set up with the detailed alternatives. Each of these stations had members of the consultant team, NPS and TPO staff available to answer questions.

Comments were received from the meeting comment forms, from e-mail and from the website. The comments continued to relate to congestion issues, resource concerns, and a small number who indicated that they would prefer to see no changes in Cades Cove.

The project team spent time with individuals at the meeting explaining how the alternatives would operate. Some people were concerned that they would not be able to drive into the Cove. Often, after explaining the peak season and the fact that they could drive in early in the morning or late in the afternoon help the public understand that the impact of the management change was not as severe as they thought. In addition ideas were brought up regarding the development of shelters at the shuttle stops in order to protect visitors from the weather while waiting for the next shuttle. Concerns related to descendant access were voiced along with concerns that the costs associated with transit would be excessive. At the end of the series of open house meeting the general sense was that the project team had captured a viable range of alternatives that would move forward into the EIS phase of the project.

Public Scoping Meeting Summary

The following provides a summary of the date, location, approximate attendance and comments received during the course of the public scoping process for the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan:

Table 3: Public Scoping Meeting Synopsis

Meeting	Meeting Locations	Number of Attendees	²Comments Received
May 2002	Townsend	300 +	221 (May-June 2002)
July 2002	Townsend	110	527 (July-August 2002)
	Knoxville	75	
September-October 2002	Maryville	50	259 (September-October 2002)
	Knoxville	80	
	Asheville	25	
Winter 2002-2003	No meetings		245 (November 2002-March 2003)
March-April 2003	Knoxville	55	145 (April-May 2003)
	Maryville	65	
	Pigeon Forge	45	
	Cherokee	8	
June 2003	Knoxville	30	432 (June-August 2003)
	Maryville	50	
	Sevierville	35	
	Cherokee	5	
Total	14 meetings	763 attendees	1829 comments received

Project Website

A website was launched on June 5, 2002 to reach out to the public on a national scale. The website provided a forum for public involvement, allowing individuals access to project information as well as the opportunity to add their comments to the process through a “free-form” email page or by completing the “Your Views” questionnaire and submitting it electronically to the project team. The website included information about the Opportunities Plan process, meeting dates and times, as well as the natural and cultural resources. Other information included on the website included:

² Comments include the material turned in during public scoping meetings as well as comments received from the website.

1. Meeting material was saved in a "PDF" format and posted to the website within three days of the last public input session. This provides time for minor adjustments in formatting and file size. The material posted included:
 - a. Comment forms
 - b. Newsletters
 - c. Presentation material
 - d. Meeting notes
2. The website was used to mass email meeting notices to citizens.
 The website included a link to the "Your Views" questionnaire form to be filled out and submitted online. These questionnaire forms (returned through the website, at public meetings and from visitors to the Cove) were compiled into a database, covering the responses received between May 2002 and January 2003. About 40 comment forms were received per month, with a peak of 97 in June 2002 and a low of seven in December 2002.

The following table is a synopsis of the comments received through the website:

Table 4: Synopsis of "Your Views" Questionnaire Responses
(from May 2002 through the end of January 2003, 371 questionnaires were returned during this period)

Major Issues and Concerns	
39%	Traffic congestion
17%	Overcrowding would damage resources
10%	Pollution/air quality
8%	Park management/money/enforcement
7%	Do not change the Cove
5%	Lack of parking or pull-outs
2%	Condition of the pavement
1%	Inadequate education (for visitors)
5%	Did not respond
Suggestions or ideas to improve their visit:	
44%	How to manage traffic
13%	Do not change the Cove
10%	Add parking pull outs or bike lanes
8%	Park management and enforcement
6%	Resource management
6%	Unclassified suggestions
5%	Improve education/interpretation
3%	Field maintenance
2%	Improve traffic flow (non specific)
2%	Add additional lanes
1%	Mix private vehicles and transit
1%	Infrastructure or facilities
20%	Did not respond

How often do you visit?	
75%	Visit 2 to 4 time per year
22%	Visit once a year
3%	Visit monthly
13%	Did not respond
What do you do when you visit the Cove?	
77%	View Wildlife
75%	Drive the Loop Road
72%	Visit Cabins & Churches
65%	Visit Cable Mill
64%	Hike
53%	Picnic
34%	Bike
16%	Walk the Loop Road
12%	Horseback
How long is the ideal drive time?	
40%	2 Hours
31%	3 Hours
12%	4 Hours
9%	1 Hour
5%	5 or more hours
27%	Did not respond
	Of those that did not answer in number of hours the following comments were noted:
21%	Indicated that there should be restrictions on private vehicle access -
33%	Indicated that the time varies and did not give a specific time
Restore the Cove as it looked in the 1850-1920 period (small field sizes, wood lots, etc.)?	
22%	Rated this as a "5" or a high priority.
16%	Rated this as a "4".
22%	Rated this as a "3" or a medium priority.
14%	Rated this as a "2".
23%	Rated this as a "1" or low priority.
61%	Did not respond
Manage the Cove as open fields (leave it as it is)?	
46%	Rated this as a "5" or a high priority.
8%	Rated this as a "4".
17%	Rated this as a "3" or a medium priority.
19%	Rated this as a "2".
8%	Rated this as a "1" or a low priority.
46%	Did not respond

Enjoy Most

The 371 responses varied greatly in terms of what people enjoy most about the Cove. However, two patterns could be identified: for one, many people visit the cove for its scenic beauty, peace and quiet and idyllic setting. About 140 respondents included these types of

words to describe what they enjoyed most. Also, 72 respondents indicated that viewing wildlife was what they enjoyed most.

Enjoy Least

Overwhelmingly, traffic and traffic congestion were what respondents enjoyed about the Cove (147 respondents cited traffic issues in their comments).

Demographics of Respondents

As Table 8-2 shows, there were slightly more male respondents than female and the majority of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 64. A third of the respondents lived in rural areas, while only 7 percent lived in a major city. The website received comments from residents of 26 states, including Alabama, Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

Table 5: Demographics of Respondents

Gender	144 Female (39%), 180 male (49%), 47 no response (12%)
Age	10%: No Response Of those respondents answering the question: 1% Less than 17 years 4% 18 to 24 years 15% 25 to 34 years 27% 35 to 44 years 48% 45 to 64 years 5% Greater than 65 years
Place of Residence	10%: No Response Of those respondents answering the question: 12% Live in a rural area on a farm 21% Live in a rural area but not on a farm 23% Live in a small community 18% Live in a large community 17% Live in a suburb 7% Live in a major city

In addition to providing a form for comments the website provides background information on Cades Cove as well as updated information on the planning process, including meeting dates, times and locations, meeting newsletters, meeting notes, and an open-ended e-mail comment link (comments@cadescoveopp.com).

Most of the 381 comments that were received in the free form comment box on the website addressed the need for traffic control in the Cove or the addition of a transit or trolley system to manage traffic. Nearly a third of the comments included a statement about the need to

manage traffic. A small number of comments suggested that the Loop Road be changed to allow two-way traffic or converted to bicycle and pedestrian use only. Others indicated that the fields needed to be mowed so that wildlife viewing was maintained.

Phase IV Development Concept Plan

Phase IV has not yet been scoped. The following information relates to a draft development of future public scoping activities that would relate to the EIS, the selection of a preferred alternative, and a Development Concept Plan.

Based on experience gained in the preceding phases and public involvement events, it is recommended that the project team carefully construct a "rollout" plan for execution in the weeks leading to the public meetings. This plan would consist of media outreach, final agency consultation, focus groups, letters or postcards of invitation to public officials, previous meeting participants and other stakeholders, and a website announcement (perhaps tied to e-mail announcements if capability is developed). Media outreach should include, at a minimum, a press release in advance of the event and a media kit that includes reproductions of key graphics made available to media during and after the meetings.

It may also be desirable for NPS/TPO officials to conduct a round of editorial meetings with local publishers, editors, and TV and radio station managers, which could generate a full exchange of information and ideas on a more informal basis with a wider number of those responsible for reporting. More media outreach may be needed to assure that the media, and, through them, the public understands that the Cades Cove Opportunities Plan will be the basis for further planning, not an end in itself.

Attachments

Attachment A: Common Elements to All Public Scoping Meetings

Meeting Materials - Included directional signs, sign-in sheets, participant name tags, newsletter, and comment sheets. Other meeting materials include large tablets, markers, tape, pencils/pens, projector, screen, laptop computer. A series of presentation boards was developed for each meeting. These boards are on file at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Court Reporter - A court reporter was available during each of the public scoping meetings. Notes taken by the court reporter are available through Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Facilitated Breakout Sessions - Meeting facilities for facilitated breakout sessions included a large gathering room (auditorium or cafeteria) and four to six small rooms that could be set-

up for break out sessions.

Comment Forms - Comment forms were available at all meetings and comments will be accepted throughout the duration of the project with each public scoping session having a 30-day comment period. The June 2003 meeting maintained a 14-day comment period consistent with the Elkmont project. In actual practice, comments were received and accepted throughout the Opportunities Plan process. The comment periods following each public scoping meeting were set to encourage comments related to the specific topic covered during that meeting. The public comment record for the project has been compiled through September 2003.

Presentation Display outside the Meetings - Presentation material on the alternatives was displayed at the Townsend Visitor Center and at the City-County Building in Knoxville in June 2003.

Meeting time - Meetings were generally two and a half hours in length. Meetings were scheduled early enough in the evening that a longer meeting would not cause people to return home late—start times were generally between 5 and 6 p.m. Some meetings were held earlier in the afternoon (2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.) in order to accommodate conflicting schedules and meeting locations.

Attachment B

Note: The following attachment is retained as a part of the project record. Ultimately, for reasons discussed in this draft of the public involvement plan, the charrette was not undertaken.

Draft Agenda – Charrette

Key point: It should be impressed on all participants, volunteers and others, that all are expected to participate for the entire day. The time required here (nine hours) is somewhat adjustable, but the nature of a charrette is to provide a burst of energy and excitement to generate ideas quickly but more in-depth than a shorter time would allow.

- 8:30 a.m. Coffee and doughnuts
- 8:55 Welcome by Superintendent
- 9:00 Facilitator instructions
- 9:05 Introductions (all/round-robin)
- 9:45 Two speakers/experts – brief background, Q&A on resources
- 10:15 Two speakers/experts – brief background, Q&A on visitor experience

10:45	Break
11:00	Two speakers/experts – other brief background, Q&A
11:30	Organize three groups, materials, space, and agenda for each group
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30	Resume small groups
3:00	Break (w/ juice and cookies)
3:30	Presentations by each group (20 minutes each)
4:30	General discussion
5:15	Closing remarks
5:30	End charrette

Steps in the Recruitment Process for the September Charrette

1. Advertisement

- Remarks at the two July public meetings urging participation in this opportunity
- Web site information
- Press releases (two, timed for early and mid-August)
- (Only the date and times will be announced; not the location.)

2. Nomination

Volunteers will be asked to send in a brief letter or e-mail stating why they are interested in participating in the charrette. We are deliberately not making it easy for volunteers to submit their names—the web site, for example, will not have a form to fill out and e-mail or a “click here” e-mail connection, nor will we distribute forms or information at the public meeting. While we will endeavor to make this opportunity widely known, those who put some thought and effort into finding out more are the kind of participants we will need for this event.

3. Response

We will send out a packet of information about the charrette to each nominee. The packet will include a brief form for the nominee to fill out and return, confirming his or her interest, and describe the event and expected commitment (attending all day, reading background information, committing to tell at least one group of people about the experience). Once again, this step is to provide a minor hurdle that will require following instructions, troubling to fill out a form, and addressing and mailing an envelope. Respondents will be provided with a phone number for questions.

4. Selection

The form will ask a few questions about the respondent's interest in Cades Cove and community activities. If it becomes necessary to make a selection among a large number of respondents, the Core Team will choose a group representing a wide number of interests and community relationships and will work to assure geographic diversity. Gender balance is to be encouraged but the proportion may reflect the balance within the pool of respondents. The Core Team is cautioned not to make judgments based on literacy or handwriting. To be doubly sure the selection process is open, the Core Team may want to split into two groups, each assembling the "ideal" group. Overlapping selections should be chosen for the final group, with discussion and consensus choice for those not chosen by both groups in the initial round.

5. Selected participants

Those chosen to participate will be sent a final packet of with agenda and background information, together with a postcard and phone number to use in accepting final selection. Upon receipt of this confirmation, the Core Team will send a letter informing the participant of the location of the event and any other last-minute details.