

6.3 Enhanced Outreach

The North Shore Road Public Involvement Program utilized aggressive media strategies to reach low-income populations, minority communities, and individuals that may have special needs:

- Public meetings were held in five different locations, providing individuals with multiple opportunities to participate.
- Court reporters, or transcribers, were available at the workshops to record public comments.
- Interpreters for the hearing impaired were available at the workshops.
- Public workshop locations complied with regulations stated under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Social advertisements were provided in local and minority community newspapers, such as *The Cherokee One Feather*, which is published weekly by the Tribal Council of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.
- Project newsletters were distributed via mail and electronic correspondence.
- Project website conforms to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act: Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards.
- Nine document viewing locations are available in North Carolina and Tennessee for individuals unable to access the Internet.

Demographic characteristics for the area are presented in Socioeconomic and Community Features, Section 3.2.1 and information concerning minority populations and low-income communities is included in Environmental Justice and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 4.2.6.

6.4 Public Participation Opportunities

6.4.1 Project Timeframe

Public participation opportunities are integral in providing the public an opportunity to actively participate in the decision-making process. The scheduling and timing of public opportunities are critical in any project to ensure that the information is presented in a timely manner prior to key decision points. The public involvement program for North Shore Road was designed to integrate comments throughout the project. This flexible and open approach provides the public more opportunity to evaluate project decisions and provide input.

6.4.2 Public Meetings

The public involvement program is a continuous and flexible process, administered to collect as much input as possible throughout the duration of the EIS process. Public feedback serves as the guideline for all public involvement meetings.

The public involvement program for the North Shore Road EIS included five series of meetings, including one series of public scoping meetings, three series of public workshops, and one series of public hearings, at major milestones in the planning process. Each series included five meeting locations (Bryson City, Graham County, Asheville, Knoxville, and Gatlinburg), which provided a variety of opportunities for interested

people to participate. The meeting schedule is included in Table 6-3. The purpose of each meeting was to provide information to the public through several mediums (project team members, displays, handouts, study area maps) and to collect input (conversations, comment sheets, e-mails, and court reporter transcripts).

Project team members provided meeting handouts, including comment sheets and a study area map, and were available to answer initial questions. Attendees were requested to sign in with their names and addresses so they could be included on the project mailing list and to accurately calculate the number of attendees for each meeting. Participants were able to talk with the project team, assimilate project information, support other individuals with similar concerns, and provide input during each meeting.

The purpose of the public scoping meetings held in March 2003 was to introduce the North Shore Road Project to the public and inform the public of the EIS planning process. The public was given the opportunity during the meeting to review project information and provide comments on items including the following: draft purpose and need statement; draft goals and objectives; proposed impact topics to be analyzed in the EIS; human and environmental issues; planning process; proposed EIS study area boundaries; concept alternatives from the past; and public involvement efforts.

The second series of public workshops was held in September 2003 during the Existing Conditions Phase of the EIS process. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for the public to review information on the existing study area conditions and provide input. This included information on the natural and cultural resources, the human environment, and the transportation network. A presentation included a review of the NEPA planning process; final purpose and need statement; final goals and objectives; final EIS impact topics; and public involvement efforts.

The third series of public workshops was held in February and March 2004 during the Alternatives Development Phase. The workshops were conducted to provide an opportunity for the public to review information on the study alternatives and provide input. This included information on alternatives development, screening criteria, and detailed study alternatives. A presentation included a review of the NEPA planning process, alternatives development process, study alternatives descriptions, and current public involvement efforts. The meeting also initiated the public involvement process for compliance with the NHPA.

Table 6-3. Public Workshop Information

Meeting Date, Time, and Location	Number of Attendees (per sign-in sheets)
Public Scoping Phase	
March 10, 2003 Swain County High School, Bryson City, NC	280
March 11, 2003 Folk Art Center, Mile Post 382, Asheville, NC	196
March 13, 2003 Robbinsville High School, Robbinsville, NC	132
March 17, 2003 Cokesbury Center, Knoxville, TN	190
March 18, 2003 American Legion Post 2021, Gatlinburg, TN	72
Existing Conditions Phase	
September 8, 2003 Swain County High School Center for the Arts, Bryson City, NC	138
September 9, 2003 Holiday Inn Sunspree, Asheville, NC	124
September 11, 2003 Fontana Village Resort, Graham County, NC	56
September 15, 2003 Marriott Knoxville, Knoxville, TN	144
September 16, 2003 Glenstone Lodge, Gatlinburg, TN	55
Alternatives Development Phase	
February 23, 2004 Swain County High School Center for the Arts , Bryson City, NC	186
February 24, 2004 Robbinsville High School, Robbinsville, NC	87
February 26, 2004 Renaissance Asheville, Asheville, NC	Canceled due to inclement weather. Rescheduled for Wednesday, March 3, 2004.
March 1, 2004 Marriott Knoxville, Knoxville, TN	161
March 2, 2004 Glenstone Lodge, Gatlinburg, TN	79
March 3, 2004 Renaissance Asheville, Asheville, NC	124
Impact Analysis Phase	
February 22, 2005 Swain County High School Center for the Arts , Bryson City, NC	255
February 24, 2005 Robbinsville High School, Robbinsville, NC	65
February 28, 2005 Renaissance Asheville, Asheville, NC	123
March 1, 2005 Marriott Knoxville, Knoxville, TN	96
March 3, 2005 Glenstone Lodge, Gatlinburg, TN	89

Note: People that chose not to sign the attendance books are not included in Table 6-3.

During the Impact Analysis Phase in February and March 2005, the fourth series of public workshops was held. The workshops provided an opportunity for the public to review information on the final alternatives recommended for detailed study in the DEIS and how they might affect resources in the project area. The project team solicited feedback on the analysis of impacts to natural, environmental, and cultural resources for each alternative. Comments from the Impact Analysis Phase will be summarized in the DEIS released for the public in fall 2005. Public hearings will be held to provide an opportunity for the public to orally comment on the DEIS.