

**A TENNESSEE ORIGINAL**



# **THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS BYWAY**

**CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**APRIL 2012**



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# Introduction

This corridor management plan is a guiding planning document for Highway 321, or the Great Smoky Mountains Byway, a seven county, 200 mile long route that runs in Tennessee along the Tennessee-North Carolina border. The byway begins in Loudon County, along Interstate 75, southwest of Knoxville, TN. It then proceeds eastward along Highway 321 through Blount, Sevier and Cocke Counties, at the edge of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It then continues eastward through Greene, Washington and Carter counties to its endpoint, near the North Carolina border, at Wautauga Lake.

The core experience offered by this byway is an exploration of the culture and landscape of the Great Smoky Mountains. The exploration will encompass scenic drives, outdoor recreation, heritage sites and experiences, and cultural destinations and activities.

The overall Corridor Management Plan is comprised of two documents. This document is a plan that addresses each of the 14 components of the National Scenic Byway Program's planning requirements. The second document is a **Road Management Guide** for the byway corridor's landscape and transportation challenges.

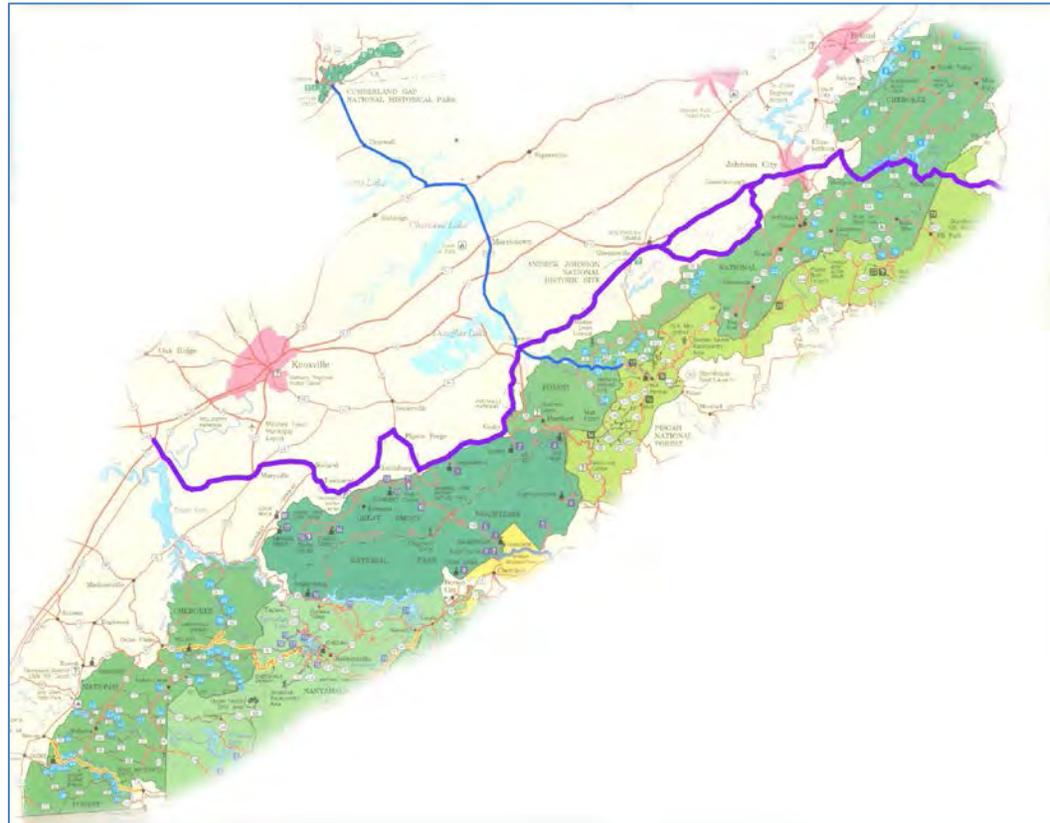


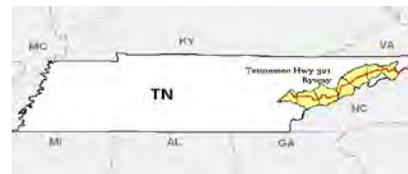
Figure 1-Byway Route

## Section II: Status of the Corridor Today

Today, the Highway 321 Corridor is a state highway and state scenic parkway that offers access to a variety of well-established and up and coming destinations and experiences. Some of the destinations along the route are among the most visited sites and communities in the nation. These include Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Pigeon Forge, and Gatlinburg. However, while the road is marketed as a scenic drive, it is not seen by the traveling public as a well-defined travel experience. The route consists of a collection of counties that work together on various projects and a collection of destinations that have little overlap or cooperation occurring. While the road offers access to one of the largest public land recreation resources in the nation, there are limited efforts made to promote access to those resources for the full length of the byway.

### Location

The Great Smoky Mountains Byway is located in eastern Tennessee. It runs southwest to northeast along the southern border of the state – directly along the edges of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and next to over 1,000,000 acres of national forest lands: the Cherokee, Nantahala and Pisgah.



## Corridor Overview

This section provides a broad review of the nature of this corridor and its challenges. For a more detailed look at the corridor, please refer to the Road Management Guide. This material is presented on a county by county basis. The seven counties, as they lay along the corridor, are shown below.

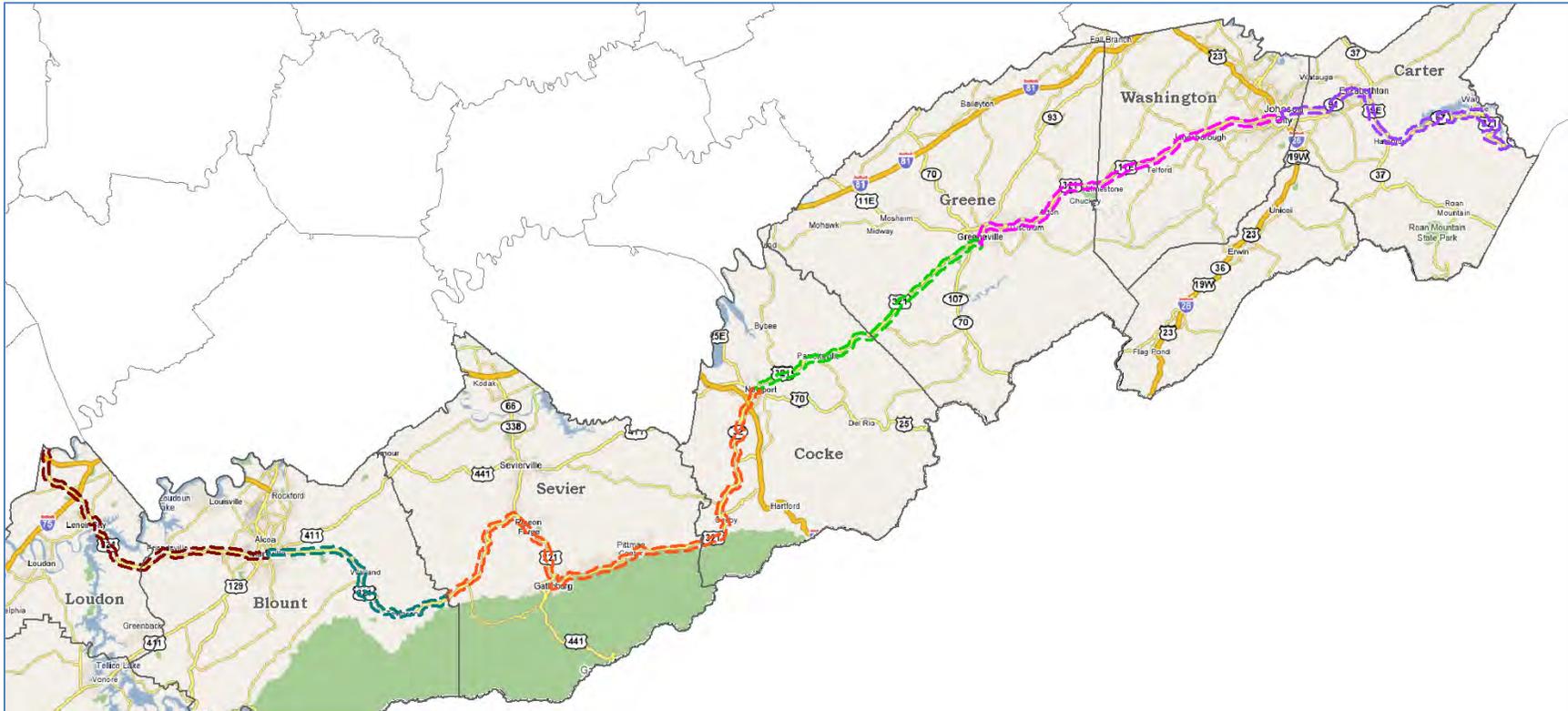


Figure 2- Great Smoky Mountains Byway as the Seven Partnering Counties

## Loudon County

From the west, the byway begins in Loudon County, at the junction with Interstate 75. Though designated as a state scenic parkway, the first 1.5 miles of the road are not suitable for national byway designation due to the intensely commercial land use patterns. The byway's character is first exhibited at the intersection with Highway 11 in Lenoir City as the byway moves into public lands surrounding Tellico Lake, a man-made lake comprised of the Tennessee River. Moving eastward, the byway travels through gently rolling farmlands and light residential areas through the remainder of Loudon County. The Great Smoky Mountains are visible in the distance at high points along the road.



Figure 5 - National Campgrounds, Loudon County

The corridor through Loudon County is very rural, but it is a gradually developing rural landscape. Second home development, scattered small businesses and farms in various states of health, comprise the major components of this

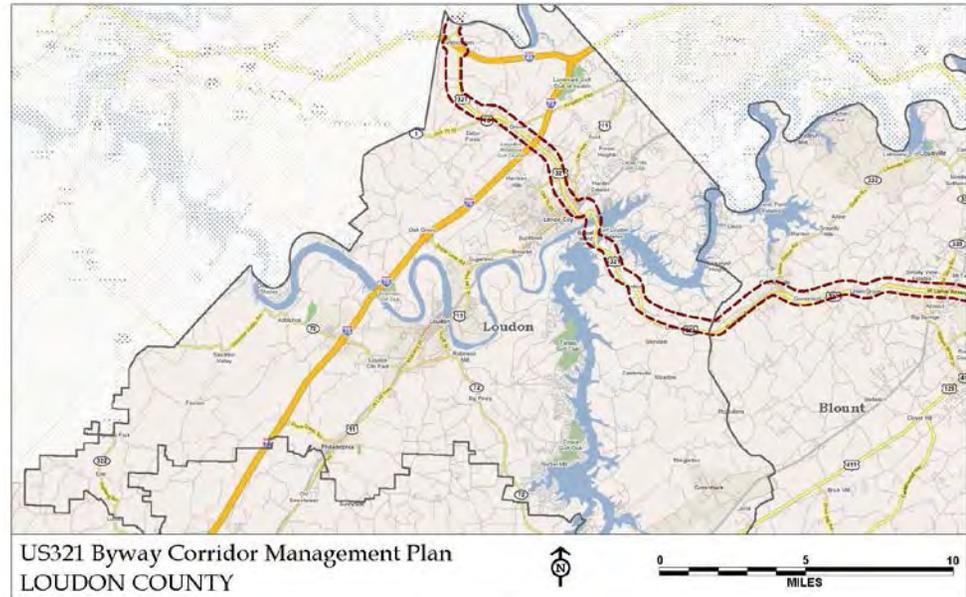


Figure 3-Loudon County map

portion of the route. The challenges to roadside landscape character will come from haphazard development not guided by some general principles concerning setbacks and landscaping. There is sufficient right-of-way to maintain a safe and orderly road edge.

The primary destinations and activities in Loudon County, for the byway traveler, will be the following:

- Tellico Lake— there is public access for boating
- Lenoir City and the village of Loudon – shopping, browsing, historic sites, riverboat rides and dining and lodging. The village of Loudon lies 5 miles south of the byway and Lenoir City. Therefore, it will be a modest challenge to ensure that travelers are aware of this historic community and take the time to visit the village before returning to their byway journey.

- The National Campground – this is one of the few remaining reconciliation campgrounds from the post Civil War Period. This site is well-maintained, but offers limited access and will need substantial interpretive investments to make it more visitor ready.

Highway 321, through the entire length of Loudon County, is a 4-lane road layout with 4-8 foot breakdown lanes. Speed limits range from 35 mph in settled areas to 65 mph in open, rural segments.

Road condition of the byway is excellent throughout Loudon County.



Figure 4-Lenoir City Museum

## Blount County

Blount County begins approximately 10 miles west of Maryville, county seat of Blount County. The corridor from the Loudon County line to Maryville is largely rural, with a growing light residential and commercial residential development pattern as one approaches Maryville. The gateway into Maryville is well planned and tended and presents a good image of the community. Highway 321 in this segment is a four-lane layout with a grass median for most of the distance.

Maryville is a growing, healthy college town with a strong base of manufacturing and service businesses. It lies close to the Knoxville Regional Airport and offers a range of services for travelers. The primary attractions in Maryville are Maryville College, downtown heritage sites, some downtown shopping and the Heritage Planetarium.

From Maryville to the east, the landscape is very rural and highly scenic. The Great Smoky Mountains become a prominent part of the eastern landscape as one drives through the county. Views both eastbound and westbound are very scenic. The highway is a four-lane layout with excellent pavement condition. Breakdown lanes and shoulders range from 4 to 8 feet in width. Land uses consist of farms, low



Figure 5-Byway Corridor through Blount County

density rural residential area and small businesses catering to the national park-bound traveler.

Prior to entering the community of Townsend, the road narrows to two lanes from four lanes and offers the first intimate driving experience through the folded, hilly landscape of the Great Smoky Mountains region. Valleys narrow; little dirt roads extend into hollows to each side of the road. Pavement conditions continue to be excellent. Shoulders vary from 2 feet to 3 feet along this portion of the byway.

Townsend is a well established travelers destination, marketed as the ‘Quiet Side of the Smokies’. Indeed, the community fully lacks the corporate entertainment and franchised business development of the Pigeon Forge side of the Smokies. As such, Townsend caters to those wishing to stay in a cabin or to camp outside the park. Lodging is abundant, but low key. Dining is available, but small scale and personal.

Townsend is a well-ordered, neatly kept national park gateway community. Its layout is highly linear and as such, it lacks a clear ‘downtown’ or town center. Residents of Townsend would like a stronger sense of a town center.

The major Blount County destinations outside of Maryville are the national park, numerous cabins for rent, the village of Townsend and the Great Smoky Mountain Heritage Center. This facility is locally managed and offers very high quality interpretive displays and presentations on the Smokies and the national park. It also contains the best Native American heritage interpretive presentation along the entire byway.



Figure 6-Smoky Mountain Heritage Center, Townsend, Blount County

## Sevier County

Sevier County is home to Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg, two of the most highly visited, non-urban tourism destinations in the country. But, Sevier County along the byway begins with a dramatic, beautiful two-lane drive up Highway 321 towards Wears Valley. The byway moves out of Townsend in a two-lane layout and climbs up the shoulders of High Top and Little Roundtop Mountains. This portion of the byway offers the most mountainous driving of the entire corridor and this variety adds to the byway's appeal. In other words, this highway is unusual in that it offers a broad range of driving experiences: 4-lane, 2-lane, flat, hilly, mountainous, tree-lined, open vistas, intimate valleys and dramatic mountain tops. Speeds into Wears Valley average 35 to 40 mph.

Wears Valley is a growing rural community with a small commercial center, small housing developments, farms, historic buildings and churches and various tourist-oriented businesses.

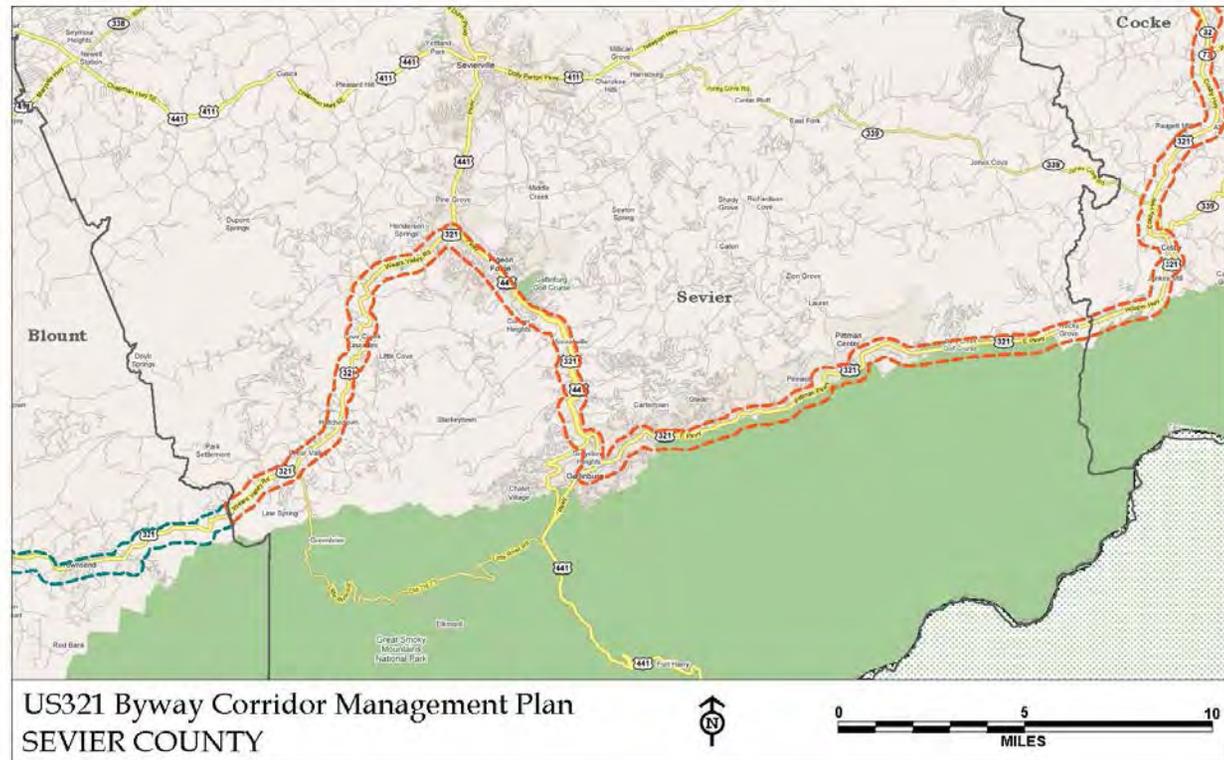


Figure 7-Sevier County and its byway corridor

Wears Valley is a mountain top valley surrounded by peaks. The valley is approximately 3 miles in length. Leaving the valley, the byway then descends into Pigeon Forge for a distance of approximately 4 miles.

Pigeon Forge – and its sister community of Sevierville – see over 10 million visitors a year. The byway is a highly commercialized, four to six lane road through Pigeon Forge. Every tourism activity, dining and lodging option are available in Pigeon Forge, including its leading destination, Dollywood – the entertainment venue developed by country western star and Pigeon Forge native, Dolly Parton. This part of the byway stands in stark contrast to the character of the rest of the route due to its intensely commercial nature. However, this is not a negative feature of the byway. The Great Smoky Mountains Byway offers a good dose of fun and easy entertainment of the byway traveler and this will be welcome. Many byways offer only natural and heritage activities; this byway will offer a range of sites and activities to appeal to a very broad range of travelers.

The byway journey continues through Sevier County but changes dramatically in character as it enters National Park lands. The road becomes a divided layout, serene, forested parkway moving along the banks of the Little Pigeon River into Gatlinburg. The shift in landscape character is dramatic – neon lights disappear to deep, Appalachian forest.

Gatlinburg is a highly developed, but character-rich community that caters to honey-mooners, those seeking a somewhat less entertainment driven experience compared to Pigeon Forge. Thousands of hotel and motel rooms in Gatlinburg serve small groups, family reunions and corporate retreats and meetings. Lodging and dining venues are numerous. Gatlinburg is home to the Arrowmont Crafts School and its presence generated a strong crafts-marketing sector in Gatlinburg. The primary craft

destination in the community is the 8 mile long Great Smoky Arts & Crafts Community, a scenic drive that winds up onto the surrounding hilltops and hollers and visits hundreds of craft studios and retail galleries along the way.

Gatlinburg offers easy access to the national park and a wide variety of retail shopping experiences.

As the byway continues east of Gatlinburg, the landscape is very rural. The next Sevier County community is Pittman Center, a rural, carefully planned hamlet that lies immediately adjacent to the national park. A critical part of this corridor plan is examining how future, planned road modifications to Highway 321 can be accommodated without negatively impacting both the rural character of Pittman Center and the generally pleasant rural driving experience of Highway 321 through this segment of the corridor. Previous TDOT modifications were received poorly by Gatlinburg and Pittman Center and resulted in a context sensitive design process that modified planned construction approaches. It is hoped that when funding is once again available, that 321 improvements will be designed in the same manner.

Extending to the south of highway 321 from Townsend to Pittman Center is a swath of land that was purchased by the National Park Service in the 1930's for the construction of a Foothills Parkway. This road is completed at the eastern and western ends of its planned layout, but funding has not been available to complete the middle portions of the road. Some funding is now available to proceed with construction along the southwest end of the Parkway. This road will eventually offer a skyline drive perspective on the Great Smoky Mountains. It is possible that the final segment from Gatlinburg to Cosby will not be an automobile road, but rather a multi-use trail.

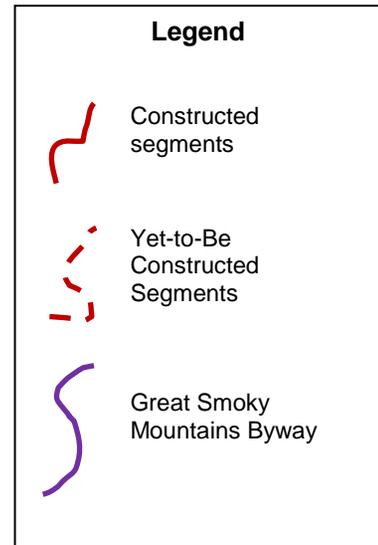
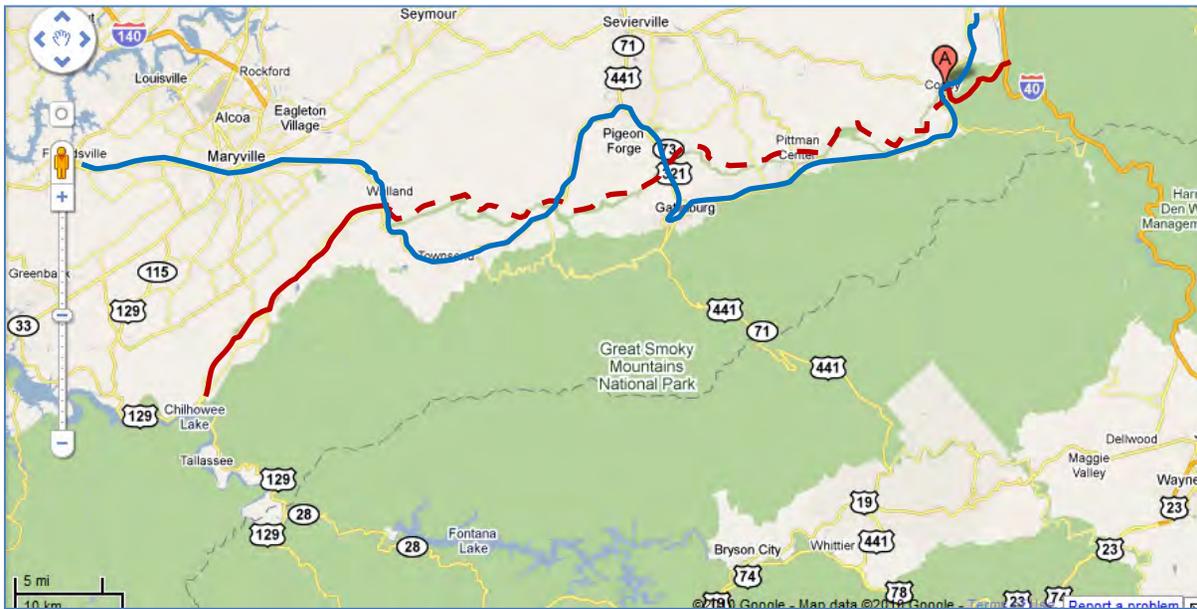


Figure 8- Planned Route for Foothills Parkway

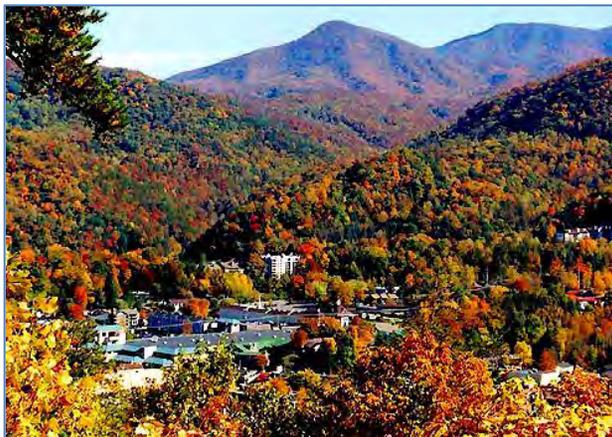


Figure 9-Gatlinburg and its Fall Colors

## Cocke County

There is no shift in landscape as one travels from Sevier County to Cocke County. The road remains a 2 lane highway posted at 45 to 55 mph speed limits. The road is a 12 foot traveling lane with a shoulder that varies between 3 foot paved shoulder down to a 1 foot gravel packed shoulder. The landscape is highly treed with interspersed farms, pastures, orchards and small residential development. The town of Cosby consists of a mixture of tourism oriented businesses, some public buildings and a collection of homes. The condition of the road all the way through Cocke County is good.

As one approaches the City of Newport the road extends to a 4 lane lay out with 4 to 6 foot wide paved shoulder. The landscape opens as the highway crosses Interstate 40. There is an increase in the number and size of pastures and fields. This farming landscape quickly transitions to a more suburban landscape, however, as one approaches the outskirts the city of Newport. Highway 321 is a very commercial corridor as it enters as it enters the city of Newport. The Chamber of Commerce and Cocke County Visitors Center is located along this route.

Highway 321 joins with Highway 25E (the East Tennessee Crossing National Scenic Byway) at the immediate edge of downtown Newport. The byway moves through the downtown. Newport is a well preserved 1920's downtown with period architecture and an overall streetscape that reflects the period. There are a number of vacancies or marginal uses in the downtown now, although the area is moving toward stronger economic health.

When one travels out downtown Newport the scenery once again shifts to farming landscape. The scenic equality is very high. Outside of Newport, one encounters the reconstructed highway 321 to Greeneville. This new road is a 4 lane layout with a broad 100 foot landscaped median. Travel speeds range between 55 and 65 miles per hour. The views from this new road are quite scenic. The layout of the road travels along the high ground and provides very beautiful views to the Great Smoky Mountains to the south. Overall this newly improved highway provides a very scenic experience for the driver all the way from Newport to Greeneville.

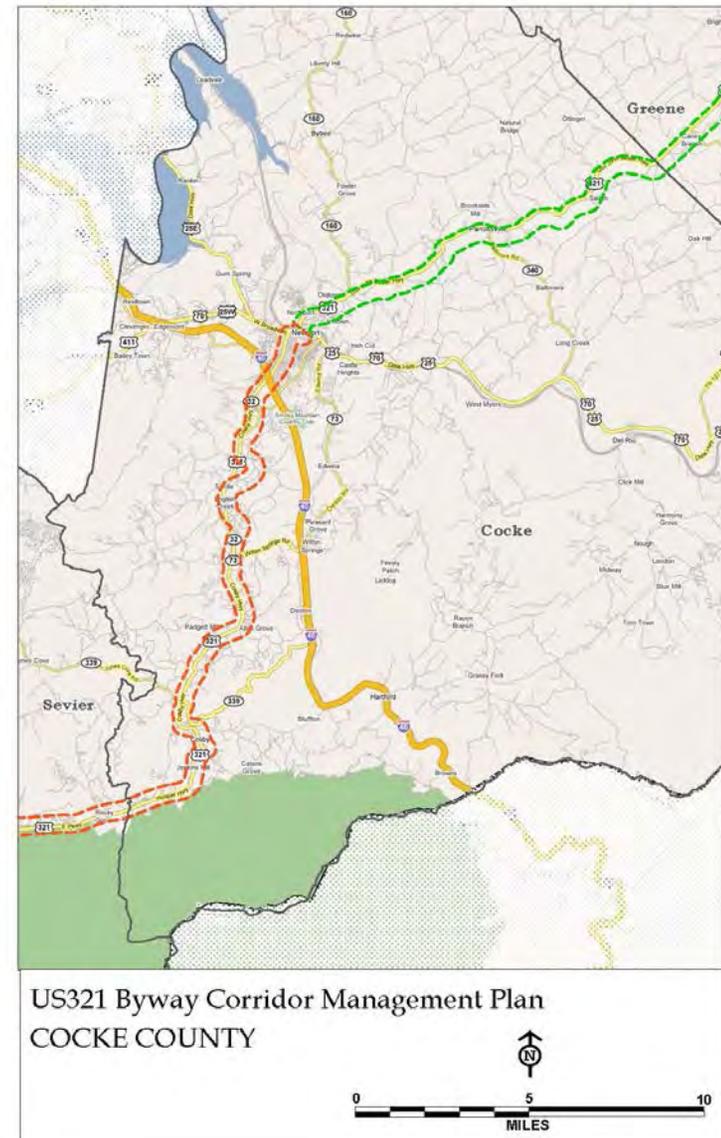


Figure 10- Cocke County corridor map

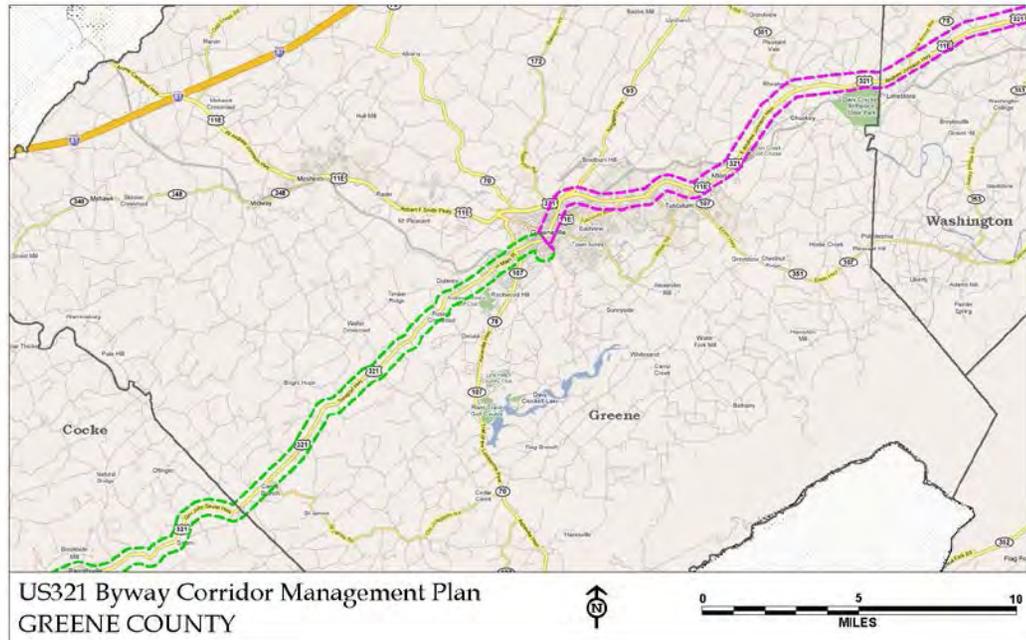
## Greene County

Highway 21 enters Greene County along the newly reconstructed layout and provides a very scenic experience. Fields and forests extend in both directions with the Great Smoky Mountains rising to the south. The views along many portions of this highway are highly scenic. Small country roads extend both to the north and the south off the highway and invite the traveler to explore the back roads of this valley. Travel speeds range between 55 and 65-miles an hour the road is primarily a two lane layout in Greene County but at times it does extend to four lanes. There are adequate shoulders for bicycling. The road condition is excellent.

The outskirts of Greeneville become quite suburban with small lot residential development along both sides of the road. A brief older commercial area is encountered prior to reaching the downtown. The road drops in width and winds its way into the historic downtown.

The entrance to the downtown is quite dramatic with a significant shift in architecture to the 19th century brick buildings of Greeneville. Downtown Greeneville provides a very historic and scenic experience for the traveler with perhaps 90 percent of the buildings in the downtown of period architecture. The downtown is economically quite healthy and a very vibrant revitalization effort is under way in downtown Greeneville which should produce even higher occupancy rates and more economic health in the downtown. The premiere destination in downtown Greeneville is the General Morgan Inn. This facility provides information for travelers as well as very impressive historic lodging.

Greeneville is also the home of the President Andrew Johnson National Historic Site. This is a National Park Service-managed facility and includes an interpretive center, workshop, his cemetery and a library.



As Highway 321 moves out of Greeneville headed toward Jonesborough, the character of the byway does change dramatically. This is an intensely commercialized portion of highway with six travel lanes and speeds ranging from 35-miles an hour to 55-miles an hour at the outskirts. While this corridor provides extensive commercial services to visitors, it is a dramatic change from the character of the road to the west.

It is suggested that consideration be given to designating an alternate scenic route from Greeneville to Jonesborough along County Route 107 through Greene County and on Washington County Route 81. Route 107 would need to be designated as a state scenic parkway; Route 81 is already a state scenic parkway.

This road is very scenic and offers a drive that moves through beautiful farming countryside right at the edge of the Cherokee National Forest.

## Washington County

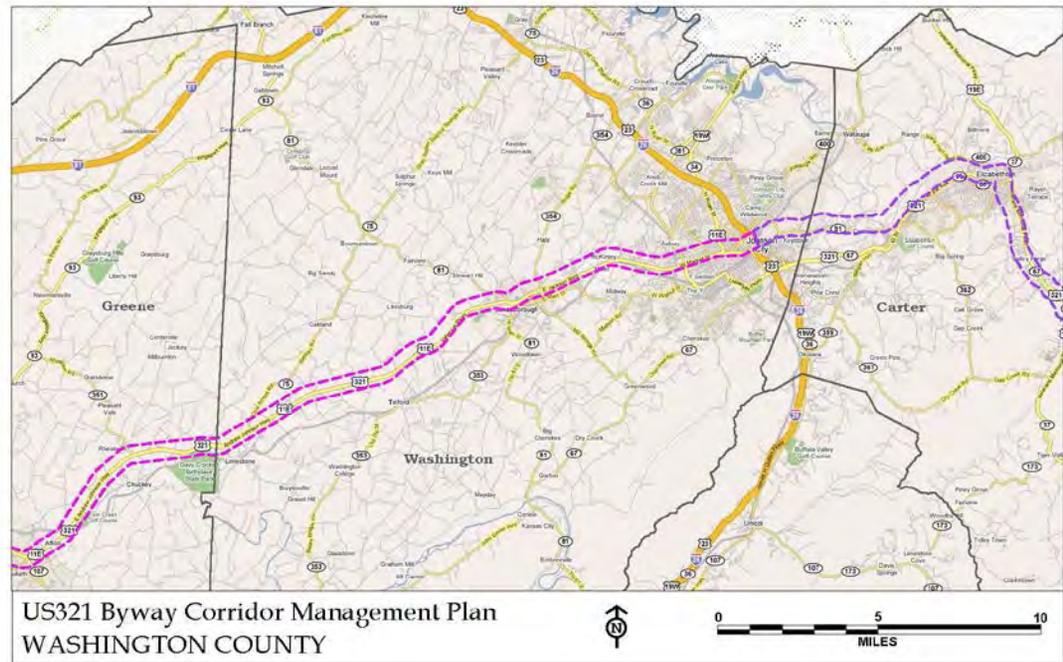
As one enters Washington County, Highway 321 is a 4 lane highway posted for speeds up to 65 mph with a 4 to 6 foot wide paved breakdown lane and shoulder. The landscape is marred by billboards and haphazard commercial development. This particular portion of the byway from Greeneville to Jonesborough is one of the least scenic and inviting parts of the corridor.

Downtown Jonesborough provides a welcome relief from the previous portion of Highway 321. This is one of the most historic communities in the state of Tennessee. It was the original capital of the state in the late 1700's. Its downtown has been well preserved and it is a very active and vital community.

The International Storytelling Center and the associated National Storytelling Festival provide a very high level of interest and visitation to this community. The shops are healthy and the streets are often filled with visitors. Downtown Jonesborough provides a range of dining and lodging options for visitors and is one of the high points along the byway.

Highway 321, as it continues on towards Johnson City, provides a similar landscape to that described between Greeneville and Jonesborough. As it draws closer to Johnson City it becomes more urban and commercialized. The highway winds its way through Johnson City and offers the traveler a more urban experience. Johnson City offers a pleasant downtown area with mixed levels of vacancies in its commercial areas.

There are a number of historic structures within the city. Efforts will need to be made to direct visitors to the visitor center and to encourage them to linger in Johnson City and explore what it has to offer. As one moves towards the eastern end of Johnson City, the byway continues to move through a mixture of residential and lighter



commercial areas. At the outskirts of the city one encounters the typical highway commercial development that one finds all across the United States. This commercial development extends in a fairly uninterrupted manner to the border of Carter County.

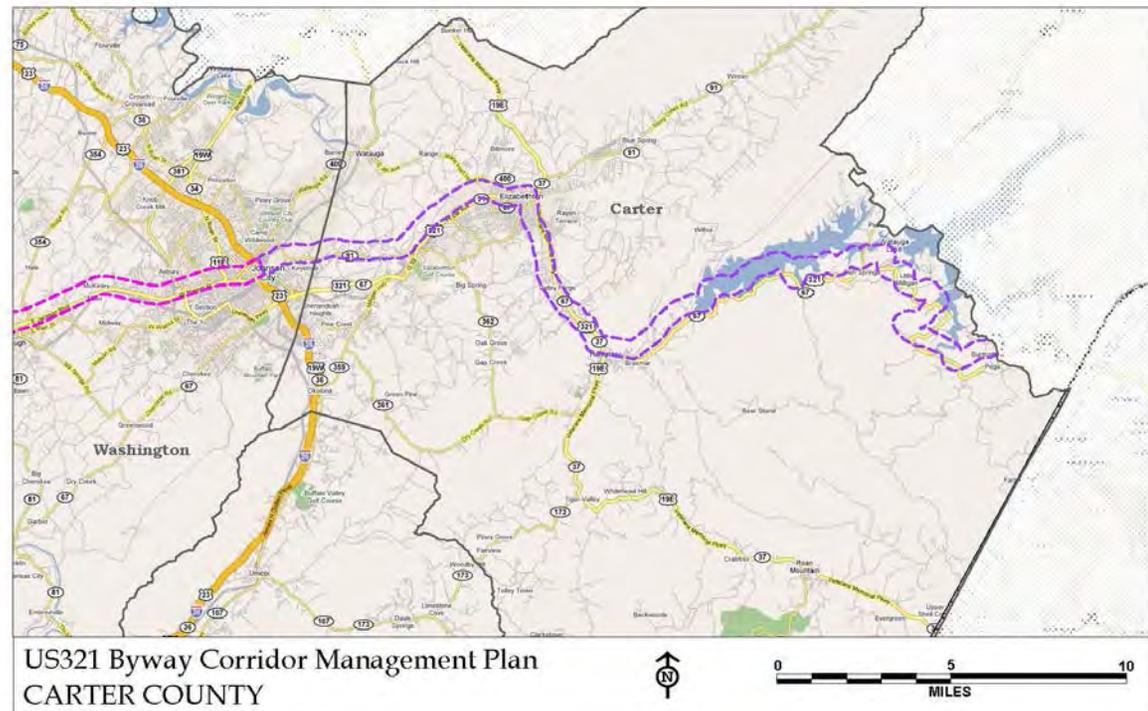
## Carter County

As Highway 321 crosses from Washington County into Carter County the landscape shifts to be more open. The road is largely a four lane layout with 3-6 foot paved shoulders. Pavement condition is good.

As the byway moves toward the edge of Elizabethton, the county seat of Carter County, the landscape returns to a commercial character. Then one enters the older downtown area of Elizabethton. This downtown is a mixture of older historic buildings, and structures that were developed in the 1970's and the 1980's. The downtown has a good pedestrian scale. This town has good prospects for enhanced economic activity and visitation. Currently its vacancy rates are somewhat high, and there are limited activities for visitors to enjoy.

After passing through Elizabethton, the byway becomes the Veterans Memorial Parkway and begins to climb as it enters the Cherokee National Forest. Initially the road is a 4 lane layout and then it shifts to a two lane layout. On the way to Watauga Lake, the byway passes through the community of Hampton, TN.

This final section of the byway offers one of the most scenic drives along the entire corridor. The road winds along the edge of the lake and offers highly scenic views. It is a 2 lane paved road with travel speeds ranging between 40 and 55 miles per hour. There are paved shoulders for the majority of this route. Along the route there are pockets of historic cabins and vacation areas, as well as marinas and services for those who are recreating at Watauga Lake. The views and overall experience of this final portion of the byway are exceptional. This portion of the corridor offers a very classic and special mountain driving experience.



## Traffic Assessment

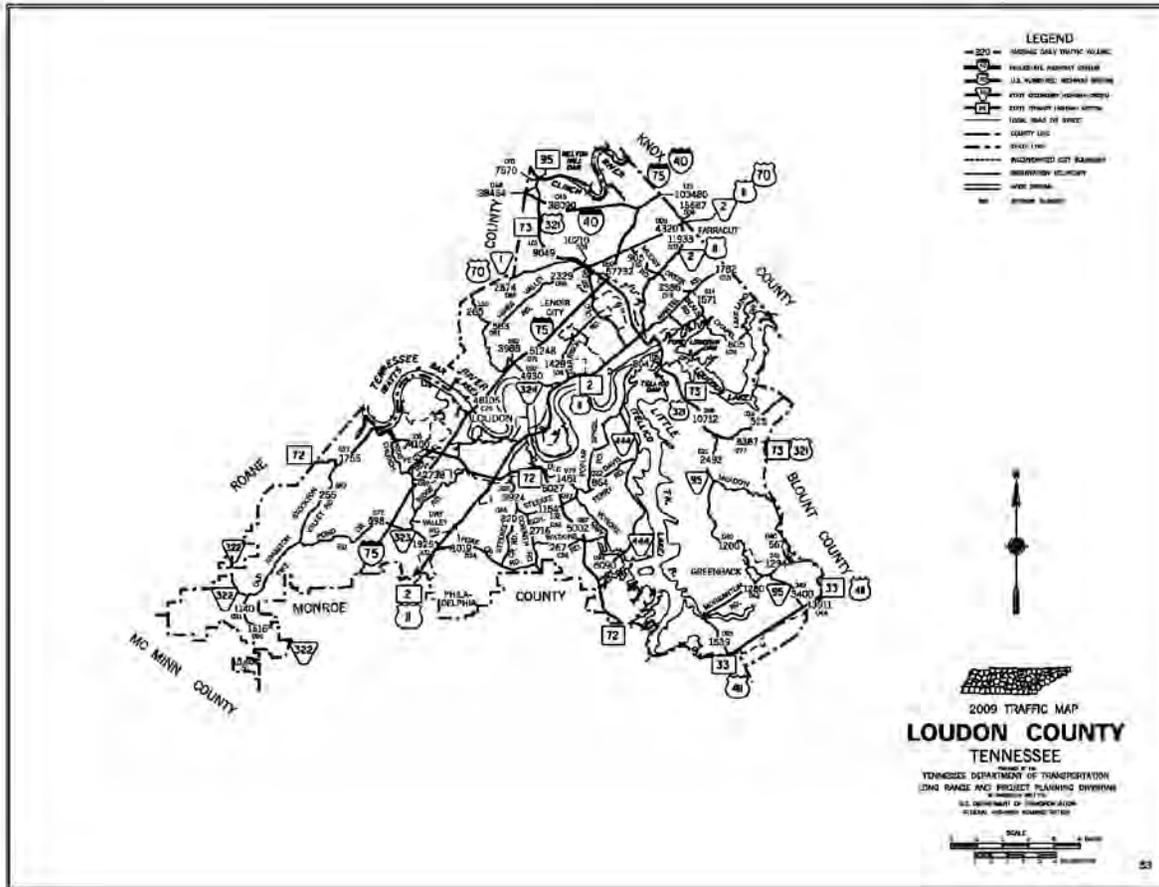
The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) produces information on traffic volumes for all counties across the state. This section offers a quick review of available traffic volume data for the 321 corridor in order to identify the overall volumes on the byway as well as the areas of highest congestion.

As a point of reference, according to the 2000 Highway Capacity Manual, published by the American Association of State Highway Traffic Officials, a two lane highway at maximum capacity will see volumes of 3200 vehicles per hour. For a 12 hour travel day, that equates to 38,000 vehicles per day. Each additional lane can accommodate 1700 vehicles per hour. A four lane highway could theoretically accommodate 80,000 vehicles per 12 hour period. The following maps present average annual daily traffic volumes. This is theoretically the total amount of vehicles traveling on a road in a year divided by 365. Generally speaking, volumes that exceed 20,000 AADT are high volume and have periods of congestion during peak travel hours.

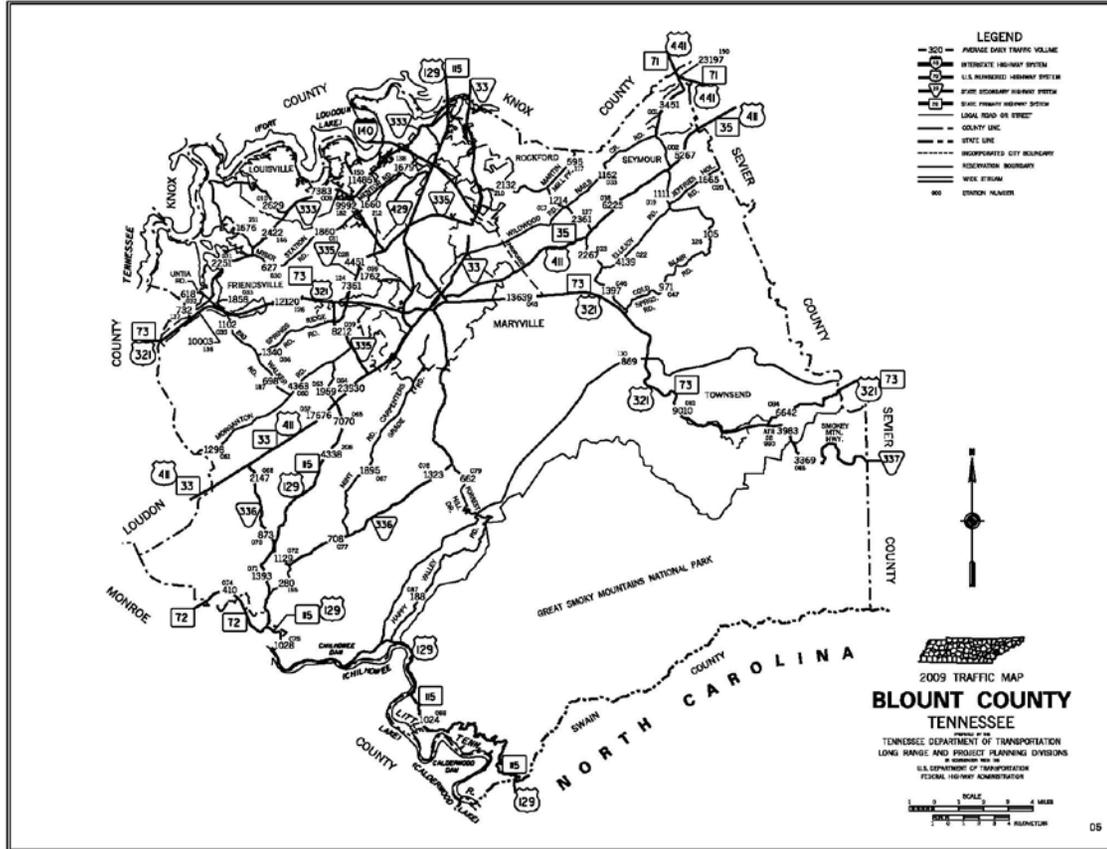
As can be seen in the following seven traffic volume maps, Highway 321 serves as both a rural, low volume route and a high volume, urban in route. In places like Carter County, near the North Carolina border, volumes do not exceed 1000 cars per day, on an average basis. In places like Pigeon Forge, traffic volumes exceed 40,000 cars per day, but the highway consists of 4 to 8 travel lanes.

Moving from west to east, Loudon County experiences traffic volumes of 8000 to 10,000 along highway 321. Blount's AADT ranges from 6000 to 13,000. Sevier sees traffic levels from 6700 to over 44,000. Cocke ranges from 6400 at the Sevier line to 21,000 in downtown Newport to 2100 at the Greene County line. Greene County's AADT range from 2200 to 22,000. Washington has moderate volumes – 9000 to 11,000. Finally, Carter County ranges from 500 to 15,000 in Elizabethton.

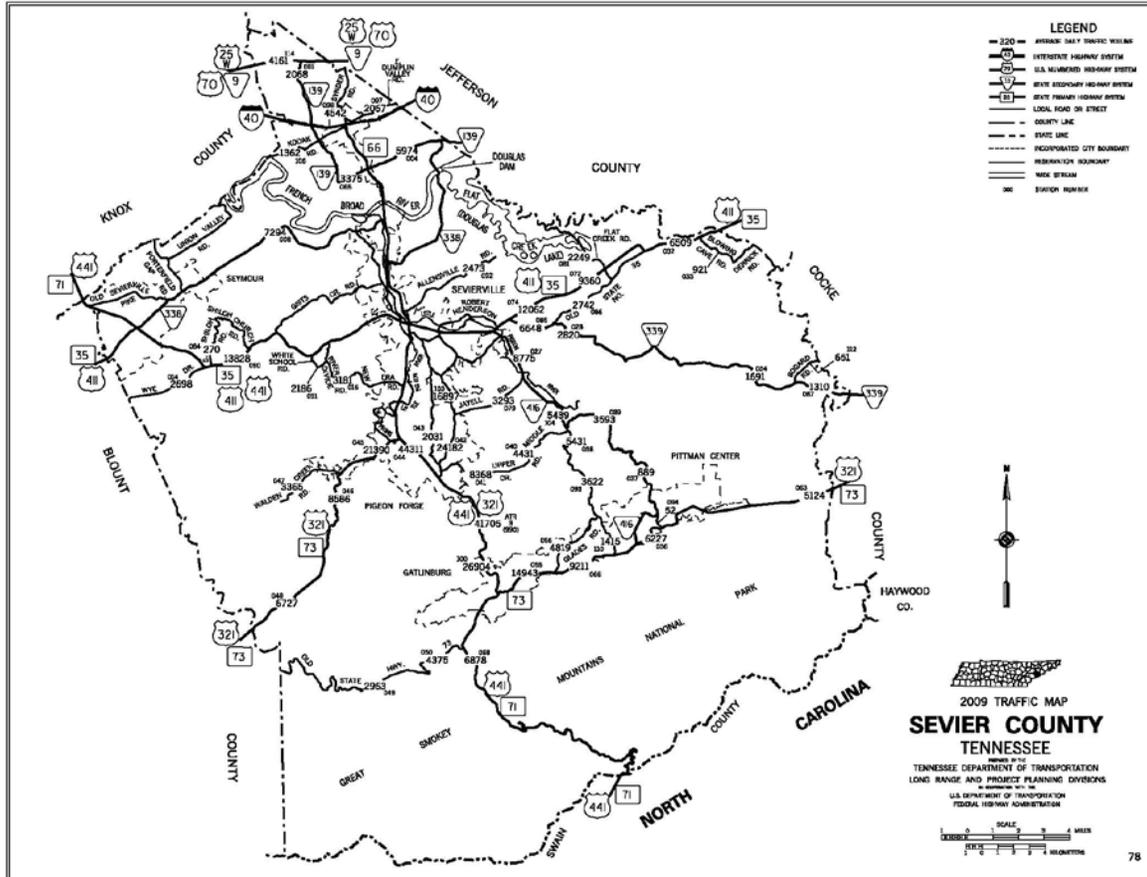
# Loudon County Traffic Volumes



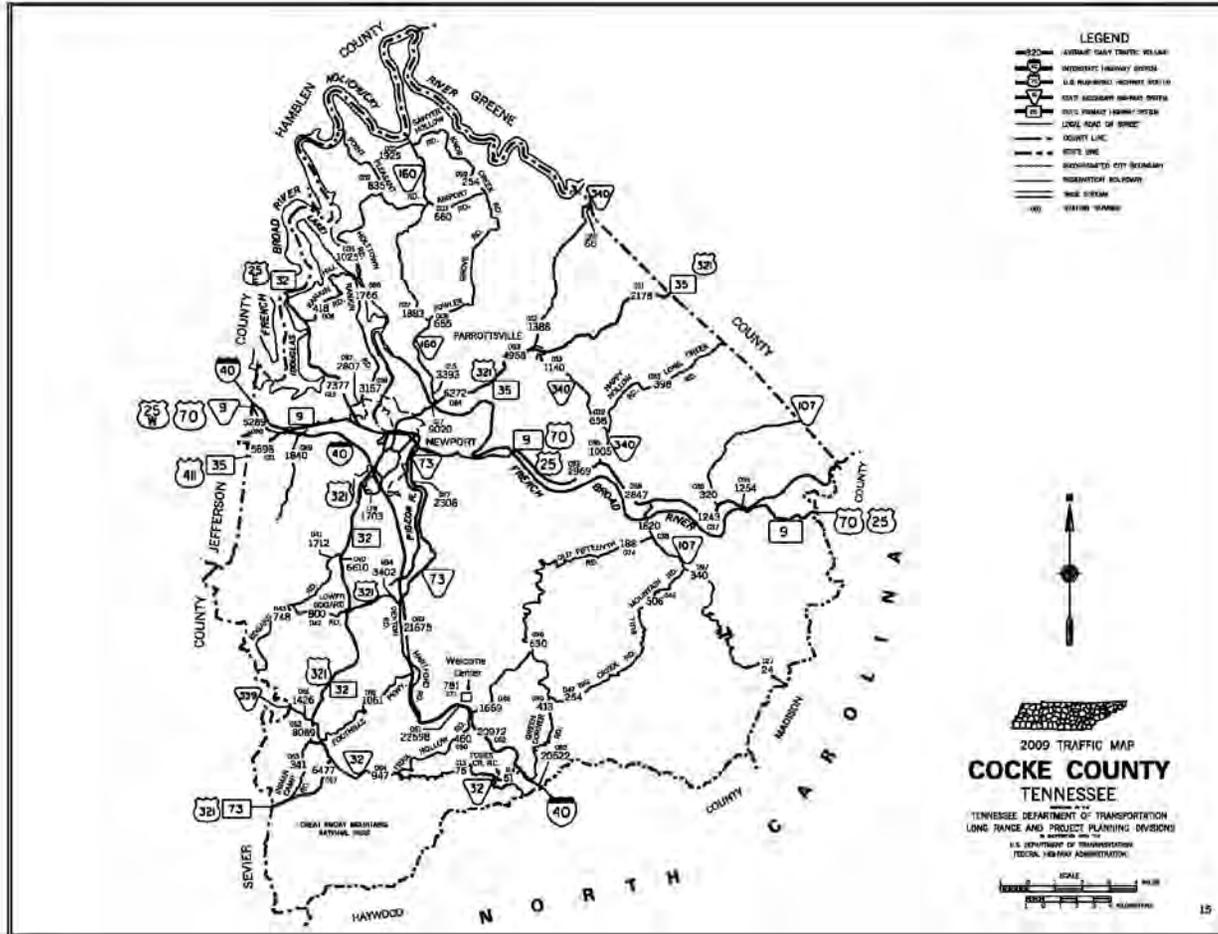
# Blount County Volumes



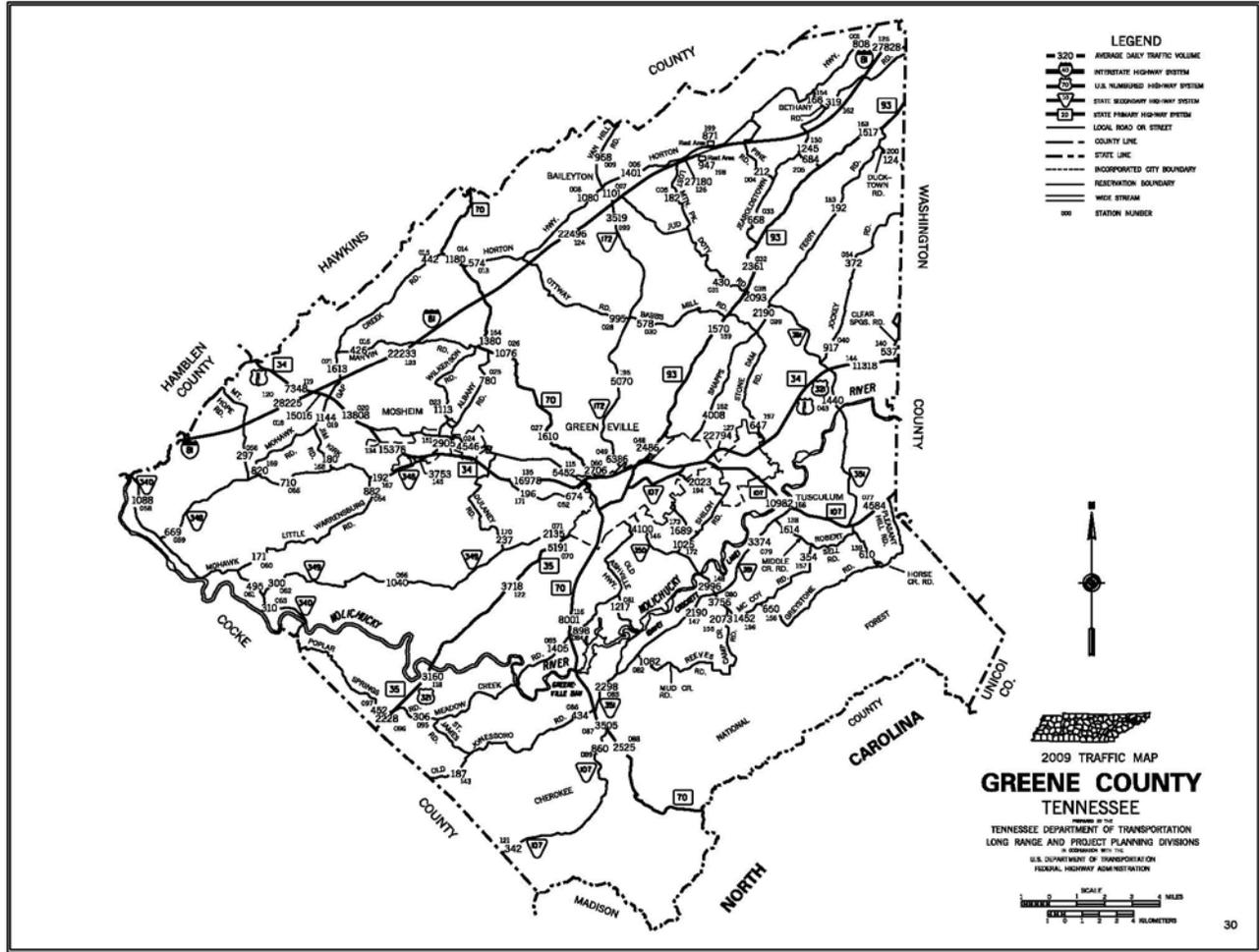
# Sevier County Volumes



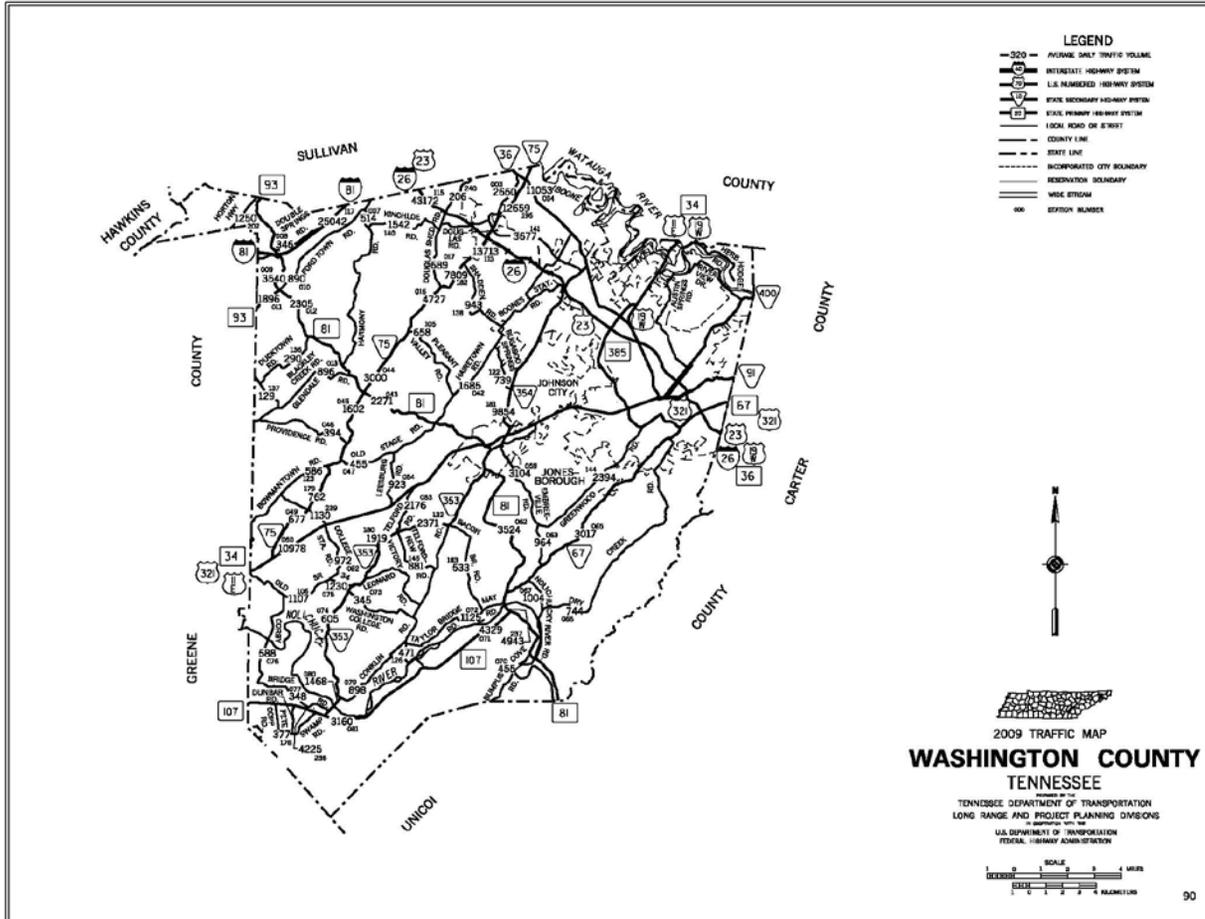
# Coke County Volumes



# Greene County Volumes



# Washington County Volumes





## Highway Safety Status

In addition to traffic volumes, this plan also presents information in this section on the general safety of the byway route.

Fortunately, this route has been almost entirely improved in recent years. Almost 150 of the 200 mile length has been widened to a four-lane highway with AASHTO compliant geometries, super-elevations, breakdown lanes and guardrails. Much of the route has divided layout with a landscaped median.

## Conclusion

This corridor assessment highlights several key points about this byway:

- The road pavement, alignments and appurtenances (i.e., safety structures along the edge of the road) are in excellent condition from one end to the other and thus offer a safe driving experience.
- The road is adequately-signed and travelers will be able to find their way along the byway. Improvements in some areas will be needed. Additional signing will be needed to guide travelers off from and back to the byway for excursions.
- The landscape is pleasant to beautiful for the majority of the drive.
- There is significant variation in the nature of the landscape along this route. It varies from urban to rural, wide open vistas to tree-canopied corridors, small villages, farms and many, many mountain views.
- Generally speaking, the route moves through areas that are gradually, but not rapidly, developing. The major cause of additional development is the steady economic diversification of this part of Tennessee and the growing appeal of the region for those seeking a retirement or vacation retreat.
- Generally, the communities along this byway are economically healthy, although it is clear that the

byway's goal of dispersed visitation will benefit those communities seeking stronger retail bases.

## Section III: Overview of Intrinsic Qualities

The National Scenic Byway Program recognizes six *intrinsic qualities* upon which a byway can demonstrate its regional and national significance as well as provide the traveler with memorable and distinctive experiences.

- Scenic
- Natural
- Recreational
- Historic
- Cultural
- Archeological

This section reviews the major qualities that distinguish this byway and defines the two qualities upon which the byway will seek All-American Road status within the National Scenic Byways Program: historic and cultural.

### Scenic

This byway offers spectacular scenery to the southeast as one drives along the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. If one leaves the byway and enters the mountains, the views are even more wonderful and distinctive. Generally speaking, the scenic quality of the landscape immediately along the byway is medium to high, with some areas of less distinctive character. The following are some of the most memorable landscapes along the corridor.

- Great Smoky Mountains: These views begin in Blount and Loudon Counties as one travels eastward along

the byway. From these western viewpoints the mountains are misty and rolling.

- Great Smoky Mountains National Park: The National Park can be entered in Blount, Sevier and Cocke Counties. All of these points provide exceptional access to highly scenic landscapes. Drives through the Park offer a mixture of intimate settings and grand vistas. Due to National Park status, the scenic value of this park's intimate drives have national significance.
- Little River, French Broad River, Nolichucky and Pigeon Rivers: Generally speaking, the most scenic views are found immediately along the rivers from Townsend, Hartford and outside Newport. There are a limited number of river crossings that offer exceptional views of the rivers.
- Foothills Parkway: The Foothills Parkway is a National Park Service owned and managed road that was planned in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and is now partially complete. As its name suggests, it offers very significant views of the Great Smoky Mountains from the vantage point of running through the foothills of Blount and Sevier Counties. There is no funding available to complete another portion of the Parkway.
- Drive to and near Watauga Lake: Highway 321 runs along Watauga Lake and offers some of the most spectacular views for the entire byway. The vistas across the lake and through the valleys are stunning.
- Downtowns: The most historically intact downtowns are Greeneville and Jonesborough.

- Other noteworthy landscapes include the farming landscapes in Greene, Loudon and Blount County, the approach to Townsend from the west, parts of Wears Valley in Sevier County, the Gatlinburg Parkway between Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge, the community of Pittman Center and portions of the newly reconstructed Highway 321 in Cocke and Greene Counties.

## Natural

- Great Smoky Mountains National Park: The National Park offers natural resources of national significance and is an international biosphere. The diversity of species in the Park is among the highest in the nation due to the confluence of northern hardwood and southern pine ecosystems. More species of plant life are found within the National Park than in any other part of the nation.
- Other impressive natural resources include the following:
  - Fort Loudon, Tellico, Watts Bar and Melton Hill Lakes and the Tennessee and Clinch Rivers
  - French Broad River, Nolichuky and Pigeon Rivers
  - Douglas Lake
  - Cherokee and Pisgah National Forests
  - Mary Squist State Forest
  - Watauga Lake

- Roan Mountain State Park

## Recreation

All of the above natural resource areas offer outdoor recreation. The most prominent are the following:

- Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- French Broad River, Nolichuky and Pigeon Rivers
- Cherokee National Forest
- Douglas Lake
- Fort Loudon, Tellico, Watts Bar and Melton Hill Lakes and the Tennessee and Clinch Rivers, all in Loudon County
- Roan Mountain State Park
- Pigeon Forge and Dollywood - Entertainment and amusement destination
- Marguarette Falls

## Archeological

- The Townsend Native American project is an archeological dig in the town with a presentation on the project at the Great Smoky Mountain Heritage Center. Carter County also has an archeological interpretive site at Sycamore Shoals State Park.

## Intrinsic Qualities of Regional and National Significance: History and Culture

The Great Smoky Mountains Byway incorporates several historical and cultural themes that distinguish the region. This section will explore the context of each theme. The byways themes are:

1. Native American presence and impact
2. The region as a region of “firsts” for Tennessee and for the country
3. Appalachian Culture
4. Civil War from the Abolitionist movement, to the war, to the Reconstruction Period

### Native American Presence and Impact

- Native Americans were hunting and camping in the region as early as the Paleo-Indian period (c.10,000 B.C.) By the time the first Euro-American settlers arrived in the area in the late 1700's, the Cherokee claimed the valley as part of their hunting grounds.
- The region was also an important area for the Native Americans in that the Great Indian Warpath passed through the area, near modern day Greeneville.
- Greeneville is also thought to have been the juncture of two lesser Native American trails—an early foreshadowing of the region's importance in the much later Western migration trails.

- There was significant conflict between the Cherokees and the white settlers as the Cherokees tried to hold on to their territory. The two groups alternated between peace and outright hostility, ultimately culminating in the infamous “Trail of Tears”, when the U.S. government forced the Cherokees from the region.

### A Region of Firsts

Eastern Tennessee has the distinction of leading the state and country in many areas—truly “A Region of Firsts” in many fronts.

- The region was also home to the first wave of settlers from the East and the beginning of what would ultimately be known as Manifest Destiny, the 19th century American belief that the United States was destined to expand across the North American continent, from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific Ocean. The region was the cross roads for emigrants from the Eastern states of North and South Carolina headed to the west.
- As a crossroads for people traveling west, the region also became a population center in its own right who reached the area and decided to stay. Another “first”, the byway region was also home to the first attempt by American-born colonists to form an independent democratic government. Known as the **Watauga Association**, frontier settlers created a semi-autonomous government in 1772 near what is now Elizabethton. Although it lasted only from 1772 to 1778, the Association was significant in that it provided a basis for what later became the state of Tennessee. Some historians believe that the Watauga Association's structure also influenced other frontier governments that were forming in the region. The

Association ended in 1778 when North Carolina annexed the Watauga settlements and the Association was replaced by a county government structure.

- The region also has a history of leading in higher education. Founded in 1794, Greene County's Tusculum College is the **oldest college** in Tennessee, the twenty-eighth oldest college in the nation, and the oldest coeducational institution affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- The populist legacy of the American Revolution still drove much of the political thinking of the frontier settlers in the region and created another "first" for the region—the **establishment of a separate state**. Ongoing dissatisfaction with the government of North Carolina by citizens in the territory west of the Alleghenies culminated in calls for the establishment of a separate state. On August 23, 1784, delegates from the North Carolina counties of Washington (that at the time included present day Carter County), Sullivan, Spencer (now Hawkins) and Greene — all counties in present-day Tennessee — convened in the town of Jonesborough (also the first state capital of Tennessee) and declared the lands independent of North Carolina. Less than a year later, the hopes for the tiny state, which was called Franklin, was unable to gain formal admittance into the United States when its petition for statehood failed to garner the two-thirds majority needed to admit a territory to statehood. The state, now called Franklin, attempted to remain autonomous by assembling a temporary government, annexing five additional counties and using barter as its economic system. By 1786, however, the lack of currency and infrastructure made remaining an independent entity increasingly difficult and, by 1790,

the government of the State of Franklin had collapsed entirely and the territory was firmly back under the control of North Carolina. Soon thereafter, the state once again ceded the area that would soon become Tennessee to the national government to form the Southwest Territory.

- The impending Civil War also produced its own "first". Many East Tennesseans were strong supporters of the Abolitionist Movement and the **country's first abolitionist newspaper**, *The Emancipator*, was published by Elihu Embree in Jonesborough in Washington County.
- Jonesborough is also notable as **Tennessee's first town** and today enjoys a carefully restored historic district from the period 1790 to 1870.

## Appalachian Culture

### Arts and Handicrafts

- Like much of the region along the nearby Blue Ridge Parkway, the byway's region has a rich tradition of **arts and handicrafts**. Like many of the settlement and vocational schools founded in Southern Appalachia during the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, Gatlinburg, Tennessee's Pi Beta Phi Settlement School used traditional handicrafts production such as woven textiles, baskets, chairs and brooms as a means to improve its patrons' economic conditions. Artisans sold their crafts through the settlement school's Arrowmont program and this program became an important source of income for many Appalachian families. As market tastes changed, Pi Beta Phi

redirected its efforts away from the production of traditional handicrafts and towards the promotion of general arts and crafts literacy. Today, the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, founded in 1968, is well regarded and highly successful in drawing experienced and aspiring artisans, both nationally and internationally. This rich heritage in crafts is evident along the byways. The Carl Koella Exhibit Center at the Townsend Visitor Center promotes the region's crafts with demonstrates and shopping opportunities for the region's many visitors. The LaRue-Myers Park in Parrottsville also hosts a popular arts and crafts festival each October.

- **Music** was also an integral part of the region's history and heritage. With limited funds for more commercial forms of entertainment, the Appalachian people amused themselves by making music at home or at community events such as weddings or harvest parties by playing favorite mountain instruments such as the banjo, fiddle, and dulcimer.
- The Appalachian culture also fostered **storytelling** as an invaluable source of entertainment. To be a great story teller was a valued skill in the culture as favorite stories were repeated and passed down through the generations. More recently, storytelling's role in Appalachian culture was codified by another "first" for the region—the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough. Now going into its 36th year, the National Storytelling Festival was created by Jimmy Neil Smith, a former journalism teacher and mayor of Jonesborough. The first National Storytelling Festival in 1973 hosted only about 60 people but has grown exponentially in the past 36 years to a major event (named as one of the Top 100 Events in North

America) that draws over 10,000 visitors and has become the epicenter of the storytelling's revival, both nationally and internationally. Two years after the first festival, the National Storytelling Association was founded to spearhead America's storytelling renaissance and to promote the power of storytelling and the creative applications of this ancient tradition to enrich the human experience. Related to story-telling is the tradition of **folklore** that reflects the Scots-Irish and English ancestry of most of the mountain people. Their relative geographic isolation resulted in an ability to pass on an largely unadulterated trove of old rhymes, ballads, and songs, attracting the attention of international folklore experts such as Cecil Sharp of London who published a collection of Appalachian ballads in 1932.

- Finally, despite the strict Baptist moral code against liquor, making **moonshine**—or homemade corn liquor—was a time honored Appalachian tradition. Cocke County in the middle section of the byway, was infamous for its involvement in the moonshine industry during Prohibition and in the subsequent years since most of East Tennessee remained "dry" during that period—the region was even memorialized in the 1958 movie, *Thunder Road*, which chronicled the homespun industry in the Prohibition years. In addition to enjoying liquor for personal use, moonshine was an important source of income for many families in the region; in fact, Cosby, also in Cocke County, was renowned as the Moonshine Capital of the World. Gatlinburg is now home to Tennessee's first legal moonshine distillery, TheOle Smoky Distillery.

## Civil War

### Abolitionist Movement:

- Strong abolitionist movements took root in much of East Tennessee including Greene County due to the relatively large number of Quakers who had moved to the region in the 1790's from Pennsylvania and who felt that slavery was in violation of the Biblical Scripture. The country's first abolitionist newspaper was also founded and published in the byway region.

### War:

- Many small skirmishes were fought in Loudon County including Aldie, Leesburg, Hamilton, Waterford, Middleburg and Purcellville. They were usually surprise attacks for the purposes of taking food, livestock and ammunition to replenish supplies as opposed to major battles, yet they did frequently result in injuries and casualties on both sides. The area suffered a lot of damage from these skirmishes including a massive raid by the Union forces in 1864, which resulted the soldiers burning most of the country in an effort to end the activities of the Confederate soldiers

### Reconstruction Period:

- The byway region also had a significant role in the Reconstruction Period. Andrew Johnson, the 17<sup>th</sup> President of the United States whose term spanned most of the Reconstruction Period, spent most of his adult years in Greeneville, as a small business owner of a tailor shop. Johnson was first elected to the City Council, then to Mayor in 1834, and then to the state legislature a year later which ultimately propelled him

to national government and the Presidency. Today his legacy is commemorated at the Andrew Johnson National Historic Site in Greeneville, which includes his tailor shop downtown as well as his home, the Andrew Johnson National Cemetery, and a Visitor Center.

- Eastern Tennessee is also home to another interesting Reconstruction Period era artifact, the National Campground in Loudon County. In 1873 individuals from congregations representing the Presbyterian, Cumberland Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Friends (Quakers), and the Methodist Episcopal Church faiths gathered at this spot five miles west of Greenback to establish a "union campground" where annual revivals could be held but the underlying purpose of the campground was to "bind up the wounds created by the Civil War." Historians also maintain that National Campground was the only rural camp-meeting tabernacle in the state where annual revivals still took place.

## Section IV: Interpretation Assessment

A major component of most byways is the presentation of the byway story through interpretive media and experiences. These approaches include museums, roadside signs, audio tours, festivals, costumed guides, videos, slide shows, murals, interpretive centers, guidebooks, driving tours and walking tours. This section reviews the existing interpretive experiences existing along the byway and identifies future interpretive investments that should be made.

### Loudon County

- Lenoir City Museum: This facility reviews the early history of Lenoir City. Started in 1997, the museum was originally housed in Lenoir City's early city hall building on Broadway in downtown Lenoir City. The Lenoir City Museum documents Lenoir City's past from its earliest settlement by Major William B. Lenoir in the early 1800's, to the arrival of the railroad at Lenoir's Station (as it was known until the 1900's), through the Civil War, and into Lenoir City's emergence as a city in 1907. The museum also highlights Lenoir City's commercial and industrial growth, particularly its premier industry, the Lenoir Car Works. The City's social, religious and educational development is traced, as well as its role in U.S. military history in the twentieth century. Museum hours are 1:00 until 4:00 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. Special tours may be arranged by calling 865-986-9169 or 865-693-3664.
- National Campground: This is one of the few remaining revival campgrounds from the post-Civil War period.

As noted in the history section, the religious leaders of the country worked to create revival camps that would be revive the spiritual lives of their congregations as well as attempt to revive a sense of national unity among former combatants and their families. Today, the campground is owned by a private organization but sponsors various events during each year. There is great potential for this site to provide a more comprehensive experience of Reconstruction America.

- Loudon Village: This village lies 5 miles south of the byway and Lenoir City along Highway 11. It offers a quaint, lakeside experience for the visitor along with some appealing historic experiences including a riverboat ride and dine, shopping and visiting structures in the historic district.
- Tellico Dam: This Army Corp of Engineers dam, lake and surrounding lands lies just east of Lenoir City and offers a nice open space gateway for the byway. Modest interpretive signs are installed at some pullouts.

### Blount County

- Maryville College: Located in Maryville, the College offers a pleasant campus walking experience and some interpretive signs covering the College's early years as a seminary.
- Historic Maryville Walking Tour: Downtown Maryville is abutted by some historic neighborhoods that offer an appealing walking tour of historic homes. A brochure is

available, but not additional signage. A small park immediately in the downtown offers some recent interpretive signage on the formation of Maryville and its early years.

- Heritage Planetarium: This facility is located on the east side of Maryville and offers a wide range of celestial and other programs for school children and adults. The focus of the facility is as a regional educational center for East Tennessee's children, but the facility is a good experience for travelers as well.
- Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center: This private non-profit facility is located in Townsend and is not a part of the National Park. It offers high quality interpretive displays of Native American culture and mountain culture. A movie is also shown on a regular basis. Outdoor presentations of regional architecture and crafts are located behind the building. A variety of festivals and events are sponsored at the Center each year.
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Cades Cove: The Townsend gateway into the park offers direct and easy access to Cades Cove, one of the more popular destinations in the National Park. An interpretive center in Cades Cove reviews the formation of the park, the isolated community that existed at that time in the park, and the natural history of the area.

## Sevier County

- Sevier County has one interpretive site located at the Sugarlands Visitor Center two miles from downtown Gatlinburg inside the National Park. Visitors can watch a film documenting the natural and cultural history of the area as well as the formation of the National Park. There is also extensive natural history exhibits along with park rangers on hand to recommend hikes and answer questions. The community of Pigeon Forge is one of the most popular tourism destinations in the United States and it offers a wide,

wide range of amusement and entertainment facilities combined with shops, restaurants and lodging properties. Overall it provides a very entertaining and compelling experience but not one that would traditionally fall under the category of interpretation.

The City of Gatlinburg, while less oriented toward theme and amusement parks, is nonetheless also a tourism oriented community. Gatlinburg has a longer history of serving visitors to the national park and to the great Smoky Mountains. In that regard it also offers a wide array of dining and lodging experiences with a downtown that is filled with a variety of shops. Gatlinburg has a rich historic connection to Appalachian craft culture that is evident today in the Great Smoky Arts & Crafts Community, an 8-mile loop in Gatlinburg of more than 120 artisans and craftsmen. Established in 1937, this community is the largest group of independent artisans in North America and is a designated Tennessee Heritage Arts & Crafts Trail where visitors can enjoy homemade crafts including candles, baskets, quilts, brooms, pottery, jewelry, dolls, ceramics, scrimshaw, silver smithing, leather, stained glass, wearable fashions, fine photography, frameable art, oils and watercolors. To be in this community, at least 50% of products on display must be produced on site.

The Gatlinburg Department of Tourism has several Welcome Centers that focus on providing information to the visitors, and may be interested in providing interpretive information about the byway and region.

In the center of downtown Gatlinburg is the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, established in 1912 as the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School. The School provided education to a once remote community where no formal schooling had been available, and was also the site of the first medical clinic in the area. Settlement School children expressed gratitude to the teachers by bringing them gifts of handmade wares made by their parents-weavings, baskets and woodcarvings.

In 1926, Arrowcraft Shop was opened to market the beautiful crafts of the Appalachian people. It was through the rich history of crafts in the region that the idea of craft classes at Arrowmont would gain popularity and begin to flourish. The workshops were a success and soon enrollments increased, attracting students and faculty worldwide. With the growing success of the summer craft classes, the School's name was changed to Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts and provisions were made to build a new studio complex in 1967.

Today Arrowmont is internationally recognized as a visual art education center and as a cultural center in the community. The public is welcome year-round to visit the campus and view artwork by local, national and international artists in the School's five galleries, which offer a full schedule of changing exhibitions, attend evening presentations, and visit the Artists-in-Residence studios.

## Cocke County

- Cocke County does not offer any specific interpretive facilities other than the county historical museum. This is located immediately on the byway in the same building as the Cocke County Tourism and Chamber of Commerce offices. It is a small museum that reviews the history of Native Americans, early farming and logging and later the canning industry within Cocke County. It offers a variety of materials from the past but will require more funding to provide more up to date delivery methods.
- An unusual and unexpected interpretive experience lies just 8 miles outside the city of Newport at the Bush brother's museum and gift shop. Canning vegetables has a long history within Cocke county. Bush Brother's began in Cocke county and is now a national food service company. Because of it's roots in Cocke county, the company decided to create a state of the arts museum with a restaurant and gift shop attached. This newly opened facility offers a surprisingly fun and interesting view on the work of the Bush

Brother's Corporation. Everything from fun interactions with the current golden retriever, the current mascot, Betty to explorations of the growing of beans, the nutritional value of beans, the canning process and the history of the company is explored in this engaging experience.

- It should be noted that a clear opportunity for interpretation exists within Cocke County at the former railroad system in downtown Newport. This facility is located immediately on the railroad tracks, right in the middle of downtown. The city and county are making efforts to find ways to create some type of facility in downtown Newport and it may be that one the interpretive themes will lend itself to the development of a visitor center in downtown Newport. The additional visitation by tourists will be welcomed by local merchants and would help improve the vitality of the community.

## Greene County

- Greene County and Greeneville are home to the president Andrew Johnson National Historic Site and presidential library. Andrew Johnson succeeded Abraham Lincoln following his assassination and oversaw the early years of the reconstruction effort following the Civil War. Today the visitor center is managed by the National Park Service and offers a high quality movie and as well as a high quality National Park Service educational and interpretive materials and tours. The Park Service also manages the nearby Andrew Johnson home and the cemetery. The presidential library is located at nearby Tusculum College in Greeneville. In Greeneville, additional interpretation can also be found at the Jones Avitt House. This property is owned by the local family and offers guided tours with appointments. The Greene County Historical Society offers a good quality local museum in a local school. The historical society has managed to collect an impressive array of materials about the history of Greene County.
- The Nathanael Greene Museum would be a very good prospect for investing byway funds to improve the overall

exhibits and the quality of the interpretive displays. The managers of the property have done an excellent job with limited funding. Additional funds would provide an experience that would be memorable for visitors and would attribute to the interesting history of Greene County.

- The one other interpreted experience within Greeneville is the General Morgan Inn. This is a historic property that has been renovated and brought up to a very high standard. It offers a restaurant as well as a small interpretive and visitor-information facility. The material in the hotel covers the final days of General Morgan, a confederate Civil War general, who was killed in Greeneville during a small skirmish.

321, offers an abundance of history, culture, and recreational experiences for all ages. This interpretive facility is a quality reconstructed replica of Fort Watauga, based on archeological and historical research. It includes a 450-seat amphitheater adjacent to the fort and is the site of the park offices and a gift shop. Sycamore Shoals is an important part of the state of Tennessee's history, as well as the American Revolution.

## Washington County

- The City of Jonesborough offers one of the most high quality interpretive experiences along the byway. Jonesborough's home to the National Storytelling Festival and the International Storytelling Center. The festival gives visitors with amazing first-hand encounters with the best storytellers in the United States as well as some of the best storytellers in the world at the festival. During the course of the tourism season there are weekly storytelling event provided for the benefit of residents and visitors. The Storytelling Center itself provides an interesting presentation on the art of storytelling and history of the Jonesborough storytelling festival.
- In addition, Jonesborough offers a historical museum and local lodging properties offer small amounts of interpretive information on the history of Jonesborough.

## Carter County

- Carter County and Elizabethton offer one of the most significant historical sites along the byway. Sycamore Shoals Historic State Historic Area, located along Highway

# Section VI: Tourism

## Tourism in the Great Smoky Mountains Byway Region

Mass market tourism is well established in the region, as is recreational tourism on public lands. Ten million visitors a year enter the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, distinguishing it as the most heavily visited NPS unit in the nation. There are many other scenic byways in the region, the best known being the Blue Ridge Parkway, and multiple gateway towns lead into the National Park itself. The two largest of these, Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg, have a density of tourism services that include lodging, food, retail and entertainment.

## Key Strengths of the Great Smoky Byway Region

- Stunning mountain scenery, and strong name recognition with both national and international visitors of Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- Outdoor recreational opportunities that include Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Cherokee National Forest, The Pisgah National Forest, and the Nantahala National Forest. Together they encompass an area almost equal to Yellowstone National Park.
- Nationally significant history, with East Tennessee a pivotal region both during and after the Civil War.
- Both the Quilting Trail and the Civil War Trail are effectively packaging and marketing to niche travelers.
- Proximity to major urban centers provides solid markets for potential visitors.

- Many public and private organizations exist throughout the region that share a concern for stewardship of natural, cultural, and historic assets.

## Key challenges of the 321 Byway Corridor

- The byway is 200 miles long and passes through seven counties. The primary challenge is to create a unifying identity that will be compelling and will resonate with travelers and locals alike.
- The National Park Service is the anchor; the historic downtowns and villages on the byway must also be perceived as valuable visitor experiences
- It is currently difficult for travelers to identify what is authentic in the region.
- Currently, most municipal websites do not effectively direct or link travelers to attractions or traveler services in the region.
- Visitor Centers stock a plethora of brochures printed by individual public lands, communities and commercial attractions. Few materials, however, link destinations together, or help the traveler figure out how to identify to the highest quality experiences.

## Strategic Conclusion

To expand possibilities for travelers, the byway must reach for stories that are under told. To infuse the byway with meaning and personalize experiences for each traveler, the byway must identify places and experiences of extraordinary quality to provide a memorable experience for heritage traveler who is characterized as well educated, well traveled, and expecting a learning experience.

## Evaluating Travel Trends

The region has an extensive infrastructure of tourism services and attractions, yet there are only few instances of travel products that address the major trends currently powering the travel industry today:

- The search for health and well being (evident in recreation not in other arenas)
- Personalization of the travel experience
- Women only travel
- Culinary Tourism
- Immersion in Place (as opposed to continual touring through many places)

## Targeting Audiences for the Great Smoky Byway

Geographically, a 500 mile region for the touring “drive” market stretches as far as New Orleans and Shreveport in Louisiana; Little Rock, Arkansas; Montgomery, Alabama; Pensacola and Jacksonville, Florida; Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; Raleigh, North Carolina; Richmond, Virginia; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Flint, Michigan; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Kansas City, Kansas.

## Opportunities for Product Development and Marketing

Discussions with the byway steering committee have given good direction about how the 321 corridor can distinguish itself from the other byways and other attractions in the region, and create a real Sense of Place. The most promising opportunities for Product development include the following:

- Deliver a message of Authentic People, Authentic Places, and create ways that travelers can make these connections, be they at existing attractions, or ones yet to be developed.
- Honor Centers of Excellence and transform them into Centers of Experience.

- Infuse the Byway with meaning by developing vehicles of experience that convey meaning.
- Prepare for the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil War by creating a Reconstruction Trail which will tell the untold story of the aftermath of the War. The byway can pull together a string of human stories that will move people along the byway and affirm that East Tennessee is truly the best place in America to learn firsthand the lasting impacts of the Civil War. “Rehabilitating Europe was nothing next to the Civil War,” one scholar has written. “50% of agricultural machinery and 90% of the railroad tracks were unusable.”

This will be a fresh focus, one that has direct relevance to today. It will tap a new audience, and give the establish Civil War buffs something new to experience. The new question to be asked at battle sites is, “What became of this community 10 years after the war ended...30 years later...50 years later?”

To personalize the reconstruction story, a plethora of questions remains. Where were the troops sent? How did they get home? How many of the wounded survived the medical treatment? What did the amputees do for work? What was the economy like in three years? Five years? Ten years later?

Each of the seven counties could feature 20 family stories, tapping into traveler interest in genealogy. The byway could produce 100 different biography cards, bringing personalities to life, tying their stories into multiple locations, making their family story collectible. We could involve the History Channel, and tie the story lines into the Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough.

The African American story can be brought in, moving the story beyond the Underground Railroad to stories during Reconstruction. Parrottsville can be featured as the home of two of Andrew Johnson’s slaves. Newport offers stories of two African American schools. The National Park Service could add to the story at Cade’s Cove, and

address the questions, "What was the damage to the natural landscapes, to the local cultures?"

Museums have an important part to play. There is a well established model to follow in the Mormon Genealogy Center in Salt Lake City that is heavily involved in genealogy tourism. There is an opportunity to create partnership between the museums in the region and the East Tennessee History Center to establish a smaller, but similar facility in the region.

## Section VII: Goals, Objectives and Vision

This corridor is one of the most exceptional roads in the country from the perspective of combining natural, recreational, historic and cultural intrinsic qualities. It has nationally designated and recognized destinations, sites, structures and events in each of these categories. This project is the first to find common ground for all seven counties and as such is an ideal springboard for demonstrating the power of cooperative economic development and heritage tourism projects.

Based on the Byway Partnership group's work and this planning process, the following are goals and objectives that will guide this corridor plan.

### Byway goals

- Goal One: Offer a genuine Northeast Tennessee experience to future generations.
- Goal Two: Use the byway to strengthen our local economies.
- Goal Three: Become an All-American Road
- Goal Four: Become the Gateway to the Yellowstone of the East
- Goal Five: Become a Central Corridor in a Grand

### Circle Tour of the Smokies

- Goal Six: Become One of the most active, vibrant heritage tourism destinations in the nation
- Goal 7: Infuse the 321 Byway Corridor with meaning, thus creating for each byway traveler the opportunity to relate to those byway qualities and stories they personally care most about, and to create regional programs that truly expand the possibilities for meaningful and authentic experience.



Figure 11-Classic Great Smoky Mountains National Park View

## Byway Objectives

1. Establish the 321 corridor as one of the Southeast's premier scenic and heritage drives.
2. Manage the landscape character and landscape heritage of the corridor while accommodating growth.
3. Protect and enhance the region's mountain heritage.
4. Guide future road projects so as to protect and/or enhance the corridor's heritage landscape and cultural character.
5. Manage the negative impacts of traffic and visitation in areas of high congestion.
6. Disperse visitation along the corridor. Encourage longer stays and higher spending in weaker counties.
7. Protect environmental resources along the corridor.
8. Interpret the Civil War history of the region with a Reconstruction Trail.



Figure 12 - Historic Jonesborough, first Tennessee Capital and Host of National Storytelling Festival

## Byway Vision

In ten years, the Great Smoky Mountains Byway will be known as a scenic and heritage drive in the Southeast comparable to the Blue Ridge Parkway. The route will stand out from other drives due to its unique combination of national destinations (e.g., Dollywood and Great Smoky Mountains National Park) and its selection of well preserved small downtowns that offer the full range of good dining, retail and lodging that visitors are seeking in quality heritage destinations. Storytelling, music and crafts will be available and highlighted in the most professional manner.

The area will be distinguished for the direct connection between the villages, water and the mountains. Every town will offer direct access routes to outdoor recreation in the foothills and along the waterways of Eastern Tennessee.

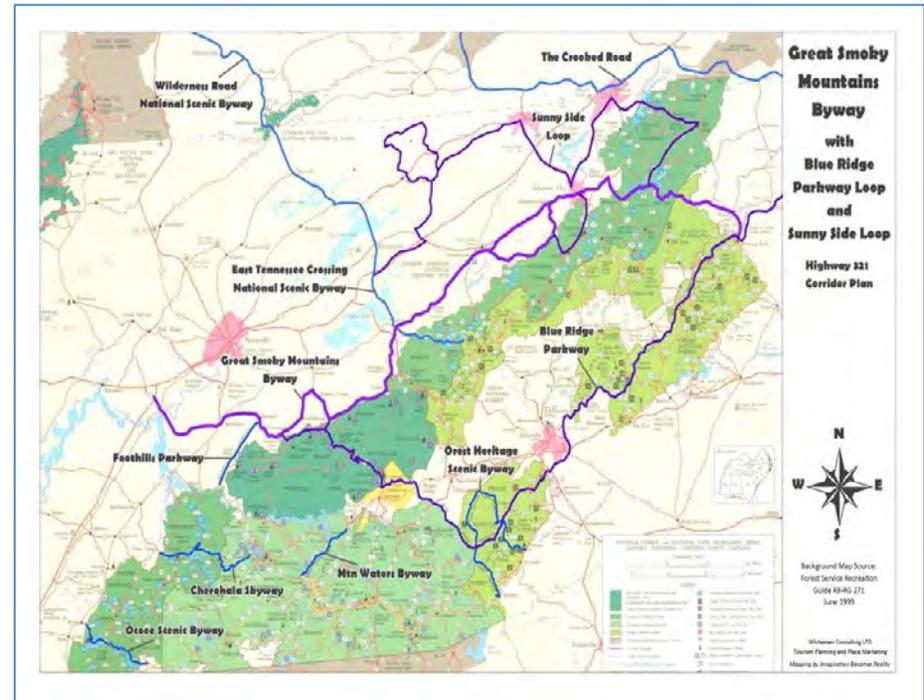
These connections between heritage downtowns and outdoor recreation will make the route known as one of America's best inn-to-inn routes. Visitors can easily drive or bicycle from one inn to the next and enjoy a full week's vacation along the corridor.

Finally, due to careful road management, visitors and residents will enjoy the experience of driving along a route that was well-designed from one end to the other. Signage is consistent, but not boring. Road edges are neat, but not too controlled. The corridor feels integrated to the traveler.



2. The byway is at the center of one of the densest collections of scenic and heritage drives in America. Therefore, become the central corridor in a grand circle tour of the Great Smoky Mountains. Be a leader in promoting this region as one of the most compelling scenic and heritage drives in the nation.

- The Great Smoky Mountains Byway
- The East Tennessee Crossing
- The Sunny Side Trail
- The Wilderness Road
- The Crooked Road
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Cherohala Skyway
- Ocoee Byway
- Orest Byway
- Mountain Waters



**3. The byway offers many complementary assets to the Blue Ridge Parkway, one of the most famous scenic drives in the world. Develop this byway in a manner that allows you to become a sister route to the Blue Ridge Parkway.**

Key ingredients for success will include:

- Presenting a clear image
- Encouraging quality destinations, interpretation, signage and community development
- Find a consistent voice through good graphics
- Respect the landscape
- Encourage fun and exploration

Promote the byway as one of America's grand corridors featuring the following nationally significant resources:

- Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- The Eastern United States' largest collection of public lands and outdoor recreation resources
- The best whitewater rafting in the East
- America's best Appalachian cultural experience including country music, historic downtowns, storytelling, crafts and Native American heritage
- America's best interpretive experience on the post-Civil War Reconstruction Period and the under-told stories of that time. This includes the National Park Service's President Andrew Johnson National Historic Site in Greeneville.
- The National Storytelling Festival
- And, Dollywood and Pigeon Forge – one of the nation's top visited entertainment and amusement destinations.

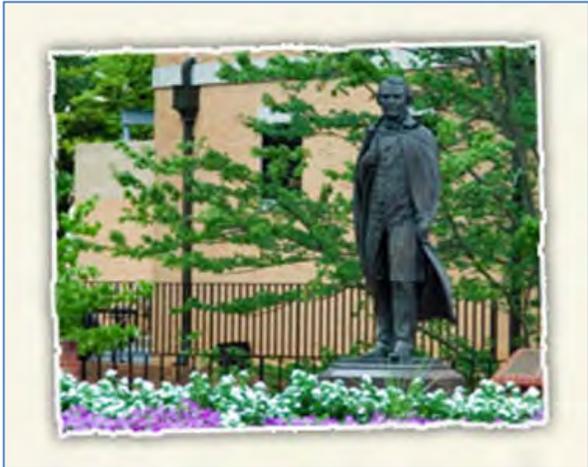


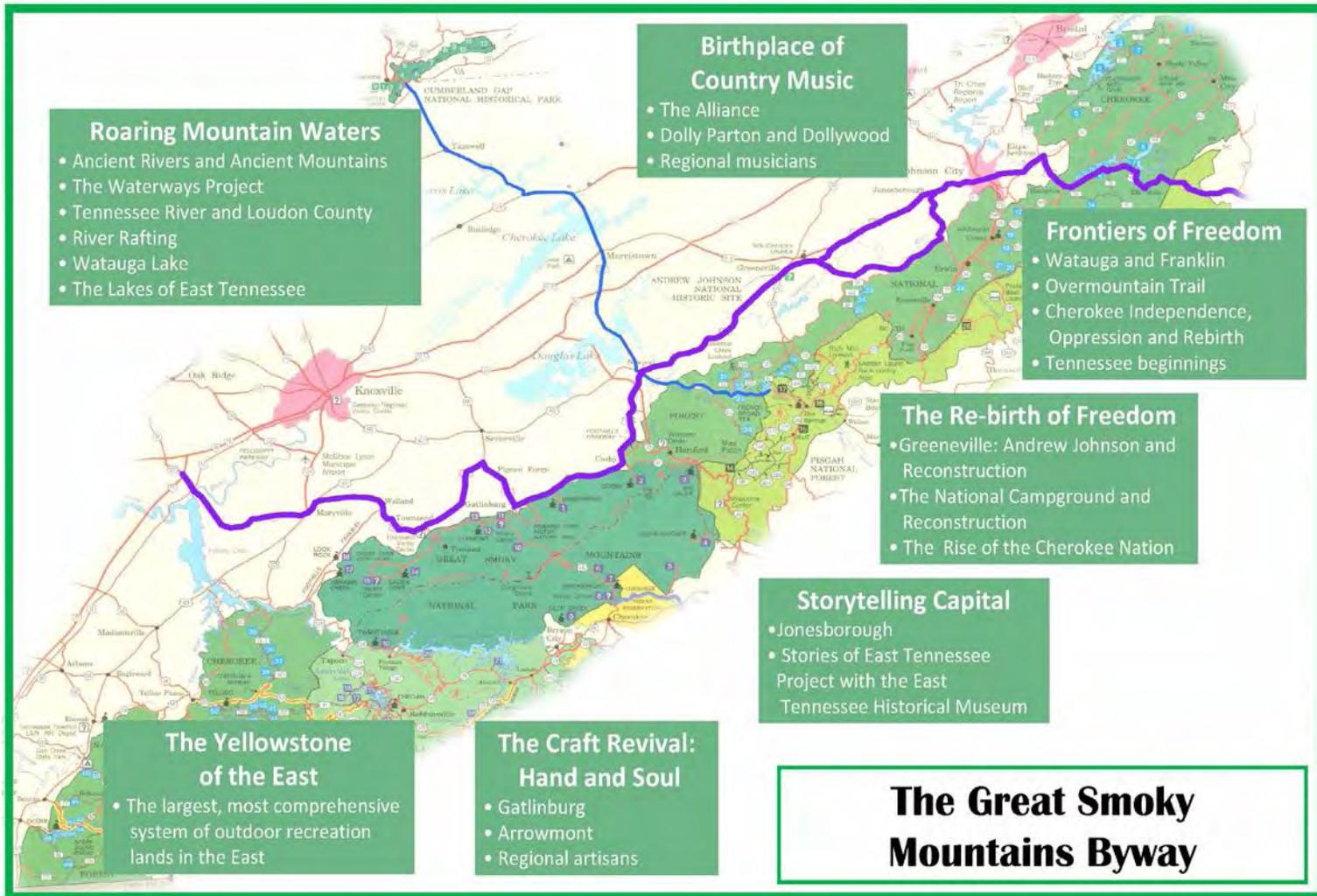
**5. Become one of America’s best known heritage destinations by expanding on the story of the region’s firsts: westward expansion, country music, storytelling, the crafts revival and natural heritage conservation.**

The Great Smoky Mountains Byway is Original Tennessee....it is a Tennessee Original

- Origins of freedom, or Firsts in Freedom
- Birthplace of Country Music
- A Union Re-borne
- Nation’s Capital of Storytelling
- Ancient Rivers and Ancient Mountains
- Re-creation through the Outdoors
- Craft Revival and Creativity

These themes, these stories offer a diverse and compelling set of images, activities and messages to convey to travelers.





## Section IX: All-American Road Requirements

The National Scenic Byways Program requires that routes seeking All-American Road status demonstrate that the route offers services and facilities that are deeper and more developed than the typical National Scenic Byway.

### **Accommodation for Group Tour Buses**

The Great Smoky Mountains Byway already accommodates hundreds of tour buses each year. The primary destination for the group tour market is Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg. However, Jonesborough and Townsend also see significant numbers of groups each year to their festivals, conferences and heritage sites.

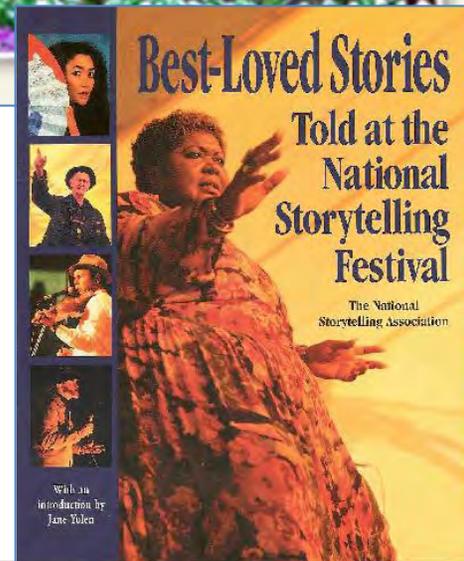
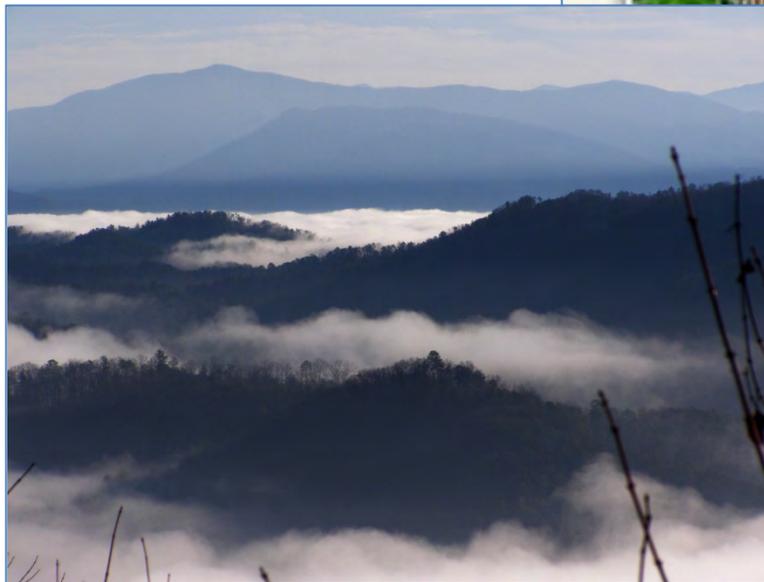
There are professional visitors centers with restroom facilities in all of the primary destination communities along the byway. All itinerary development that follows this plan will assure that group tours are directed along routes that offer the necessary facilities.

As new interpretive centers and visitors centers are developed, the group market must be accommodated.

### **Multilingual Signage and Collateral**

Currently, Sevier County produces materials for the international traveler. This project will be required for the full byway in the future.

## Section X: Recommendations



## Action 1: Image

**Adopt a name for the byway that is compelling, descriptive and workable.**

Group adopted the name: The Great Smoky Mountains Byway

**Create a website for the byway**

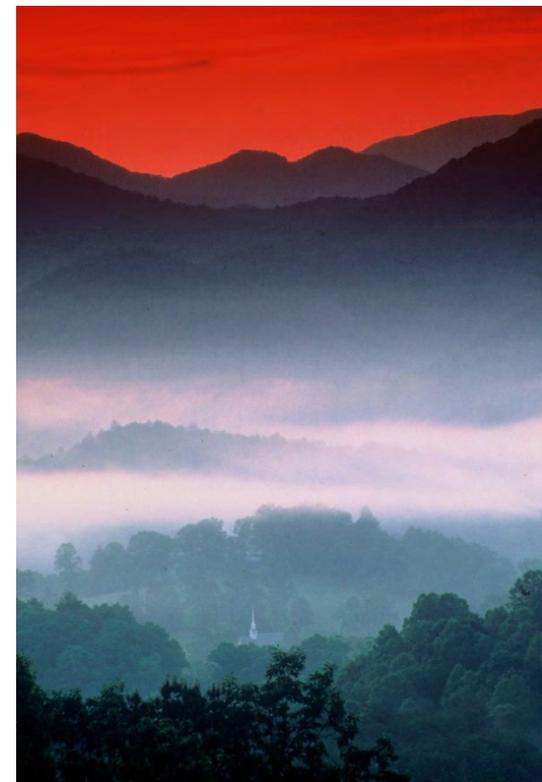
Group established initial website in the summer of 2010.

**Develop identification logo and sign for byway**

Group developed sign and TDOT will fabricate and erect signs as part of TN Trails and Byways Program

### **Steps to Take to Move Forward**

All actions are moving forward.



## Action 2: Formalize and Broaden Organization

Select an organizational structure for the GSMB Taskforce

Give presentations on the byway and its objectives to elected leaders and the general public during the fall of 2010

Reach out to other potential partners and bring them into the organization

Contact other regional organizations and find ways to work together on projects

### **Steps to Move Forward**

- Steering Committee formed
- Presentations will be made to counties in coming months

## Action 3: Develop Collateral

Develop a basic brochure for the byway that captures the byway's character through text and images

Create a byway map for distribution and for posting at Visitors Centers

Create a set of itineraries for exploring the byway: historic lodging, distinctive dining and agri-tourism

### Steps to Move Forward

- Project map modified into byway map
- Byway group establishes small committee to outline their map/brochure – messages and general structure
- Counties submit information for Reconstruction Trail
- Byway group provides photographs
- Consultant writes text and designer prepares map/brochure
- Byway group edits and refines piece

- Byway group raises funds to print map/brochure
- Counties submit information on lodging, dining and agri-tourism to consultant.
- Consultant prepares first draft of itineraries for printing in two color, 3-fold 8.5x11 format
- Byway group raises funds to print itineraries

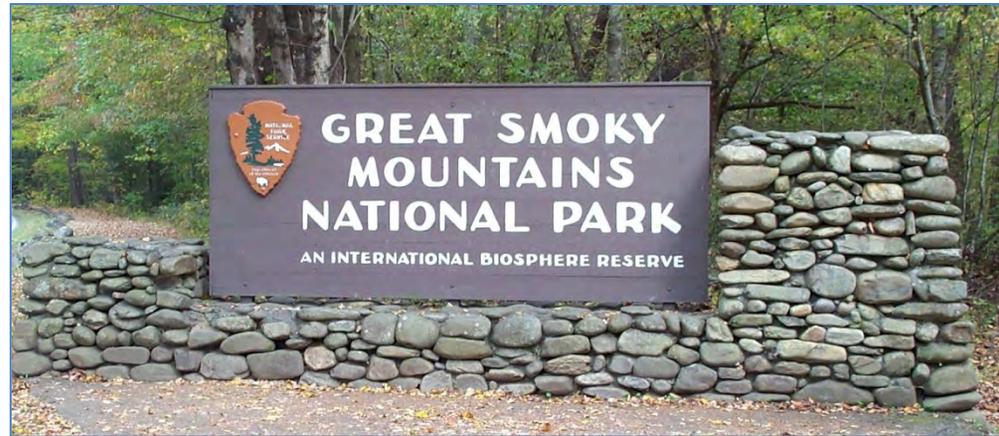


## Action 4: Develop a More Detailed Signage Plan;

### Fund, Fabricate and Erect Signage

Develop a plan for Gateway Monuments – design and locations

Create a directional signage plan



Identify locations for orientation and information signs

Make downtown signage recommendations

### Steps to Move Forward

- Road management guide provides direction on these issues.



## Action 5: Create the Reconstruction Trail for the Civil War Sesquicentennial

Create a map of the potential trail and think about how existing facilities and sites might be made more substantial

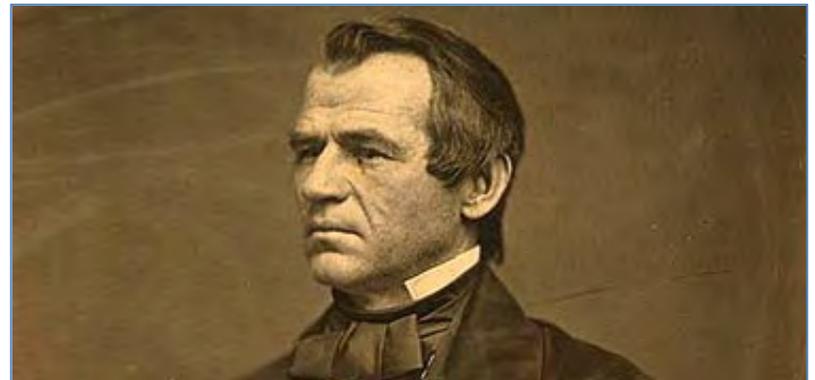
Seek funding for facility improvements and promotional materials from the National Scenic Byways Program and other sources

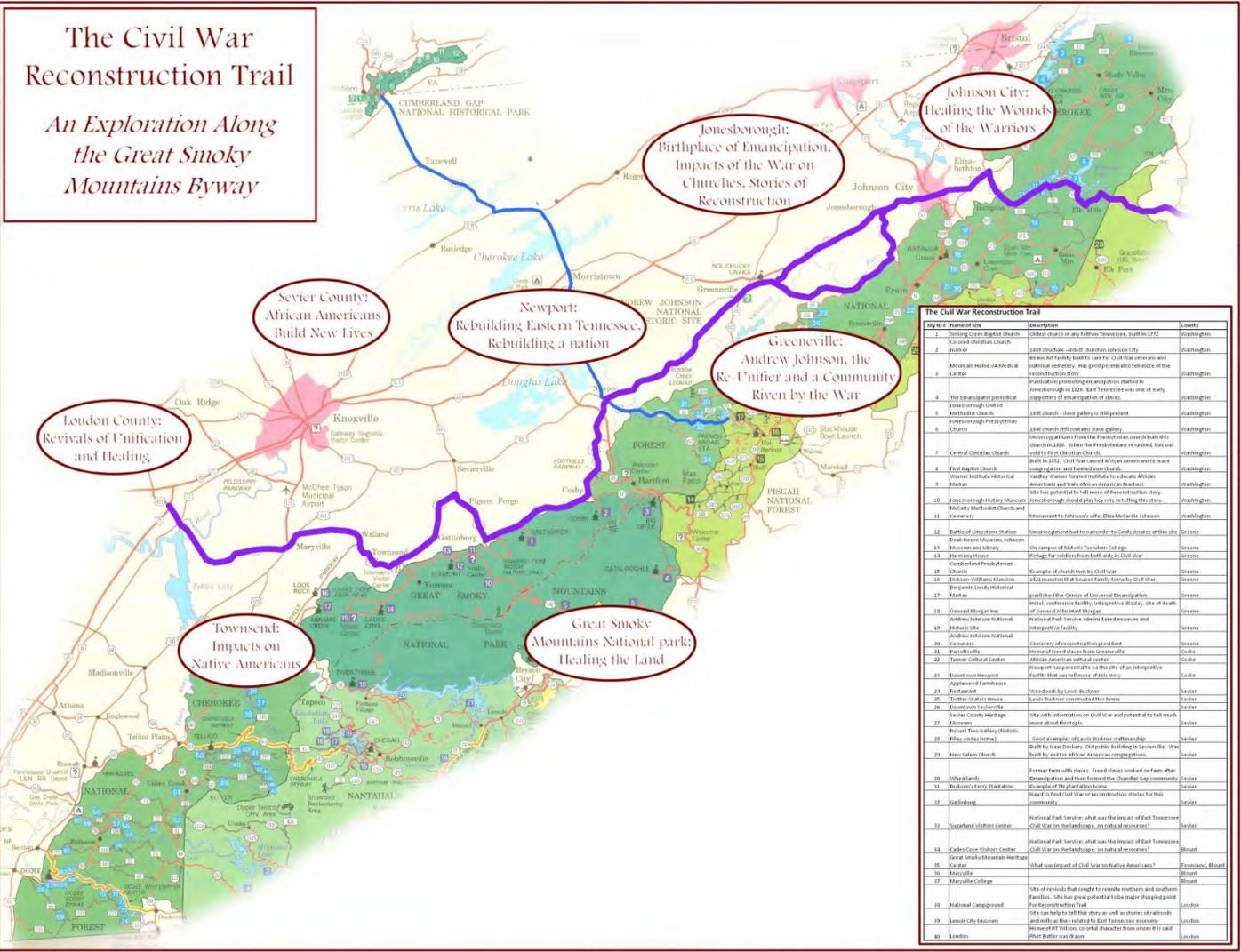
Create partnerships with other relevant organizations to support and implement this idea

### Steps to Move Forward

- Think about ad work on and research how each county can participate
- Flesh out what needs to be improved at various sites

- Work with regional organizations to develop either a signed interpretive program or an audio program, or both





**The Civil War Reconstruction Trail**  
*An Exploration Along the Great Smoky Mountains Byway*

Loudon County:  
Revivals of Unification  
and Healing

Sevier County:  
African Americans  
Build New Lives

Jonesborough:  
Birthplace of Emancipation.  
Impacts of the War on  
Churches, Stories of  
Reconstruction

Johnson City:  
Healing the Wounds  
of the Warriors

Newport:  
Rebuilding Eastern Tennessee,  
Rebuilding a Nation

Greeneville:  
Andrew Johnson, the  
Re-Unifier and a Community  
Riven by the War

Townsend:  
Impacts on  
Native Americans

Great Smoky  
Mountains National park:  
Healing the Land

Site #	Name of Site	Description	County
1	Looking Rock Baptist Church	Original church of any faith in Tennessee, built in 1772	Washington
2	Looking Rock Christian Church	1898 structure, oldest church in Johnson City	Washington
3	Wesleyan House, VA Medical Center	Wesleyan Art Facility built to care for Civil War veterans and national cemetery. Has good potential to tell more of the reconstruction story.	Washington
4	The Emancipation periodical	Publication providing emancipation details to Jonesborough in 1861. East Tennessee was one of early supporters of emancipation of slaves.	Washington
5	Methodist Church	1848 church - stone gallery is still present	Washington
6	Presbyterian Church	1848 church still contains stone gallery.	Washington
7	Central Christian Church	Shows opposition from the Presbyterian church to the church in 1861. Shows the Presbyterian involvement. This was used to form Christian Church.	Washington
8	First Baptist Church	Built in 1852. Civil War saw many African Americans to leave long migration and formed new churches.	Washington
9	Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church	Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church to educate African Americans and train African American to labor.	Washington
10	Jonesborough Military Museum	Site has potential to tell more of Reconstruction story. Jonesborough should play key role in telling this story.	Washington
11	Methodist Church and Cemetery	Monument to Johnson's wife, Eliza McCallie Johnson	Washington
12	Battle of Lenoir Station	Union regiment had to surrender to Confederate at this site	Greene
13	Donk House Museum, Johnson	Site contains of historic Tusculum College	Greene
14	Harrison House	Refuge for soldiers from both side in Civil War	Greene
15	Wesleyan Methodist Church	St. James of church torn by Civil War	Greene
16	Dickson-Williams Mansion	1822 mansion that housed family home by Civil War	Greene
17	Bergansky-Lewis Historical Marker	published the Genesis of Emancipation	Greene
18	General Morgan Site	Remains conference facility, interpretive display, site of death of General John Hunt Morgan	Greene
19	Andrew Johnson National Historic Site	National Civil Service administration museum and interpretive facility.	Greene
20	Andrew Johnson National Cemetery	Cemetery of reconstruction president	Greene
21	Parisville	Home of freed slaves from Greeneville	Cook
22	Tanner Cultural Center	African American cultural center	Cook
23	Reynolds Farmstead	Reynolds has potential to be the site of an interpretive facility that would focus on this story.	Cook
24	Applewood farmhouse	Overlooked by Lewis Burdick	Cook
25	Timber-Cook House	Lewis Burdick contributed to this home	Cook
26	Dawson Tavern	Site with information on Civil War and potential to tell much more about this topic	Cook
27	Marysville	Home of freed slaves	Cook
28	Wiley Anderson home	Good example of post-Battle reconstruction	Cook
29	New Salem Church	Home to Lewis Burdick. One public building in Greeneville. Site built by and for African American congregation.	Cook
30	Whitewater	Former farm with slaves. Freed slaves worked on farm after Emancipation and then formed the Chandler Gap community	Cook
31	Madison's Farm Plantation	Remains of the plantation home	Cook
32	Sullivanburg	Need to find Civil War or reconstruction stories for this community	Cook
33	Sugarland Visitors Center	National Park, service what was the impact of East Tennessee Civil War on the landscape, on natural resources?	Cook
34	Cedar Cove Visitors Center	National Park, service what was the impact of East Tennessee Civil War on the landscape, on natural resources?	Blount
35	Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center	What was impact of Civil War on native Americans?	Tennessee, Blount
36	Marionville		Blount
37	Marionville College		Blount
38	National Campground	Site of events that sought to resolve tensions and improve families. Site has great potential to be major shopping point for Reconstruction Trail	Loudon
39	Lenoir City Museum	Site can help to tell the story as well as stories of railroads and industry as they related to East Tennessee economy	Loudon
40	Loudon	Home of Eliza Johnson, critical character from whom to go and show Butler was drawn	Loudon

## Action 6: Seek a National Scenic Byways Grant in the Spring of 2011

### Potential projects to fund:

- Reconstruction Trail Interpretive signage and/or audio tour
- Facility improvements or new construction in target locations
- Directional signage, orientation signage and/or wayside interpretive signage along entire byway

Develop criteria for defining critical or byway enhancing projects

### **Steps to Move Forward**

- Decide on which projects to fund
- Identify matching funds and/or matching resources – this will be a major part of deciding what projects to pursue
- Finish the plan for submittal with the application



## Action 7: Work with Regional Partners to Establish the Idea of the Grand Circle Tours

Work with the Blue Ridge Parkway organization on their reaction to this concept, how to approach this concept, how to present idea in publications

Promote the Concept of this Region Offering the Best Collection of Scenic and Heritage Tours in America

### Steps to Move Forward

- Identify Task Force members to talk with Blue Ridge group and others about this concept





## Action 8: Promote Outdoor Recreation Along the Entire Byway – Gateways and Getaways

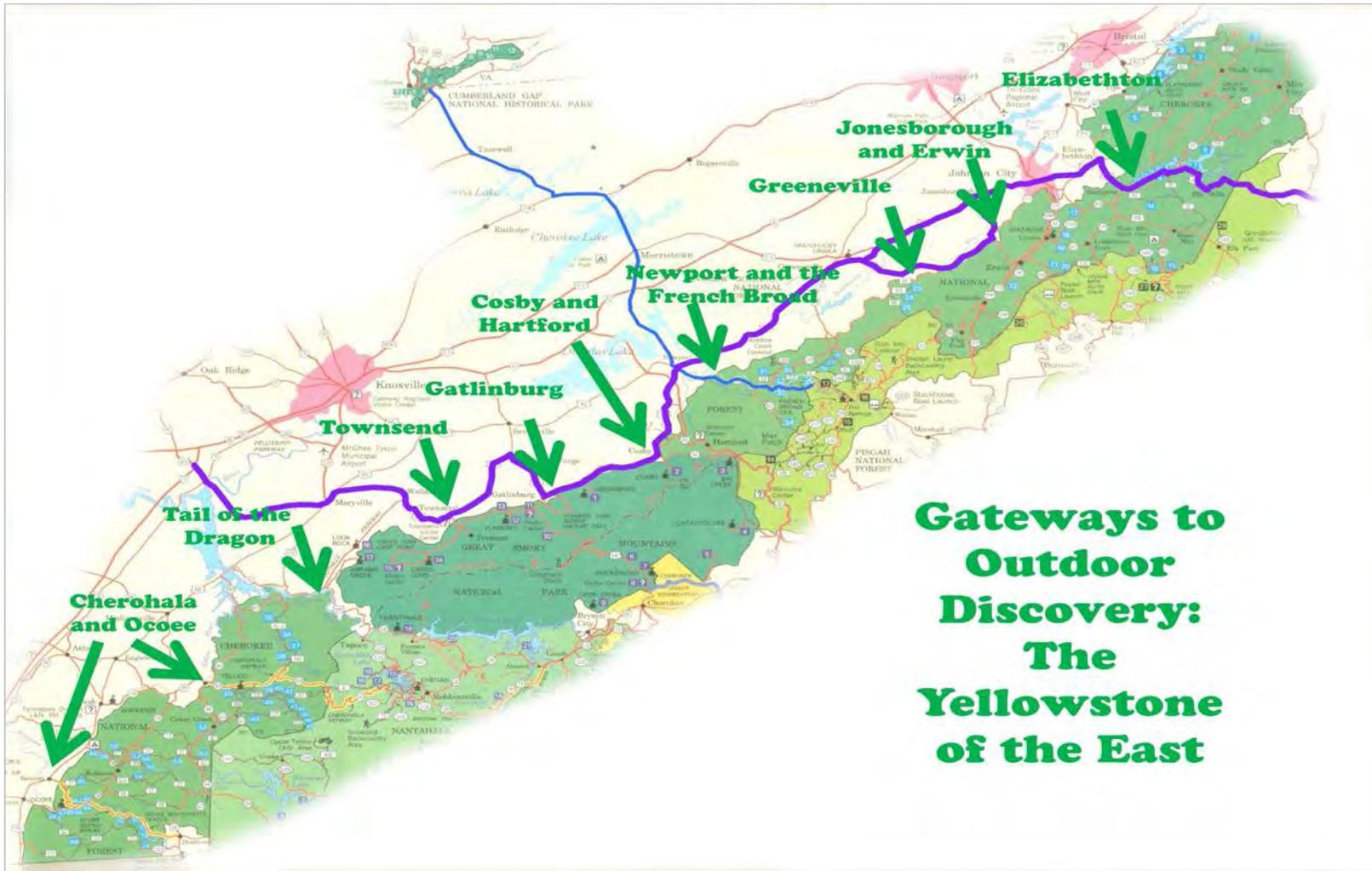
**Organize existing information on recreational resources and trails and river access that can be found near each gateway community along the byway**

**Publish a Gateways and Getaways Guide for the Smokies – options: insert to regional publication, target Knoxville and Tri-Cities area**

### **Steps to Move Forward**

- Create subcommittee of Task Force to look at this idea or to generate better ideas on selling the concept of outdoor recreation along the entire byway corridor





**Gateways to  
Outdoor  
Discovery:  
The  
Yellowstone  
of the East**

## Action 9: Prepare Road Management Guide for the Road Edge and Future Improvements

Ideas to support more creative, Context Sensitive Design in New Construction

Ideas for guardrail, signage, pullout road edge management

County by County ideas for managing the most critical landscapes along the route and still accommodating growth

### **Steps to Move Forward**

- Prepared by consultant

## Action 10: Marketing Toolkit

Specific ideas for reaching specific markets

### **Steps to Move Forward**

- Materials needed from counties