

7.1 Two Road Types Recommended for Detailed Study

The Special Purpose Park Road was eliminated from further study due to the problems associated with a very long road (roughly 30 miles) that provides travel in only one direction. A road would provide new vehicular access for emergency service vehicles attending to both visitor and vehicular incidents; however, the one-way road would not be able to provide a quick return route. The return route would include NC 28 and US 19/US 74 which, as compared with a two-way road, would delay the return of emergency services. Also, motorists are not expected to utilize a long one-way road due to the inconvenience of this return route. The use of a pair of one-way, one-lane roads could reduce travel time and improve the usefulness of the road; however, the area of impact would be greater than that of the two-lane road types recommended for further study in the DEIS.

The Administrative Access Road was also eliminated from further study. Since the Administrative Access Road would not be opened to the public on a regular basis, the benefits for local communities and GSMNP visitors are not expected to justify the anticipated cost and environmental impacts associated with construction of the roadway. In addition, the roadway's designated use is inconsistent with the intent of the 1943 Agreement.

The remaining two road types, Principal Park Road and Primitive Park Road, are recommended for further study in the DEIS for the partial-build and build corridors (refer to Figures 2 through 5).

7.2 Elimination of the Cable Cove Bridge Corridor

The Cable Cove Bridge Corridor was proposed to cross Fontana Lake via a major bridge crossing to tie into Cable Cove Road within the Nantahala National Forest lands. Upon review, the USFS has determined and stated in a June 29, 2004, letter that the Cable Cove Bridge Corridor is not consistent with their current standards and guidelines as defined in the Nantahala/Pisgah Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The USFS manages many of these areas for wildlife habitat and quality scenery, with limited disturbance from motorized vehicles. Many of these areas are also classified as Retention Visual Quality Objective because of visibility from Fontana Lake, which does not allow visual evident or differentiate impacts to the surrounding characteristic landscape. In addition, the USFS' Transportation System Management guidelines require limited areas for motorized vehicles, which the area affected by the proposed alternative already exceeds.

The DOI cannot proceed with implementation of this alternative without revision to the Forest Plan and USFS approval. In addition, based on comments received to date, the alternative seems to lack public interest and support. Therefore, this alternative is being dropped from further consideration.

7.3 Addition of the Proctor Option (Modified Version of the Flint Gap Corridor)

Revisions to the full build alternative reflect the public's desire to avoid major bridge crossings and to have access to the Proctor area. Two main routes were considered to address these concerns, the Deep Gap route and the Proctor route. The Deep Gap route would turn north from the Northern Shore Corridor in the vicinity of Pilkey Creek and Clark Branch and continue through the Deep Gap for approximately 3.8 miles (6.1 km) (this route was considered during the initial options phase and is shown on Figure 6 as segment 31). The Proctor route would utilize an approximately 6.1-mile (9.8-km) portion (from where the Deep Gap Corridor segment originates) of the Northern Shore Corridor before turning north to follow the Lakeshore Trail for approximately 2.7 miles (4.3 km). At this point, both routes would continue to follow the Lakeshore Trail to the west, avoiding the major bridge crossings of the Hazel Creek and Eagle Creek embayments and offering access to the Proctor area. The Proctor route (including the portion of the Deep Gap route that overlaps the Proctor route) is a modified version of the Flint Gap Corridor, which was originally suggested for elimination from further study (see Section 4.2.3).

The Deep Gap route, as compared with the Proctor route, is expected to have a greater potential to inhibit the ability for vehicles to stop, more frequent road closures, and increased erosion problems. The use of steep grades for long distances, especially with the presence of precipitation, is a greater concern with the Deep Gap route than with the Proctor route. More than half the length (approximately 2.7 miles [4.3 km]) of the Deep Gap route involves continual steep grades. In addition to snow and ice necessitating road closure, frost occurrences would likely hinder proper vehicle control and cause more closures for the Deep Gap route. Based on these concerns, the Deep Gap route is not recommended for detailed study in the DEIS. The Proctor route (referred to as the Proctor Option) was incorporated as the baseline corridor of the Northern Shore Corridor Alternative (shown on Figure 9) for detailed study in the DEIS, as discussed in more detail in Section 8. Also, enhancements for all detailed study alternatives and further development of the Laurel Branch Picnic Area and the Bushnell Alternatives are detailed in Section 8 of this report.