



Foothills Parkway Open House – October 18-19, 2008

The staff at Great Smoky Mountains National Park and volunteers from Experience Your Smokies – Blount County are pleased to offer you the opportunity to travel this scenic roadway in the autumn when fall leaf color is at its best. This 9.5-mile partially-completed section is part of a 72-mile Foothills Parkway right-of-way which parallels the northern boundary of the national park. This route has spectacular views along the way that can be seen from several vantage points. We ask that if you stop, you do so only at the well defined pullouts. Near the road's end, you will be turned around to continue the drive back. At this point you will not be allowed to stop or park in order to keep traffic moving. We offered this drive last spring for the first time in 10 years and it was so popular that over 8,000 people came over a two-day period. We expect even more people this fall so we are not allowing visitors to get out of their cars at the route's end because parking is so limited that gridlock would be unavoidable.

Completion Plans for the “Missing Link”

Through the support of Senator Lamar Alexander and Representative John Duncan, \$17.7 million was appropriated under the SAFETEA –LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy of Users) for the “Missing Link”, a 1.5-mile long uncompleted section of the Parkway right of way. After Congressional reductions, a total of \$15.2 million was left available. With this funding, the National Park Service and Federal Highway Administration awarded a contract in September 2008 to a Kentucky contractor to construct 1,200 feet of new roadway extending westward from the end of the partly-finished Parkway at U.S. 321 in Wears Valley. This work is scheduled to take 8 months. The Park plans to utilize another portion of the \$15.2 million to award a contract in the fall of 2009 to build another 1,800 feet of Parkway extending east from this Walland segment. Full completion of the “Missing Link” is expected to cost an estimated \$138 million (including the funding now available) and Park officials are hopeful that the “Missing Link” will be completed by the National Park Service's Centennial in 2016.

Completing the Remainder of the Foothills Parkway

A map on the reverse shows the entire 72-miles of the Parkway from I-40 in Cocke County to Chilhowee Lake in Blount County. Of that 72-mile distance, two segments at the ends, totaling 22.5 miles, are completed and open to traffic. The top priority of the NPS is finishing the “Missing Link” so that another 16.1 miles can be opened from Walland to Wear Valley. Once that is complete, 33 miles will remain to be constructed. Environmental planning has been partially completed on portions of that route, but no construction has taken place.