

Community Based Resource Team FINAL Recommendations

US 321, Phase II, Buckhorn Road to SR 416

April 9, 2007

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Fourteen workshops have been conducted by the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) in conjunction with a Community Based Resource Team (CBRT), and with the assistance of several design specialists. These workshops have taken place between December 2004 and

April 2007. Two public workshops were also held on August 29 and November 14, 2005 to present the CBRT's findings and preliminary recommendations to the public. An Environmental Public Hearing was held on January 25, 2007 to get feedback on the TEER document from the public on the alternatives being considered.

This document has been prepared by the CBRT, with the assistance of the TDOT and the Consultant Project Managers, and represents the recommendations to TDOT Commissioner Gerald Nicely for a Context Sensitive Solution for Phase II of US 321 (State Route 73) in Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

Phase II concerns the widening of US 321 (State Route 73) from Buckhorn

Road to east of SR 416 (approximately 1.6 miles in length), and is referred to in the community as "East Parkway." This segment had been advanced into the design phase, and a few properties had been pre-purchased by local governments as right-of-way acquisition for the project. A second project along US 321, from Glades Road to Buckhorn Road (approximately 2.4 miles in length), has recently been constructed and is referred to as Phase I. Phase I was under construction from the spring of 2001 until fall of 2006. Landscaping is currently being installed as a result of the CBRT recommendations for Phase I.

The recommendations contained herein concern only Phase II, from Buckhorn Road to east of SR 416.

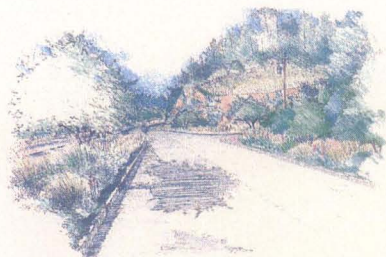
Goals

Our region is a wondrous and sometimes magical one bordering one of our national treasures, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. As

such, it is the belief of the CBRT that this project should not negatively impact the park experience, but should be improved to add to the overall visitor experience.

The project goals established early on by the CBRT were to develop a consistent overall theme along the corridor and to create a "parkway" feel for both Phase I and II. As the team continued to meet throughout 2005, discussions

centered on the need to go beyond simply creating a safe, efficient, affordable, maintainable and aesthetically pleasing facility. The project goals evolved to reflect the CBRT's desire to protect the environment and the quality of our region's natural and cultural heritage, which in turn sustain the economic health of our local communities.



321 East Parkway / Phase II



Recommendations

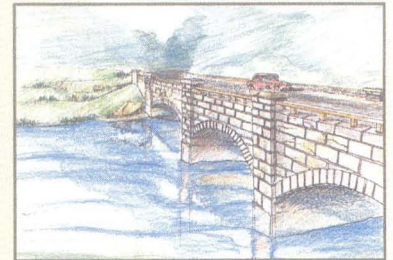
The CBRT recommends that Concept II be implemented, with the understanding that adjustments to the current concept may be required in the final design of the project. In order to ensure that the integrity of the design concept is being carried out, we ask that the resource team be included in the review process as the project moves through design and construction.

The final placement of the median crossovers and the median width at any given location may need to be somewhat different than shown on the concept. As Concept II is implemented, it is the strong desire of the CBRT that the introduction of provisions for left-turn entrance/exit to/from any properties be absolutely prohibited, such that the median does not lose its intended purpose(s).

In any case, the CBRT recommends that median openings and the median width at any given location be generally as shown on Concept II.

We strongly recommend that concepts for this highway should reflect national park standards and that the highway itself should create a parkway experience. For this to become a reality, it is imperative that the various elements that make up the whole of this highway project meet the criteria herein. The CBRT strongly recommends that Phase II include the following four elements:

- ✓ A bifurcated, or split, median should be utilized as illustrated in Concept II. This approach will insure that this road remains a scenic parkway by creating rhythmic sequences of curves and elevations and by preserving the pleasant view of the mountains and ridge tops. A wider and varying width median provides the opportunity for a more naturalistic landscape that more closely mimics the natural setting and blends the highway comfortably with the environment. It will have a "traffic calming" effect for more moderate speeds, and will provide for limited access with development occurring in clusters at appropriate locations, as opposed to continuous strip development. With regard to the median element, both the "no build" and Concept I alternatives are traditional solutions and create a highway corridor that is "business as usual" and that are not appropriate in a parkway environment.
- ✓ Bridges that span the middle prong of the Little Pigeon River should be of an arch design with stone facing, and should have a railing system that match those that occur in the park.
- ✓ Retaining walls should not exceed a height of 15' and should have the appearance of what one would expect to see inside the national park. Therefore, retaining walls, where required, should be terraced and have a stone surface that matches in color and texture those that occur in the park.
- ✓ Lastly, markers, signing and lighting should be strictly limited only to those locations where they are required for safety. Signing should be kept simple and tasteful and in keeping with the character of the national park. Indirect lighting, for example on the bridges, may be appropriate but the light sources should be hidden. The ultimate goal should be to minimize light pollution in keeping with the mission of the International Dark-Sky Association: <http://www.darksky.org/index.html>



The CBRT further recommends the strategic placement of native plant species within Phase II, as recommended for Phase I. Plantings should be appropriate to water and soil moisture conditions at the site and should be chosen so as to require minimal trimming. Provisions for wildlife-proof trash collection should also be provided at appropriate areas.

Finally, the CBRT recommends the posted speed to be established at 35 MPH, and that fencing be added at all retaining wall locations for the safety of pedestrians and wildlife alike. The DOT should utilize both appropriate signage to alert travelers to wildlife crossing on the road and culverts to be installed in conjunction with fencing to promote safe passageway for wildlife with the intent of mitigating animal mortality.

Illustrations of the CBRT recommendations can be found on line at:

<http://www.tdot.state.tn.us/us321/solutions.htm>



Proposed
New

Future US 321 Corridor Development

The CBRT recommends that a "Corridor Vision" approach be utilized for any possible future development of the US 321 corridor. The expectation would be to look at all aspects of road development including systems traffic, community visions and plans, and regional modes with the intent to create "projects" with broad-based community support.

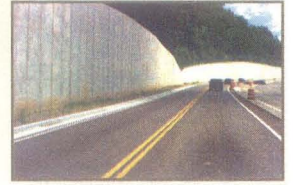
It is the strong desire of the CBRT for the next section eastward on US 321 (from SR 416 to Cosby, near the end of Section A of the Foothills Parkway) to be closely coordinated with the National Park Service work on the Foothills Parkway (Section B), and that this section meet the recommendations for Phase II herein ("park-like" standards). It is

the CBRT's desire that this section be viewed as a Section of Independent Utility that will be developed with strong local input so as to reflect community standards.

Further, it is the strong desire of the CBRT that any further development of US 321 be developed in a Context Sensitive manner, with consideration given to the recommendations for Phase II herein ("park-like" standards).

The CBRT has been mindful of future transportation needs of our region. We are convinced that implementation of our recommendations for Phase II will protect our environment and mountain heritage while allowing our communities to prosper as our region continues to grow into the future.

US 321 (SR 73) Today



Phase I, between Glades Road and Buckhorn Road (looking east)



Phase II, near Old Hills Creek Road (looking west)

Environmental Compliance

In early 2005, the CBRT appointed an environmental subcommittee to delve into related issues for the project. Soon thereafter, based upon the recommendation of the environmental subcommittee, the CBRT requested that TDOT prepare a comprehensive environmental report. Later, during the summer of 2005, TDOT committed to preparing a Tennessee Environmental Evaluation Report, or TEER. It is the understanding of the CBRT that the TEER will influence, but not dictate, the final decision on which alternative is chosen for implementation for Phase II, for example Concept I or Concept II. Impacts addressed in a TEER fall into two major categories, technical studies and other studies.

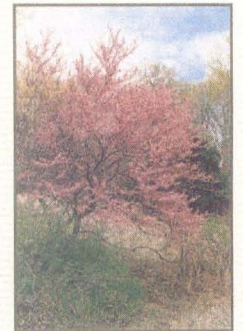
Recent draft technical studies for Phase II have included: Archaeological; Historical/Architectural; Ecological; and Air Quality/Noise. In the further development of the TEER, consideration will also be given to:

- ✓ Land use
- ✓ Farmland
- ✓ Social
- ✓ Environmental Justice
- ✓ Displacements
- ✓ Relocations
- ✓ Economic
- ✓ Bike/Ped
- ✓ Visual
- ✓ Energy
- ✓ Geotechnical/Soil
- ✓ Construction

Impacts reported in the technical studies (archaeological; historical/architectural; ecological; and air quality/noise) do not indicate any "fatal

flaws" in either of the CBRT concepts. The initial results indicate that some further testing will be required, regardless of which concept is pursued.

The Draft TEER Document was approved by TDOT on December 8, 2006. Subsequently, the TEER Environmental Public Hearing was held on January 25, 2007. No "fatal flaws" surfaced as a result of this Public Hearing. However, either concept will require some additional technical studies be done, once the preferred alternative selection is made by TDOT.



Future Project Development

We recommend the CBRT be involved in continuing project development to assure the project reflects community objectives. Although the schedule for the remainder of the project is yet to be defined, we recommend moving the project development in an expeditious manner.

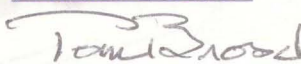


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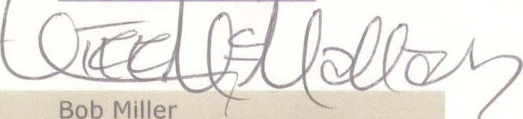
Proposed New Bridge

Community Based Resource Team Members (CBRT)

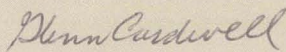
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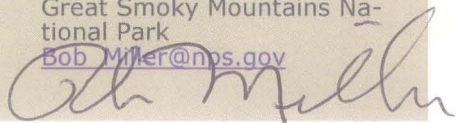
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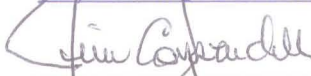
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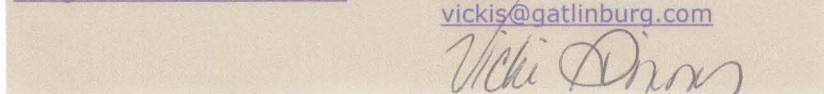
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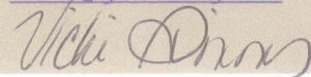
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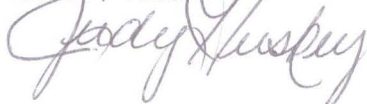
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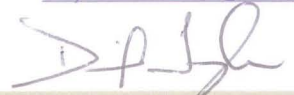
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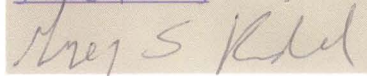
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Citizen / Teacher



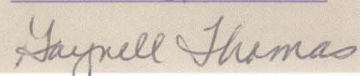
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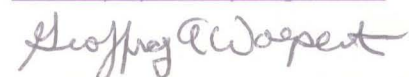
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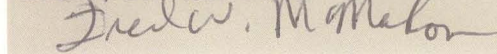
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