

Preliminary
Alternatives Report

North Shore Road
Environmental Impact
Statement

Appendix D

Public Comment
Summaries

The tone and content of these summaries represent the views of the individuals who provided input and do not necessarily reflect actual events and/or factual information.

Overview

The public acknowledges that various viewpoints exist regarding the best solution for the area along the northern shore of Fontana Lake. These viewpoints include concepts focusing on preservation and conservation, growth and economic opportunity, access, heritage, and fulfilling the original promise from 1943. Some people comment that they do not understand why the issue resurfaced and that this project is unnecessary and costly. Other people state that their focus is on protecting and preserving the natural and cultural resources associated with GSMNP and that they will do whatever it takes to avoid destruction of GSMNP resources. Some individuals comment that there may be potential compromise solutions, such as partial-build alternatives, that would serve the needs of both parties' interests by minimizing the potential negative environmental impacts, while providing benefits to the local citizens (i.e., strengthening the local economy and providing more access). Others comment that all alternatives except for the Northern Shore Corridor Alternative and the Monetary Settlement Alternative should be eliminated from further study. Some comment that none of the alternatives presented fulfill the 1943 MOA.

Members of the public comment on issues regarding the local economy and which alternative would provide the best short- and long-term benefits for the economic future of Swain County and the surrounding area. Many local citizens also favor satisfying the terms from the 1943 Agreement, which they feel would only be accomplished by building an east-to-west route along the northern shore of Fontana Lake, fulfilling the original promise. Other people comment that the build alternatives do not comply with the park purpose or the original NPS Organic Act. Many also comment that the proposal of the build alternatives is a direct violation of federal laws, including: The Endangered Species Act, The Clean Water Act, The Clean Air Act, The Department of Transportation Act, and The Wilderness Act of 1964 among others. As indicated through the various viewpoints included in the public comments, the public values the tract of land among the northern shore of Fontana Lake for many reasons. People value the history behind the land, the current beauty and solitude it offers, the vast amount of flora and fauna present in GSMNP, and the potential for enhanced opportunities in the area.

Suggested Modifications to All Alternatives

People comment that a few modifications need to be made to all alternatives in order to better represent the various views of the public. These modifications include: improving existing roads to cultural sites and trailheads in the North Shore area; designing/obtaining new handicapped-accessible boats for use in transporting people across Fontana Lake; providing more consistent service across the lake (whenever lake levels permit); creating innovative ways for dealing with lake-level fluctuations to ensure more consistent access; creating new park positions to operate the boats to provide for more regular trips; using improved roads to lead guided tours of cultural sites and to transport visitors to these areas or to access remote trailheads; and creating a cultural heritage center that celebrates the cultural and natural history of the area. Most people agree that the government needs to acknowledge the sacrifices of the relocated families.

No-Action

Many people acknowledge that the No-Action Alternative is required by NEPA for a baseline study. People comment that although this is the least costly and least environmentally damaging alternative with no intrusion into parklands, it is politically unviable. People suggest that if the No-Action Alternative is selected, the process results in a broken contract and the government should return the land to its original occupants. Other commenters assert that no action has worked for over 61 years and ask why would the government want to change it now and cost taxpayers millions of dollars. Some feel that catering to the needs of the former residents of the road (any alternative) is wrong. Others state that building a road in the area on the northern shore of Fontana Lake is not consistent with the mission of the NPS. Some individuals comment that while they prefer the No-Action Alternative, they understand that it would cause too much hostility with local citizens. For this reason, these individuals shift their support to a second choice, the Monetary Settlement Alternative.

Monetary Settlement

Summary

There are diverse views regarding the Monetary Settlement Alternative. Many people feel that a monetary settlement for Swain County would raise the standard of living for local residents and could be used to benefit the county's infrastructure, public works, and utilities. Others suggest that the citizens or government would be able to use the interest from the settlement for tourism or to provide jobs that pay a salary comparable to the statewide average. People state that the monetary settlement would save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in both initial construction and short- and long-term maintenance costs when compared with build alternatives. Others state that monetary settlement is the obvious solution because it has the political backing necessary for implementation. (The Monetary Settlement Alternative has been agreed to by four-fifths of the Swain County commissioners and is supported by Senator John Edwards and Governor Mike Easley of North Carolina). Some local citizens comment that the Swain County commissioners' vote favoring the settlement does not represent the views of the residents of Swain County. Others comment that the settlement fairly disposes of the government's obligation, provides a significant savings to taxpayers, prevents construction of an unnecessary road, preserves the wild integrity of GSMNP, and provides the greatest public good. Individuals state that this alternative is the most environmentally, socially, and culturally reasonable, responsible and effective solution. In addition, the settlement preserves the unique recreational opportunities that exist in GSMNP. Other members of the public view the settlement as a payoff, blackmail, or an attempt to buy out the local community, and they say they believe the settlement would be misused by the county government. People also comment that a monetary settlement was not mentioned in the 1943 MOA and the only legal alternative is to build the road.

Environmental and Cultural Resources

Some people state that they understand the history within Swain County, but are more concerned with the global issue of a national park. These individuals comment that the Swain County citizens deserve a monetary settlement and the whole country deserves the GSMNP protected and preserved for future generations. Many people who favor a monetary settlement say they are concerned with the potential negative environmental impacts associated with any build alternative. Commenters feel that this alternative protects natural resources and the environment, including water quality, air quality, threatened and endangered species, acidic rock, and topographic scars, and it prevents habitat fragmentation in GSMNP. People also comment that the monetary settlement is a small price to pay to secure the future of limited public lands in the eastern United States. In order to further limit development, some comment that roadway access should be limited in GSMNP. Some state that the Monetary Settlement Alternative should be tied in some meaningful way to the environmental and educational goals of the National Park Service. In addition, individuals state that this alternative would be the least damaging to the cultural resources within the study area. Others suggest restricting horse use and motor access, as well as closing the current road and tunnel, to minimize environmental impacts. People comment that there are no guarantees for how the monetary settlement would be used and that it may be used for development, which would result in environmental impacts.

Funding Amount and Allocation

Comments address the amount of the monetary settlement. Some say that the \$2.5 million (5 percent interest) Swain County would receive in interest would be a benefit to the people who deserve a settlement. Others state that \$52 million is not enough. These individuals comment that the monetary settlement amount should be the estimated cost of building the North Shore Road, including the bridges, and not less than \$52 million. Some would prefer cash or consul bonds equal to the total amount that Swain County paid off for the submerged road (old NC 288) at present (2004) value. Others suggest that North Carolina should receive annual payments based on what Tennessee receives for providing GSMNP access. In addition, people suggest using the remainder of the \$16 EIS funding toward a settlement.

One public concern is to not provide a lump-sum amount, but provide a yearly payment schedule to ensure an improved quality of life and to prevent money being squandered. Those who oppose the monetary settlement say they feel that it would be stolen or wasted away by local city and state politicians, lawyers, and unelected officials. These commenters say they are concerned that the money would never get to the local citizens and that the local community would never reap the benefits of such a settlement. People countering this argument say that there is proposed legislation that eliminates the possibility of money squandering. Comments state that the money would be deposited with the North Carolina Local Government Commission and that the commission would have the expertise and experience to invest it. Others comment that the money would only be expended by Swain County under a resolution approved by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the registered voters of the county. Some people comment that the money cannot come from the

Park Management Budget, as an extensive backlog already exists. Others recommend that the financial settlement should include restitution for the estimated revenues lost and to be lost due to the lack of a road. In contrast, people comment that the government should make payments to Swain County as compensation for maintaining the wild integrity of GSMNP.

Some feel that citizens of Graham County should be provided a portion of the monetary settlement. Some members of the local public state that there was nowhere for their family to relocate to in Swain County and they were forced to move to Graham County (when referring to their family's relocation in 1943). These individuals concur that a portion of relocated families now resides in Graham County and that these families should be compensated.

Monetary Uses, Allocation, and Implementation

The public makes suggestions on how to potentially allocate and implement the monetary settlement. Some people suggest providing a 10 percent stipend for economic development of the study area. Other suggestions include: improving cemetery access programs with more frequent visits and upgraded roads, as well as improved bridges; providing maintenance and protection of cemeteries and other cultural resources; giving a portion of the monetary settlement to those families displaced by the 1943 Agreement; providing a settlement to enhance community infrastructure, public works, and utilities; maintaining all existing programs and upkeep of the Fontana Lake area by NPS; increasing service amenities in the park; improving pedestrian bikeways; providing motorized access from the lakeshore to amenities via Lakeshore Trail and other trails within the southern boundary; providing seed money for grants; using bond monies for "green" programs, such as education on sustainable forest management strategies; providing a green corridor for foot travel with overlooking vistas; increasing public safety (law enforcement, new jail), emergency services (ambulance, fire), and healthcare/human services; developing recreation, camping, and hiking utilities; enhancing the educational system, providing salary supplements for teachers, and developing scholarship funds; enhancing community functions and services; and enhancing the employability of Swain High School graduates, as well as the general workforce. Others suggest using the money to purchase more land, extend NPS borders, and create a true wilderness corridor between GSMNP and the Nantahala National Forest land. People comment that NPS could provide boat tours, with services contracted to local vendors. Other people comment that the monetary settlement should fund the development of management plans to increase opportunities for low-impact, non-motorized recreational opportunities. In addition, some comment that a portion of the monetary settlement needs to go to the Cherokee Indian Reservation.

Combinations with other Alternatives

There are suggestions for combining the monetary settlement with modifications of other alternatives. Some people suggest combining the Monetary Settlement Alternative with the Laurel Branch Picnic Area Alternative to provide a settlement plus a destination at the end of Lake View Road with camping, picnic areas, waysides, and interpretive possibilities. Suggestions are made for constructing a dirt road to the Laurel Branch Picnic Area in lieu of a two-lane, paved road. Others suggest that a permanent, frequently scheduled ferry service from Fontana or a new location on the southern shore needs to be provided to take tourists,

hikers, and cemetery visitors to various destinations on the northern shore of Fontana Lake. Some suggestions would combine the monetary settlement with the Partial Build Alternative to Bushnell or similar cultural interpretive area focusing on local history and culture. Some suggest other locations for heritage and recreational centers, such as Laurel Branch or Cable Cove. People comment that the settlement could be used to purchase private, undeveloped land for the cultural museum area. Opinions differ about whether the money for associated destination areas or amenities should come from the monetary settlement figure.

Laurel Branch Picnic Area

People comment that the Laurel Branch Picnic Area Alternative provides a destination for many people who view the current roadway (Lake View Drive) as “The Road to Nowhere.” People state that the alternative would provide long-term benefits by contributing to local business without destroying the environment. The public also states that this alternative would allow access and enjoyment by creating a use of the existing infrastructure (Lake View Road and tunnel) without forfeiting the beauty and solitude of GSMNP. Many of the people who prefer the Monetary Settlement Alternative state that they oppose all alternatives that build roads except for the Laurel Branch Picnic Area. Road proponents feel that the Laurel Branch Picnic Area Alternative is an embarrassment to the local community. Others state that this alternative provides the least benefit to relocated families and their descendants.

People comment that the Laurel Branch Picnic Area Alternative would provide more trails, a staging area for hikers on Laurel Branch and Noland Creek, and better interpretive possibilities than currently exist. Suggestions are made to extend the road a minimal distance to a picnic or staging area where a trail could lead to the cemeteries. People comment that a dirt road should be built to the picnic area. Others suggest an interpretive center or visitor’s center and campground facilities near the picnic area, including bathroom facilities and historical informational kiosks. Other suggested amenities that include pre-cast, concrete tables; wilderness-style sanitary facilities; spur trails with connections with existing trail system in the interior; and conducting park guided vehicular access to cemetery sites. People comment that additional recreational facilities could be west of the tunnel or in areas where access is already provided. Others suggest an unpaved roadway/bikeway/hiking trail extending to the Fontana Dam site.

People state that these enhanced facilities would provide more income to the local residents and to Bryson City. Others state that the picnic area wouldn’t attract any additional people to Bryson City. People against development within this area state that the Laurel Branch Picnic Area would attract more people and destroy much of the charm of the “abandoned” tunnel. Other individuals oppose any development, including the Laurel Branch Picnic Area, stating a concern about increased litter and traffic on the northern shore of Fontana Lake. People also mention concern for increased impacts associated with everyday picnic areas, including noise, smoke, and associated clean-up. People who advocate more road construction state that they already have picnic areas; this is not what \$16 million was appropriated for and it does not fulfill the Agreement.

The public acknowledges that the Laurel Branch Picnic Area Alternative is already included in the National Park Service’s General Management Plan (GMP). People comment that it is not a meaningful alternative,

since it is probably going to be developed without this study. A combination alternative that is mentioned states that in addition to the Laurel Branch Picnic Area, there should be another picnic area or visitor center at Flint Gap, just west of the Eagle Creek confluence, to provide access in the western portion of GSMNP. People mention that visitors could learn about each area's cultural resources without building a road along the northern shore of Fontana Lake. People suggest providing a staffed, interpretive center at Laurel Branch and/or Cable Cove instead of at Bushnell, or west of Flint Gap. People also suggest that there should be a combination of the Laurel Branch Picnic Area and a heritage center at Bushnell. One respondent commented that the tunnel could be renovated as an educational classroom. Another person comments that the tunnel should be converted into an exhibit describing the history of converting the area back to a natural resource, complementing the cultural center in Bryson City. Others state that the tunnel should be removed if this alternative is chosen. Suggestions are also made for the road to stop prior to the tunnel as a tourist attraction showing the attempt to violate mountain wilderness. Another individual suggests extending the road southward from Laurel Branch to Carson Mill, along the eastern shore of Fontana Lake. Suggestions are also made to combine the Laurel Branch Picnic Area Alternative with the Monetary Settlement Alternative, using the settlement money for trail maintenance and preservation of existing cultural and recreational sites on the north shore.

Partial-Build Alternative to Bushnell

Some proponents state that the Partial-Build Alternative to Bushnell would provide long-term benefits by bringing business and tourism into the area. Members of the public comment that this alternative would provide an economic benefit to residents of both Swain and Graham counties by providing a unique attraction likely to interest a wide range of visitors, from backpackers and day hikers to heritage tourists and former area residents and their descendents. People comment that this alternative would add value to GSMNP, satisfy the 1943 agreement, and create a scenic drive for sightseers. Some comment that a cultural heritage center would also provide opportunities for locals and park staff to interact and to build trust and meaningful relationships. Some feel that although this concept may not fulfill the original promise, it may fulfill the general intent of the original agreement by providing increased access into the northern shore of Fontana Lake. Opponents to this alternative are concerned with providing development in the area of Bushnell because of the expenditures associated with maintenance and management. The public also states concern about constructing a facility in a location unable to utilize existing public works and utilities, including water and sewer lines and electricity. In addition, most who view the Northern Shore Corridor as settling the 1943 Agreement state that the Agreement would not be fulfilled solely with this alternative.

Some people suggest amenities such as a campground, boat-access area, a large parking lot, a heritage center, a picnic area with hiker access points, and wildlife-viewing areas. Others comment that an education and heritage center would be sufficient at this location, but that the first priority is the road (the Northern Shore Corridor without the bridges). Others comment that the Partial-Build Alternative to Bushnell would be attractive if camping, history of the area and GSMNP, and lake access are provided. Suggestions are made to create a cultural heritage museum that celebrates the history of the area and the sacrifices that local residents made for WW II and includes an overview of the legacy they have left behind—GSMNP. This would include oral histories, photos, and stories about the history of this tract of land on the northern shore,

including the controversies surrounding it. People also comment that this museum could provide exhibits, guided excursions to local areas, and interpretive trips with exhibits to local historic sites within the area. Others suggest hiring a local artist and writer to document the history of the area through a publication. Suggestions were given for other locations to build the museum and/or interpretive center in Bryson City, Proctor, or another location outside the park.

Some also state that this alternative would allow access and enjoyment of the northern shore area with minimal impacts to the beauty, solitude, and GSMNP wilderness. In addition, some members of the public state that the backcountry experience would largely be protected and any potential adverse environmental impacts of a road would be significantly reduced under this alternative, including poaching. People comment that access to trails and the lakeside provided by a 4-mile road would not negatively impact the general wilderness area. Members of the public state that a bridge would impact the wilderness so the road should go north of the water body (Forney Creek). Some comment that this alternative would be less expensive than building the road (Northern Shore Corridor) and would potentially provide more benefits to all interested parties than the road itself. Some state that this alternative addresses the interests of former residents of this area who do not live in Swain County.

Some individuals state that this option should be combined with the Buckeye Branch Bridge Corridor. Others feel this alternative should be developed in combination with the Monetary Settlement Alternative or the Laurel Branch Picnic Area.

Buckeye Branch Bridge Corridor

One respondent suggests that this alternative would provide similar benefits to the Interior Corridor, but would be shorter and less expensive and would disturb less of the park environment. This respondent feels that the Interior Corridor and Buckeye Branch Bridge Corridor should not be eliminated.

Partial-Build Alternative to Cable Cove

Some individuals state that the Partial-Build Alternative to Cable Cove is the best of the build alternatives because it would be the least environmentally obtrusive. Others comment that the alternative would provide more overall benefits to Graham County. Some feel that the location of Cable Cove is a good point-of-entry to NC 28, especially after the recent widening to four lanes. Opponents of the alternative comment that it would intrude on the Nantahala National Forest, destroy the Lakeshore Trail, and dramatically alter the landscape. One respondent suggests that this alternative should not include a recreational center south of Fontana Lake in Cable Cove because that is critical habitat for the cerulean warbler, a potentially threatened and endangered species. Others state that the cost of constructing and maintaining a bridge across Fontana Lake is not feasible. In addition, some comment that this alternative should be eliminated because it does not follow the intentions of the 1943 Agreement.

Other suggestions are made for a heritage center in the vicinity of Cable Cove Recreational Area, in combination with the Monetary Settlement Alternative, beginning at NC 28. People comment that in

addition to Laurel Branch, the development of a one-way road from the tunnel to Cable Cove would provide for future good management practices in the area. Another commenter suggests constructing an aerial tram from Cable Cove to Welch Ridge as an attraction to view GSMNP waterfalls.

Interior Corridor

Some prefer the Interior Corridor because of the increased opportunity it provides to access the interior portion of the northern shore area of GSMNP by car, increasing access for day-trip hiking. Some also state that the Interior Corridor gives the elderly and disabled greater access visit homesites and cemeteries deeper inside GSMNP. Other people comment that this alternative does not provide enough access to historical locations as compared with the Northern Shore Corridor. People comment that this alternative would have the most favorable economic impact on the communities on the south side of GSMNP due to the potential future development of new destinations. The public suggests modifications to this route by using the Partial-Build Alternative to Cable Cove to avoid having two bridge crossings. People also suggest combining the Interior Corridor Alternative with the Flint Gap Corridor Alternative. Opponents of the Interior Corridor Alternative state that this alternative would cause more ecological, archaeological, economic, and recreational impacts than the other build alternatives. People comment on the value of protecting the undisturbed mountain land and vistas within GSMNP and state that the Interior Corridor Alternative would disrupt one of the few remaining wilderness areas in the eastern United States.

Flint Gap Corridor

Many people comment that they prefer the Northern Shore Corridor with modifications of the Flint Gap Corridor to avoid major bridges around Eagle and Hazel creeks. People comment that the Appalachian Trail views would be diminished by the major bridges. Others suggest combining the Interior Corridor from Lake View Road to the Flint Gap Corridor. Some state that the Flint Gap Corridor provides deeper access for the elderly and disabled to visit homesites and cemeteries. Opponents of this alternative do not want any disturbance in the most remote part of GSMNP. People comment that the alternative would ruin streams, fishing, camping, and hiking in the area. They state that the Appalachian Trail would be forced to move and people would be required to travel longer on a paved road. People also comment that this alternative would aid terrorists seeking hiding places and would give access to hazardous-material release sites.

Northern Shore Corridor

Summary

The Northern Shore Corridor is the longest alternative recommended for detailed study in the DEIS. For this reason, there is a large focus placed on the alternative, with supporting and opposing viewpoints provided by members of the public. Those individuals who favor roadway alternatives typically favor the Northern Shore Corridor, stating that it complies with the original intent of the 1943 Agreement. People state that the other alternatives do not honor the Agreement, and they comment that their heritage is not for sale. Many proponents of this roadway alternative suggest focusing on the original promise before implementing any

other ideas (partial- and no-build alternatives). People comment that the federal government's promise should be fulfilled because funds have been made available. Opponents state that the road really does not comply with the 1943 Agreement, stating that the agreement mentions reconstruction only if thought to be a wise or efficient expenditure of public funds. In addition, road opponents state that a road is unnecessary, since NC 28 fulfills the transportation need. People comment that the old NC 288 roadway did not afford a high standard of service and that reconstruction or relocation would not be a wise expenditure. They comment that this roadway would provide aid to terrorist seeking hiding places or release sites for hazardous materials. Many road opponents also state the aversion toward building a road through the largest roadless area east of the Mississippi River (GSMNP).

Access

Individuals state that the Northern Shore Corridor provides more access to the over 28 cemeteries located on the northern shore of Fontana Lake than any of the other alternatives. They feel that increased access is needed for cemetery visitations and to view their heritage. Some individuals state that the current amenities provided by NPS are inadequate, dangerous, and do not allow for handicapped access into this area. Individuals also want their children and grandchildren (future generations) to be able to enjoy the area and be able to see where the former communities, businesses, and other cultural resources were located. Some state that this would be better accomplished by a road instead of using a boat. Road opponents comment that increased access would place the cultural resources at an increased risk to looters and would expose cemeteries to the threat of vandalism. In addition, people show concern for increased noise, traffic, and litter that would accumulate on the northern shore if access was provided. People also comment that the GSMNP already suffers from overcrowding and deferred maintenance issues.

Others state that increased GSMNP access would allow everyone an opportunity to visit some of the most remote land in eastern United States. People comment that under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), everyone should be provided access to this part of the park. Individuals also feel that everyone should be able to access the hiking trails and wilderness and that the Northern Shore Corridor should be built to reach the existing access trails and roads.

Economy

People comment that since the Northern Shore Corridor would be in close proximity to old towns, homes, businesses, and cultural resource sites, the alternative would provide for the best tourism route in GSMNP. Some feel the Northern Shore Corridor would most benefit the local economy, provide an opportunity to reopen local mineral mines, and reverse the low-income status that resulted in Swain County because of lost tax base. People comment that most spending and public attention go to the west side (Tennessee) of the park, where the NPS headquarters is located. Road opponents state that jobs created from road construction would only be short-term and that sustainable economic solutions should be sought instead. In addition, opponents state that they do not see the benefits of building a road, except to road builders, politicians, and land owners supporting their own interests. Road opponents also comment that tourism dollars spent along similar roadways, such as the Cherohala Skyway, have decreased since inception. People also comment that

tourism in Swain County declines during major construction periods. Another concern is who would provide the funding and which social and/or educational programs would potentially be cut by the federal government to build the road.

Type of Road

Those who favor the Northern Shore Corridor suggest using the Principal Park Road typical section only, a two-lane, dustless road as promised in 1943. There are also comments about whether the road should be a full access or a permitted road. Many people comment on the expense of designing and building the road. They state that the EIS must include cost estimates that take into account a reasonable prediction of the amount of time and money required to build the road, including funding potential legal battles. Road opponents state that a road is not needed because NC 28 eliminates the transportation need.

Some comment that the use of the bridges in the Northern Shore Corridor Alternative is a way to make the cost of this alternative astronomical as a scare tactic against road construction. These individuals say the alternative needs to be modified to eliminate the bridges.

Modifications to Corridor Location

People state that the Northern Shore Corridor needs to follow old roadbeds and previously cut trails in order to have the fewest negative environment impacts. Individuals comment that the location of the corridor needs to be moved to the Flint Gap Corridor, providing access around Eagle and Hazel creeks. Among the reasons given for modifying the Northern Shore Corridor (Northern Shore Corridor with Flint Gap, eliminating the bridges) are: eliminating the need for huge bridges on Forney, Hazel, and Eagle creeks; following old road and rail beds; being closer to former home sites, farms, and cemeteries; becoming a tremendous asset to the GSMNP; showing the pioneer-to-1940s history; completing the original Master Plan for an around-the-park road; greatly boosting the economy for Swain and Graham counties; and satisfying the intent of the 1943 Agreement—making up for the loss of more than 44,000 acres of taxable land. Other individuals comment that the Northern Shore Corridor would begin the healing process between the citizens of Swain County and the federal government.

Suggestions for modifying the Northern Shore Corridor include eliminating the major bridges at Forney, Hazel, and Eagle creeks. Some comment that building three bridges across the creeks is still less expensive than building one across Fontana Lake (Partial-Build Alternative to Cable Cove), and some suggest building culverts at minor water crossings further north of Fontana Lake. People also comment that it would be better to use old trails, roadbeds, rail beds, and NPS maintenance roads as the primary corridor where available, including old NC 288 and Lakeshore Trail, to minimize environmental impacts. Suggestions were also made to continue the corridor to the vicinities of Cable Cove, Proctor, Possum Hollow, and Flint Gap (interior of GSMNP) toward Fontana Dam to tie in to NC 28. People comment that there needs to be a special-purpose road connecting Proctor to the corridor. People comment that the Fontana Dam terminus option needs to be a secondary exit because it may be closed for long durations for maintenance and potential terrorist threats. Some also mention that termini at Fontana would be too close to Deal's Gap, increasing

motorcycle noise. Others state that crossing Fontana Dam would provide one of the best scenic views in the eastern United States. People also comment that the Northern Shore Corridor should not extend west of Fontana Dam.

Road Amenities

There are many suggestions for amenities along the Northern Shore Corridor, including: sheltered picnic areas, pull-offs and parking spaces showing lake views, parking areas at all major creeks, and comfort stations. Others suggest historical markers and plaques to identify local and historical communities, cultural sites, and family homes, farms, churches, and businesses; provide information about the sacrifices people made for the war effort; show the history behind the creation of GSMNP; and provide information on the natural environment. People also make suggestions for improving and developing day-use trails, fishing, and recreational areas. Some suggest managing the facility like the Blue Ridge Parkway or another scenic route, with additional turnoffs with parking areas for cemetery access. Other people suggest gated roads to the cemeteries, opened only for Decoration Days, with picnic areas at the entrances to the cemetery roads. Suggestions for the Northern Shore Corridor also include using rock walls instead of guardrails to create a roadway design consistent with GSMNP environment. People also suggest combining the Northern Shore Corridor with increased ferry service. People also suggest having locked park administrative roads near areas like Hazel, Eagle, and Forney creeks so that hikers, campers, or sightseers could receive emergency assistance, if needed.

Environmental Concerns

Many people who favor the No-Action and Monetary Settlement alternatives view the Northern Shore Corridor as the greatest threat due to the potential negative environmental impacts. They state that a road would destroy the integrity of the largest unspoiled tract of mountain terrain in the eastern United States. Some comment on the potential negative impacts to the Appalachian Trail and other trails within GSMNP. Others comment on potential negative impacts to flora and fauna and the overall wildlife habitat. People are also concerned with seasonal migrations and assert that a permanent, all-season road may act as a physical barrier to these migratory movements. Other people comment that making the area more accessible by vehicles will increase the potential for poaching of game animals and rare and economically valuable plant and animal species, as well as increasing the potential for forest fires. Others comment on the degradation of air quality due to increased automobile exhaust in an area already suffering from poor air quality.

Others state that the bridges and roadway would ruin the aesthetics and character of GSMNP. In addition, people comment that the road would hinder GSMNP's becoming a unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Road proponents comment that there are many other places to go within GSMNP for a wilderness experience, and the Northern Shore Corridor provides the least amount of habitat fragmentation of the build alternatives. People also comment that the steep and rugged terrain would make extensive blasting necessary, resulting in widespread erosion and vulnerability to landslides. Others mention concern for the underlying acidic-rock formation and the leaching of acid into the high-quality trout streams and Fontana Lake. Road proponents state that technology exists to mitigate erosion, landslides, and potential acid

leaching in water resources. Further comments suggest that a roadway alternative would need to provide significant avoidance and minimization measures to mitigate potential negative environmental impacts.

Combinations with other Alternatives

In addition to building the North Shore Road, people suggest building a heritage/educational center at Proctor or Bushnell with comfort stations and a covered picnic shelter. Others suggest the corridor end at Proctor at an interpretive center. People also suggest combining the Northern Shore Corridor with the Partial-Build Alternative to Cable Cove. Comments are made that the Cable Cove area could serve as an informational rest area providing scenic overlooks. People also suggest combining the Northern Shore Corridor with the Monetary Settlement Alternative. They say a monetary settlement is owed due to the time of inactivity by the federal government. Others suggest allotting money for the maintenance of the road, trails, cemeteries, and park service vehicles.

New Alternative – Boat Route

Some suggest developing the Partial-Build Alternative to Cable Cove without the bridge recreation area and NC28 to Buckeye Branch Corridor without the bridge. Provide a boat route between them so that you could have protection of exotic species in the water.