

**R E P O R T**

**Proposed Locations**

**SHENANDOAH-GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARKWAY**

to

**Chief Landscape Architect**

**National Park Service**

**Resident Landscape Architect**

**June 8, 1934**

Thru the relatively low section of the BLUE RIDGE near ROANOKE it will be necessary to cross the Roanoke river and to develop thru choppy, rolling country by means of stream valleys in combination with ridge line location. The scenic environment, though the line will bypass the city of Roanoke, will be in considerable part developed hillside farm lands. The crossing of the Roanoke river on the proposed line would be an interesting stretch.

Alignment and grade in this section will compare with the above section described.

From Bent mountains to the Virginia line, a distance of approximately 75 miles, the Blue Ridge break to the east in a sharp escarpment and spread to the west in a high plateau. The region is largely developed with small farms, which in many sections prove an interest in addition to the excellent views to be obtained at various points towards the west over the rolling farm region. The PINACLES OF DAN, a mountain within a deep gorge, thirty miles east of Hillsville, are an interesting scenic and geological formation which could easily be made accessible from the highway.

Absence of deep gaps plus the latitude will make it possible to attain a relatively fast line and grade thru this section, much of which will be actual sky line.

From SOUTH of the VIRGINIA LINE to DANVILLE, N.C., the Blue Ridge tend to lose their high plateau character, becoming larger and less ridge-like. The mountains are in pasture land to a considerable extent and

the valleys are quite extensively developed. Occasional views are obtained to the east, not unlike those from the escarpment. Toward Grandfather Mountain the interest heightens. This region, famous as a summer resort, is outstandingly fine. Grandfather itself is traversed by the Yonahlossee Road between Blowing Rock and Linville on the probable Parkway location.

The line and grade in this section would probably be similar to that north of the Peaks of Otter.

**Scenic Note:**

LINVILLE FALLS, 90 ft. high, in the gorge of the Linville River is an outstanding scenic feature in an excellent state of preservation. They are under private ownership and have not been developed commercially. The connection of Linville Falls by a spur parkway (approximately 15 miles) to the primary route appears to be the most practicable means of reaching the falls. This spur and the acquisition and development of the region might be undertaken.

From the vicinity of Linville Falls the state has developed a ridge line road (#105) along the LINVILLE MOUNTAIN for a distance of 12 miles. This road overlooks the Linville River gorge, the parallel Jonas Ridge on the east and the Blue Ridge on the west. Jonas Ridge (partially National forest) includes three unusual features, SITTING BEAR, HAWES BILL MOUNTAIN, AND TABLE ROCK. These points are visible from many places on this sky line road and particularly from WISEMANS VIEW and PINACLE, which are rock promitories overlooking Linville Gorge. The existing dirt-gravel road follows a good location as far as Dog-



Lizville, North Carolina--Great Smoky Mountains National Park

via

Black, Pisgah, and Balsm Mountains,

LINE B

Contested  
Section

The route as proposed traverses a region that offers the finest mountain scenery and would have the highest average elevation of any section. The scenery, however, is largely of and within mountains. The possibilities for the utilization of sections of the immediate valleys are not favorable. The following mountain sections are particularly outstanding: The Black Mountains, including Mt. Mitchel, the Craggy Mountains, the Pisgah region, the Balsm range. These areas are relatively undeveloped and suggest that long stretches of the Parkway would have a wilderness character. The mountains themselves are more heroic and the forking of the ridge lines introduce views of the nearby ranges.

It is notable that some of the outstanding scenic features, particularly Mt. Pisgah and Mt. Mitchel are now accessible to the public by existing roads and have a recreation value which might be considered lessened by the development of the Parkway. Many tourists stop in the Asheville resort region and make one day trips to the various mountain tops. This means of "going up into the mountains" has a definite lure to the traveler, which would perhaps not be obtained from a Parkway on the slopes of the dramatic peaks themselves.

This route leaves the actual line of the Blue Ridge Mountains

near Mt. Mitchel but traverses higher ranges which constitutes water divides. The drainage problems are, therefore, confined to the French Broad river which is common to all routes. Problems with local cross roads would concentrate in the Asheville region, a distance of about 15 miles.

The character of the mountains in section B. suggests expensive construction with a lower standard road and a resultant scarring of the hillside.

From the Craggy mountain section the route is non-directional, though, no one readily suggests itself as an alternative. Route B approaches the Park at Soco Gap from a high elevation by means of the Balsam Mountains, which are a ridge branching from the general base of the Great Smoky Mountains.

The route would be a natural bridge, rather than a road, and would be a fine scenic route. The route is approximately one-half to one-quarter mile long and would be a fine scenic route. The route is approximately one-half to one-quarter mile long and would be a fine scenic route.

Though this route is under private ownership it is the property of the State of North Carolina and is a fine scenic route. The route is approximately one-half to one-quarter mile long and would be a fine scenic route.

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**Shenandoah Park--Unicoi, Tennessee**

via

**Walker Mountain, Shady Valley, Iron Mountains.**

**LINE F**

In combination with the Drive in Shenandoah Park, a wide variety

of scenic type is introduced on Route F. There are two crossings of  
and Holston  
the Shenandoah valley and the route will pass through the Allegheny  
mountains which are a limestone formation in contrast with the Appalachian  
range, where the soil condition is more acid. In addition the  
mountain ranges are little developed due to the soil conditions and there  
is a good cover of forest native to this soil. Numerous rock formations  
abound on the ridge tops. The off-scape would include the interesting  
skyline of the parallel mountain ranges and the blue grass valleys be-  
tween. Close to the proposed route would be Natural Bridge, Carig Heal-  
ing Springs, and Mountain Lake, and within a few miles is located White  
Sulphur Springs. MOUNTAIN LAKE is approximately one-half by one-quarter miles,

is a natural body of water and is reputed to be the highest lake east  
of the Rockies. Though this lake is under private ownership it is the  
only body of water of its size to be found in the territory under dis-  
cussion.

Potts and Walder Mountains, averaging 3500 feet elevation, on this  
Route are more adaptable to a truly dry line location than any mountains  
in the entire area under discussion. It appears possible for long dis-  
tances to construct the highway at reasonable cost, with good line and  
grade direction, actually on the ridge.

Route F would develop down from Walker Mountain in the vicinity of Marion, recross the <sup>Holston</sup> Shenandoah valley and probably proceed by means of the Beaverdam Valley and Iron Mountains to Unicei (joint route D). The <sup>Holston</sup> Shenandoah valley itself is narrow at this point and the Beaverdam creek, within National Forest Lands, would support a fast line and grade and is in itself a delightful location. The headwaters of Beaverdam Creek are in a cross range connecting the Iron Mountains with the Unakas Mountains. It would be possible to proceed to Unicei approximately on the ridge of the Iron Mountains which have an even profile. From the mouth of Beaverdam creek it would be possible to connect with the existing roads to Whitetop Mountain and Mt. Rogers, the highest in Virginia.

The disadvantages of Route F are definitely concentrated in the two nondirectional crossings of the Shenandoah valley through developed

farm lands. In the Natural Bridge vicinity the elevation of the route would be as low as 1000 feet. It would be necessary to cross the James River twice and also the New river where it breaks through Walker Mountain.

With the exception of this there is no conflict with privately owned lands, and in consideration of the formation of the plan...

offers the possibility of a low...

...



Unicoi, Tennessee—Great Smoky National Park

LINE D

Route D has an interest variety of mountains, mountain stream valley, and broad river types of scenery. The outstanding features of this route are the Nolichucky gorge, Paint Creek, French Broad river gorge, in addition to Cold Spring Mountains. It appears possible to attain the top of Cold Spring Mountains for some distance at least. The cover on Cold Spring Mountain is a fine and clean stand of hardwood, pine and hemlock, interspersed with gentle pasture lands of blue grass. It offers to the south and east a fine view of the Smokies and Roan Mountains and to the west a distinctly fine view of the Tennessee Valley. Cold Spring Mountains is at the present time undeveloped.

The French Broad river gorge on the proposed route, between Paint Creek and Wolf Creek is undeveloped except for the tracks of the Southern Railroad on the southern shore. This section of the valley is very scenic, with high rock cliffs, fertile meadow lands, thickly wooded sections and the water, offering a wide variety of interest. This gorge and it might also be said of the Nolichucky gorge, are scenic features as desirable as many of the Mountains suggested as attractions.

With the exception of Erwin there is no conflict with intensely developed areas, and in consideration of the formation of the Appalachian region would have reasonably good direction, good line and grade with moderate construction cost.

Route D offers the possibility of a low route and high route (via Mt. Patch) to connect with section E.

The Major disadvantage of Route D lies in its relatively low elevation. There would be many drainage crossings, including the Hollelucky and French Broad Rivers and more conflict with developed roadways.

It is possible to cross on a generally high route over the slopes of Ross Mountain itself (44) or via means of a parallel water route to generally high elevations (44). The top of Ross Mountain itself is already accessible by means of a trail road. The Ross Mountain is a worthy objective of the Parkway, a much-studied site in relation to Grandfather and Cold Spring Mountains suggests the lower of valley route as offering better strategic routing lines, and grade and subsurface construction costs would result:

Survey of Proposed Routes  
Cross Over

Montana, 1.34 - United

C-4 High Route

ROUTE

C-5 Low Route

Line C crossing from the Blue Ridge Mountains at Knoxville toward  
the main range via the Snow Mountain cross ridge to United would  
afford a line lying equally in North Carolina and Tennessee. It  
would be possible to cross on a generally high route via the slopes  
of Snow Mountain itself (C-4) or via most of a parallel valley route  
at generally high elevations (C-5). The top of Snow Mountain itself  
is already accessible by means of a toll road. The Snow Mountain is  
a worthy objective of the Parkway, a consideration of its relation

General Principles of Route Proposed

to Grandfather and Cold Spring Mountain suggests the lower or valley  
route as offering better variety. Easier line, and grade and moderate  
construction costs would result.

The route will follow a general line of good roads and  
be a considerable distance from the mountains.

The mountains region is not so high as the mountains. The  
route will be between the mountains and the main range, and  
will be a good route for the mountains. The route will be  
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## Summary of Proposed Routes

From a consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of each of the foregoing sections as outlined there appears no one ideal route. The Virginia-North Carolina (A-B) and the Virginia-Tennessee (D-E-K) each have advantages and disadvantages which make it difficult to say that one is better than another when considered from all angles. Some of the disadvantages on these two routes are eliminated by the combination Virginia-North Carolina-Tennessee A-C-D-E route. This route does offer a variety of scenery, reasonable construction costs and good direction. It would be practicable to enter the Great Smoky Mountains National Park on line E at a desirable point with relation to the development plans for the Park.

## General Discussion of Routes Proposed

It is desired to highlight certain advantages and disadvantages of the mountain location in these proposals:

### Advantages

1. A ridge drive will offer unusual views of great power and beauty for a considerable portion of its distance.
2. The mountain regions of the three states in question, (and particularly the mountain tops) are National Forest land, constituting a broad right-of-way, and thus precluding the bill board, and uncontrolled deforestation. There will also be a minimum of conflict with towns and farm land.
3. Such a location would provide a cool drive during the heat of summer, particularly in those sections actually on the ridge.

Disadvantages:

1. The frequency of gaps in the mountain ridges so controls the location of the Parkway as to introduce heavy grades, side hill construction and sharp alignment in considerable part of all lines.

2. It is not an unusual condition for clouds to be hanging low over the mountains with the result of fog, rain, and in the winter snow and ice. This would defeat the purpose of the Parkway during several months of the year and would for all practical purposes close such sections of the route while thus affected. There would be danger under such conditions to the tourist unacquainted with mountain driving.

3. The possibility that the tourist would become tired with 800 miles of mountain scenery, much of which would be less interesting and less important than the areas at either end.

4. To some extent at least there will be scarring of the mountain sides which will be visible from the Parkway itself and in places from the valleys below.

5. To a considerable number of people there will be a lessening of the present recreational value of wilderness areas.

6. The mountain location is costly from the viewpoint of construction and maintenance.

In view of these considerations it is possible that the mountain parkway would not be used by a sufficient number of tourists nor have great enough recreation value to justify its construction.



It is believed that a mountain or skyline road is distinctly a type to be developed within a park such as Shenandoah National Park and that the idea is not adaptable in this region to a 500 mile Park to Park connection.

If these conclusions are accepted a reconsideration of this project at once suggests a different point of view or change of attitude from that outlined in the foregoing. It might be proposed to the authorities that a study be made of the possibility of combining the Park to Park features with that of a passenger parkway for regional traffic. Such a parkway would emphasize a high standard of alignment and grade. It might conceivably provide easy and safe access to the National Parks and to the outstanding scenic and recreational areas in the mountain ranges by branch or spur road systems; and at the same time provide a convenient passenger route supplementing the existing commercial highways. The parkway would be located in the broad valleys along the mountains on a right of way of 200 feet or less with the abutting property having no frontage rights. The grade crossings of principal intersecting highways would be eliminated by bridges.

An all-year parkway of this type might well be justified if made part of a comprehensive regional plan for passenger and recreational traffic requirements over a broad area.