

build and build preliminary study alternatives were analyzed as entire corridors rather than by individual segment.

2.4 Corridors

At this stage, the build and partial-build alternatives are 2,000-foot-wide (609.6-m-wide) study corridors. The 2,000-foot-wide (609.6-m-wide) corridor does not mean that 2,000 feet is required to develop the construction footprint. It is a designated width to be studied so that if an environmentally sensitive area is found, the alignment can be shifted to avoid adverse impacts to sensitive areas. The required footprint for the build alternatives and site plans for the partial-build alternatives have not been determined at this time. Corridor locations and widths may need to be modified to avoid sensitive areas, based on the more-detailed DEIS design work and field investigations.

3. Description of Preliminary Study Alternatives

After consideration of approximately 100 initial options and a number of potential roadway alignments, 9 preliminary study alternatives were developed. They are described below and include: No-Action, Monetary Settlement, Laurel Branch Picnic Area, Bushnell Area (also known as the Partial-Build Alternative to Bushnell), Buckeye Branch Bridge Corridor, Cable Cove Bridge Corridor, Northern Shore Corridor, Interior Corridor, and Flint Gap Corridor. For purposes of describing some of the alternatives, reference is made to the Northern Shore Corridor. The Northern Shore Corridor is the most east-west corridor, and segments of many of the other corridors, both partial-build and build, utilize the same path. Since it is the most common link between the alternatives, it is used as a basis for describing the other corridors (Figure 7). Approximate lengths and corridor widths are shown in Table 2 (described in Section 4.1). These lengths are for the preliminary study corridors and may change for the detailed study alternatives, which are discussed in Section 8.

Annual ferry service for cemetery access is currently provided by the NPS on a scheduled basis for the public. Eleven trips are made to visit 20 cemeteries along the north shore of Fontana Lake each year. The annual ferry service would continue if an alternative does not include provisions for a new road, a build or partial-build alternative does not intersect an administrative road, or a build or partial-build alternative only reaches a portion of the cemeteries. If a build or partial-build alternative intersects a maintained GSMNP administrative road, the public would be allowed access to the road on a scheduled basis for access to cemeteries.

Transportation would be provided by NPS or personal vehicle depending on the condition of the road.

3.1 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative would forego any improvements to Lake View Road with the exception of routine maintenance. Under this alternative, there would be no changes to the existing conditions within the study area. No compensation would be provided in lieu of building the road. NPS would continue to provide transportation across Fontana Lake for annual cemetery visits and would maintain current amenities, policies, and practices of GSMNP.

A No-Action Alternative is required by NEPA, but does not meet the purpose of and need for the project. Because the No-Action Alternative would avoid any adverse environmental impacts, it provides a basis for comparing the potential impacts and benefits of the partial-build and build alternatives.

3.2 Monetary Settlement

The Monetary Settlement Alternative would provide monetary compensation to Swain County. No additional roadway would be constructed. NPS would continue to provide transportation across Fontana Lake for annual cemetery visits and would continue current amenities, policies, and practices of GSMNP.

The Swain County Commissioners passed a resolution on February 11, 2003, that stated the County would accept a monetary settlement of \$52 million to settle the 1943 Agreement. Bryson City passed a similar resolution on March 3, 2003. Copies of these resolutions are included in Appendix C. The amount of \$52 million was assumed for analysis purposes in the DEIS.

3.3 Partial-Build Corridors

3.3.1 Laurel Branch Picnic Area (Initial Concept)

The Laurel Branch Picnic Area would include a day-use area prior to reaching the existing tunnel. Lake View Road would end at the existing parking area east of the tunnel. A new, two-way, paved entrance/exit road near the parking area would provide access from Lake View Road to the picnic area. Outdoor facilities would include covered picnic tables, an interpretive trail, drinking fountains, and restrooms. Section 8.3 of this report details the refined concept for this alternative.