



Newfound Gap Road Environmental Assessment

January 2004, Volume #1

Announcing Public Meetings

The first set of public meetings for the Newfound Gap Road Environmental Assessment will provide an opportunity for the public to learn about the project and to discuss their comments and concerns with the study team. The meeting will be an informal, open-house arrangement that will provide opportunities for the public to collect project handouts, review study area maps, talk individually with study team personnel, and offer input. In an effort to gain input from those interested in the Newfound Gap Road Environmental Assessment, the workshops will be held at two different locations. Each meeting will follow the same agenda and will present the same information.

The first meeting will be held on Monday, January 26, 2004, 6 pm to 8 pm at the Holiday Inn, 37 Tsali Rd. (Highway 19S), Cherokee, NC; the second meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 27, 2004, 6 pm to 8 pm at the Glenstone Lodge, 504 Historic Nature Trail, Gatlinburg, TN. In the event of inclement weather, make-up days are scheduled for Monday, February 2, 2004 in Cherokee and Tuesday, February 3, 2004 in Gatlinburg. If weather conditions are poor, please call Bob Miller, Great Smoky Mountains Public Affairs Officer at (865) 436-1207 the day of the workshop to verify meeting status.

Background and Purpose

The National Park Service, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, is in the process of preparing an Environmental Assessment for the Phase II portion of the Rehabilitation of Newfound Gap Road project. Phase I of the project, rehabilitation of the 10½-mile section of Newfound Gap Road from the Newfound Gap Parking Area south to

just north of the Collins Creek Picnic Area, is more routine in nature and is expected to be Categorically Excluded from the NEPA Process. The work of this project, Phase II, will include resurfacing the 6½ miles of badly deteriorated roadway and proposed intersection improvements along Newfound Gap Road in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The project study area is located in Swain County, North Carolina, and extends from approximately 500 feet north of the Collins Creek Picnic Area to the southern Park boundary with the Cherokee Indian Reservation (see map on back). The intersections scheduled for study include the intersections of Newfound Gap Road with:

- Collins Creek Picnic Area
- Smokemont
- Tow String Road
- Park Circle Drive
- Oconaluftee Visitor Center and Mountain Farm Museum
- Blue Ridge Parkway

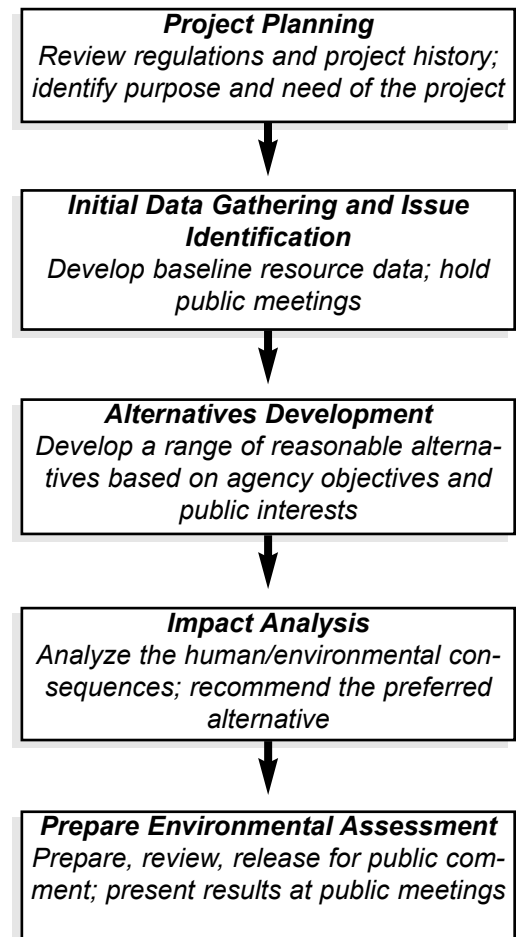
Phase I of the Rehabilitation of Newfound Gap Road project is currently in the design development phase and it is anticipated that it will be advertised for contract award in September 2004 with construction beginning after the fall color season. Phase II of the project, currently in the planning phase, is programmed to be advertised for contract award in Fiscal Year 2006.

Based on existing accident data, roadway conditions, traffic volumes, and cultural and natural resources, alternatives will be developed and analyzed for each of the six intersections. Options to be evaluated may include adding turn lanes, realigning the intersections, or leaving the intersections as is. The end product will be an environmental document that describes the decision-making process and conforms with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Planning Process

NEPA is a procedural law that provides a process for agencies to make an analytical study of the impacts of alternatives and requires agencies to involve interested and affected members of the public. The planning process provides a framework for striking a balance between the use and preservation of natural and cultural resources.

The NEPA process follows these steps:



The NEPA process allows interested members of the public to participate in the decision-making process.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

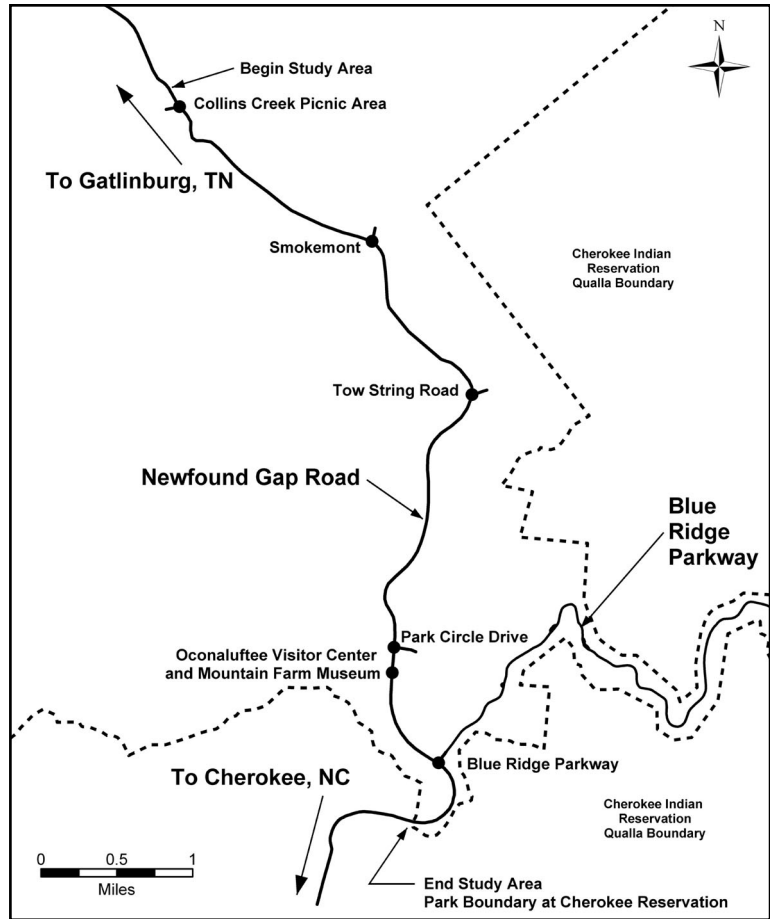
**Comments about the study can
 be directed to:**

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 for the special places saved by
 the American people so that all
 may experience our heritage.



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