



The Parkway 75

Collaborative Strategies for Blue Ridge Parkway Communities

Original artwork by Brendan Ambrose Meng

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The 75th Anniversary: A conversation starter

The 75th anniversary of the Blue Ridge Parkway is an opportunity to celebrate the Parkway's history, Appalachian culture, and spectacular scenic views. It's a chance to invigorate a strategic, regional approach to community and economic development along the Parkway while strengthening support for its stewardship.

As the most visited of the nation's 391 national park units, the Blue Ridge Parkway is a national treasure and a tremendous local economic development resource. The Parkway's annual count of more than 20 million visitors translates to \$2.3 billion in economic impact across 29 counties in Virginia and North Carolina.

Yet communities along the corridor have only just begun to tap the economic development opportunity it represents, "The Parkway is a regional asset that crosses two states and brings the world to our doorsteps," says Todd Christenson, Deputy Director of Community Development at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

While many see the towns and cities along this bi-state corridor as gateways to the Parkway, Parkway Superintendent Phil Francis points out, "We often think of the Parkway as a gateway to the unique local communities that offer authentic experiences for our visitors."

Blue Ridge Parkway 75, Inc. has been organized and tasked with coordinating the anniversary celebration. To kick off the effort, they hosted a series of conversations throughout the region involving local stakeholders and partnering with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, the North Carolina Department of Commerce and the Appalachian Regional Commission.

The conversations were just a start, an occasion, says Dan Brown, former Parkway Superintendent and president of the collaborative BRP75 effort, "to get involved, and consider what the Parkway means to your community, organization, or business."



Superintendent Phil Francis addresses community leaders in Galax.



Virginia BRP75 contact Penny Lloyd; BRP75 President Dan Brown, and Dawn Godwin, BRP staff, in Roanoke.



Todd Christensen, VADHCD and North Carolina BRP75 contact Leesa Brandon at the Roanoke discussion.

75 Collaborative strategies that work (or could!)

The 75th Anniversary conversations offered a chance to develop ideas and strategies across the region. Community leaders shared their existing initiatives with each other. And collectively, they developed new ideas to strengthen connections between communities and improve communication between the Parkway and the surrounding towns and cities.



This list, culled from conversations at all four meetings, is just one element in a growing tool kit that will offer resources for getting involved in the anniversary, as well as for strengthening long-term partnerships for the protection and conservation of the Parkway and improving the quality of life in the communities that surround it.

Direct travelers from the Parkway into communities.

1. Create a better system for working with the Parkway on signage.
2. Create sponsorship and 'adoption' programs for local businesses and organizations.
3. Provide a brochure distribution system and charge the communities, perhaps rack card stands at welcome centers for locality information.
4. Create a computer access point like at state parks.
5. Have local brochure-carrying volunteers or docents at the visitors' centers. For instance, the Meadows of Dan could be promoted at Mabry Mill.
6. Tap into new technologies: blue tooth, GPS systems, e-atlases, mobile browsers, listening points and kiosks.
7. Provide community maps on the Parkway.
8. Create regional brochures for distribution on the Parkway.
9. Increase signs letting people know where to get gas.
10. Direct Parkway visitors to farmers markets and festivals.



Engage locals in the Parkway.



11. Enhance existing volunteer efforts.
12. Partner with local organizations.
13. Assign a ‘town-crier’-style goodwill ambassador to connect the town to anniversary and Parkway efforts and other Parkway communities.
14. Engage youth groups to get young people invested in the Parkway—Boy and Girl Scouts, 4-H, and high school groups can volunteer to do projects along the Parkway.
15. Contact local persons regarding the heritage and opportunities, for instance Bob Childress regarding the rock churches.
16. Create spots, such as parks, in nearby towns not directly adjacent to connect them to the Parkway.
17. Create visible identification tools within the community, for instance some community merchants have donation cans for the Parkway.
18. Wear your Parkway 75 pin!
19. Give a Parkway pin to your local elected official
20. Use Parkway facilities for more local events, for instance get the music going at the Roanoke Campground.
21. Sign up for a Blue Ridge Parkway license plate.
22. Tell 10 people about the Parkway’s importance in the community.

Highlight Local Arts, Culture and Heritage along the Parkway.

23. Create and maintain interpretive kiosks on the Parkway
24. Host pleine aire painters on overlooks on special days.
25. Create CDs that correlate with mileposts and feature heritage & cultural information with themed music in the background.
26. Create kiosks at scenic overlooks that portray the history and culture of surrounding towns.
27. Tell community stories, and the story of the region!
28. Let locals sell products as concessionaires at authorized spots.
29. Connect local institutions offering arts and cultural heritage instruction (such as Galax’s Chestnut Creek School of the Arts) with the Parkway to offer mini-classes.



Welcome visitors into communities.



30. Improve signage just off the Parkway as visitors enter communities.
31. Reduce visual clutter at community entrances.
32. Concentrate on customer service and hospitality. Conduct hospitality training.
33. Schedule vans from the Parkway for mini-tours.
34. Increase accessibility for bikers coming off of the Parkway.
35. Create a shuttle to bring cyclists into towns.
36. Consider the visitor's impression, analyzing for appearance and tourist friendliness.

Connect sites of interest.

37. Offer side trails, or loops off of the Parkway:
 - a wildlife trail
 - a trail of heritage museums
 - winery trails
 - a stone churches tour
 - a "Foods of the Blue Ridge" trail.
 - a quilt trail
38. Package tourism experiences.
39. Package "how-to" models for smaller communities.
40. Create a regional guide to side trips, loops, and trails.
41. Intentionally connect the Parkway with 'Round the Mountain's Artisan Trails, the Crooked Road and other regional trails

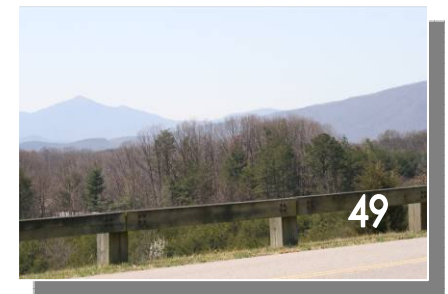
Best Practices for Developing Looped Tourism Trails

1. **Have something to show.** Make sure you have a critical mass of sites before putting signs up.
2. **Tell a story.** Interpret for the visitor. Tell a story to engage visitors in the history and culture of your community.
3. **Mark the path well.** Don't lose your guests with inconsistent or inadequate signage.
4. **Count the Miles.** Even vacationers have schedules. Let them know how many miles the trip is, how much time they should allow, and where they'll end up at the end of the loop.
5. **Complement major attractions.** Incorporate major Parkway sites and history into your regional story.



Strengthen the identity and connection of local communities with the Parkway and the region's natural resources.

- 42. Create a biodiversity center to research flora and fauna, host tours and exhibits on endangered species, ecology, geology. Include guided hikes, birding, research classrooms for college students, volunteer programs. Get colleges and universities involved in researching and volunteering on the Parkway.
- 43. Conduct geocaching events.
- 44. Create tree house lodging for canopy study and recreation.
- 45. Promote the public/private partnerships needed to maintain the viewsheds.
- 46. Host nature walks and stargazing on the Parkway.
- 47. Strongly connect local greenways and trail systems into the Parkway.
- 48. Work with VDOT to increase signage to the Parkway.
- 49. Consider identifying as “the Blue Ridge Region.”



Strengthen local recreation and environmental tourism economic sectors



- 50. Create a loan fund to support micro-businesses catering to Parkway-related tourism.
- 51. Provide entrepreneurial training and technical assistance.
- 52. Encourage agritourism: Pumpkins/ Trees / Cherries / Orchards.
- 53. Create a music stage at Fancy Gap, or in other communities, for instruction as well as performance.
- 54. Partner with communities to increase lodging options.
- 55. Create parallel biking and walking lanes in urban areas.
- 56. Increase the lodging tax to fund marketing efforts.



Market!



57. Target specific markets, such as bird watchers, bikers, auto clubs, motorcycling events, RVers, campers, tree climbers, volunteer groups, collaborating with organized associations and umbrella organizations of specific users.

58. Tap into the Boy Scout's 100 year anniversary and other major events.

59. Emphasize regional marketing efforts

60. Create local Parkway anniversary specials-- \$75 lodging, pay 75%, pay 1935 prices for events

61. Incorporate Parkway logos and imagery on Marketing Materials

62. Connect existing Festivals and events to the 75th anniversary



Tips for Building Effective Partnerships

1. **Agree upon shared goals.** Engage potential partners in establishing the vision and goals for the project.
2. **Communicate.** Be clear about what you need to get out of the partnership for it to work for your organization and what you can offer to the project.
3. **Establish Roles and Responsibilities.** Put the parameters of the partnership down in writing. Who will do what? How will leadership be shared?
4. **Build up.** It's okay to test drive collaborative relationships. Start with a small project before committing to larger undertakings.
5. **Establish regular communications.** Set regular check-in dates. Communicate in a way that works for all involved.

Collaborate and coordinate

63. Collaborate in regional marketing efforts.
64. Share information with visitors about neighboring communities
65. Make the most of existing technology, linking events on regional and state tourism sites, including blueridgeParkway75.org
66. Support organizations through which businesses and organizations are already collaborating
67. Join the Blue Ridge Parkway Association.
68. Communicate across communities, seeking out collaborative projects.
69. Improve communication between Parkway and communities.
70. Create a Regional ‘Passport’ to be stamped by travelers and residents.
71. Create a *coordinated* bicycle tour on Parkway and festivities in town...i.e. Tour de Floyd. Festivities in each town could be an annual event—people ride the whole Parkway or do it in parts—earning a distinction. Vacations could be planned around doing a different leg each year.
72. Do the same for motorcycles.
73. Split up the Blue Ridge Parkway into regions, with each region having a promotional center
74. The Visitor Center at Explore Park is brings state, local, and Federal resources together, and the Parkway allows it to be promoted along the entire 469 miles—model efforts on this.
75. Connect local websites—of governments, nonprofits, and private businesses—to the BRP75 website, and continue it beyond the anniversary.



Parkway 75th Anniversary Meeting

Waynesboro - 2/23/09

I. Participants

Peter Agelasto, Rockfish Valley Foundation
Karen Beck-Herzog, Shenandoah National Park
Bruce Bytnar, Former NPS employee, I believe
Tom Carlsson, Waynesboro DHA
Pat Carter, P. Buckley Moss Museum
C. T. Cash, Granny's Attic
Barbara Coffey
Lianne Crookshanks, Waynesboro Tourism
DuBose Egleston, Waynesboro Tourism
Debbie Garrett, Office of Congressman Bob Goodlatte
Stan Horst, Cabin Creekwood
Janet James, Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library & Museum
Maureen Kelley, Nelson County Tourism
Pat Ohleger, Celebrate Buena Vista
Brian Ososky, SVTA
James Parker, Blue Ridge Parkway
Dana Quillen, Wintergreen Resort
Bonnie Riedesel, Central Shenandoah PDC
Sherri Smith, Artisans Center of Virginia
Jeff Trollinger, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries



II. Opening exercise:

Give your name, affiliation, and the first word (One Word!) that comes to mind when you think of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Picnics
Family
Resources
Fear
Revenue
Beauty
Family memories

Slow
Missed opportunity
Artisans
Tourism
Tradition
Charm
Quality of Life

Surprise
Future
Heritage
Views
Natural beauty

III. Relationships: Overlap, Conflict, and Enhancement

What does the Parkway offer visitors, tourists, & residents?

What do communities offer visitors, tourists, & residents?

<u>The Parkway</u>	<u>Communities</u>
Beauty/vistas	Food
Diversity	Lodging – Gas
Recreation	Other commercial
Nature Education	Artists/crafts
Birding	Music and craft festivals
Cycling	People!
Recreation	
A break from the commercial	
Affordable vacation	
A Break from real life	

The Parkway provides a unique experience, a slower pace, nature and beauty. In the discussion, the communities were described largely as filling a void left by the Parkway for its visitors, because the Parkway can provide few commercial amenities. Meeting the needs of Parkway travelers is an opportunity for the communities. But is that enough? The communities along the Parkway are unique, but they struggle to articulate their identities.

While the Parkway cannot advertise commercial endeavors, the Parkway Association rose as a response to that need.

The Parkway provides a vacation or a break from the everyday that harkens to the past, yet one challenge is maintaining that family friendly feeling.

IV. *Who is the Parkway trying to capture, and how might communities tap into this audiences?*

- Young families
- Local governments
- Local residents
- National constituents
- Driving/biking enthusiasts: example: Reid’s Gap Loop
- Photographers
- Local businesses/Cottage industries –(example) Handmade in America, National Heritage Area Partnership in North Carolina
- Extended vacationers –(example) Williamsburg, VA; The Crooked Road

V. Parkway and Community Assets

The Authentic	Safety drive	Wildlife
The hometown	Swannanoa	Fisheries
An affordable vacation	Rock Castle Gorge	Entertainment
Views	Interpretive History	Folklore
Fish	Natural Bridge	Mountain Music
Giftshops	D-Day Memorial	Bluegrass
Humpback Rocks	Folk Music	Cultural Heritage
Waterfalls	Safe Driving	Skylark Farms
Wineries	Crabtree Falls	Banana pudding
Hikes	Culture	
Medical Center		

VI. In what specific ways are the Parkway and communities currently partnering?

- The Parkway is more interested now in partnering in general
- State sign—Rockbridge County advertising services
- Blue Ridge Travel Association
- Miner’s Museum
- Visitor’s Center as regional tool
- Agritourism efforts
- Cooperative advertising
- Adjacent communities promote the Parkway

VII. What are some of the easier opportunities to improve collaboration?

- Take advantage of technological tools—the internet
- State tourism, getting them to market the region
- Encourage each town to have a ‘town-crier’-style goodwill ambassador connecting the town to anniversary and Parkway efforts
- Move beyond the territorial—and use the 75th anniversary to align communities

VIII. What are some of the more difficult opportunities for collaboration?

- Improve signage
- Increase state tourism funding
- Create a wildlife trail
- Create a trail of heritage museums
- Create winery trails
- Foster Regional cross-community collaboration
- Support the organizations through which community businesses are working together
- Increase the lodging tax and fund marketing efforts
- Expand volunteers, working with the Chamber of Commerce.
- Package tourism experiences

- Connect to the commercial opportunities through side trails
- Put painters at the overlook on a special day
- Diamonds & Sparkles—emphasis on state tourism
- Trail Development
- Crozet Tunnel Opportunity for communities—longest bike/pedestrian tunnel east of the Mississippi
- Create models for smaller communities. The anniversary toolkit might help to share these models.
- Expand on existing volunteer efforts

Action Steps: *Forget the “can’t’s”*

1. Tell 10 People about the opportunity of both the 75th Anniversary and the potential to connect to the Parkway and the tourism opportunities in a greater way.
2. Build a preliminary action plan
3. Convene: Agree to get back together (with decision makers and influencers) The 75th Anniversary Symposium: Example: the Creative Economy Conference in SWVA
4. Communicate across communities, seeking out collaborative projects.
5. Tom Vick will explore a funding opportunity through the Scenic Byway. Could an audio guide to the Parkway—can a CD be created as an outreach / marketing tool?

Parkway 75 Anniversary Meeting Roanoke - 2/24/09

I. Participants:

John Abadie, UBS Financial, Martinsville
Liz Belcher, Roanoke Valley Greenways
Anna Bentson, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest
Lindsay Blankenship, Roanoke County Community Development
Ed and Barbara Chauncey, Community Partnership for Revitalization
Rebecca Chittum, Natural Bridge
Kevin Costello
Bonnie Cranmer, Lodge at Lick Creek Lane
Lauren Crowder, Quality Inn
Rupert Cutler, Western Virginia Water Authority
Jo Diedrich, Leisure Publishing
Barbara Duerk, Virginia Bicycling Federation
Pete Eshelman, Roanoke Regional Partnership
Catherine Fox, RVCVB
Suzanne Gandy, Downtown Roanoke, Inc.
Judy Green, Patrick County Chamber of Commerce
Ken Heath, Town of Marion
Liz Houhoulis, Leisure Publishing
George Kegley, WVLT
Peter Kipp
Christina Koomen, City of Roanoke PIO
Tubby Kubik, Progress Press
Stan Lanford
Pete Larkin, Office of Congressman Bob Goodlatte
Chris Lawrence, Town of Vinton
Mary Beth Layman, Town of Vinton
Connie Mays, Booker T. Washington National Monument
Susan Mills
Cara Ellen Modisett, Blue Ridge Country Magazine
Kim O'Conner, Comfort Suites
Dave Orndorff, Mill Mountain Zoo
Rodney Overstreet, Roanoke Symphony Orchestra
Bill Parmer and Alaina Parmer
Stacy Potter, SW Virginia Ballet
James Rosar, Virginia Bicycling Federation
Janet Scheid, Roanoke County PRT
Jenny Shelton, Opera Roanoke
Wayne Strickland, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission
Sergei Troubetzkoy, Bedford Visitors Center
Emily Tucker, Blue Ridge Dinner Theater
Karla Turman, Town of Vinton
Richard Wells, Leisure Publishing
Tom and Diane Wilson, Bedford Main Street
Tina Workman, Downtown Roanoke, Inc.



II. Opening exercise:

Give your name, affiliation, and the first word (One Word!) that comes to mind when you think of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Complex	Outdoors	WPA: We Poke Along	Viewshed
Family	Escape	Adventure	Colorful
Memories	Vistas	Culture	Grandfather
Connection	Connection	Trails	Unique
Hikes	Conservation	Tranquility	Roosevelt
Journey	Green	Biodiversity	Marvelous
Biking	Seasons	Beautiful	Liberty
Beauty	Relaxing	Youth	Great!
Home	Attraction	Tourism	Peaceful
Kayaking	Business	Heritage	All of the
Picnic	Scenery	Photographic	above!!!
Scenic	Opportunity	Peace	
History	Tradition	Volunteers	

III. Relationships: Overlap, Conflict, and Enhancement

What does the Parkway offer visitors, tourists, & residents?

What do communities offer visitors, tourists, & residents?

<u>The Parkway</u>	<u>Communities</u>
Recreation	Food
Change of Pace	Lodging – Gas
Beauty	Attractions
Commuter Route	Charm
Attraction	A reason to get on the Parkway
Lifetime Memories	Arts, Culture & History



The Parkway supports the community with infrastructure, while private land along the Parkway provides it with views.

The Parkway provides visitors (and tourism dollars) to the communities. It attaches an identity to the communities and provides an avenue for conservation.

The potential for conflict comes with sprawl, the commuter traffic that harms tourism. Additionally, with the tourism comes potential harm to the insular nature that tourists travel the road to see. Each generation experiences the Parkway differently, and different constituencies look to it to meet their own needs.

IV. *What is the relationship between the Parkway and communities?*

- None
- Vital
- Supportive
- Active
- Symbiotic
- **Potentially Symbiotic**

V. *Who are the stewards of the Parkway?*

- Phil Francis
- Communities
- Volunteers
- Staff
- “All”



VI. *In what specific ways are the Parkway and communities currently partnering?*

- The Visitor Center at Explore Park: State, Federal, County participate in, and the Park Service allows it to be promoted along the entire 469 miles.
- Smith Mountain Lake Wine Festival
- Private land / viewshed: Parkway, Virginia Outdoor Foundation, Land Trusts
- Roanoke Valley Greenways: City, County partner with National Park Service for regional recreation trails
- Hotels...Advertising...Tourism Promotion
- Rocky Mount Downtown revitalization—events partnering with Ferrum College
- Patrick County - Publication
- Magazine Directory
- Tourism marketing partnership—Roanoke County & Bedford
- Wine, Brewery, & Cultural Trails
- Friends of the Parkway, BRPA, Foundation
- Zoo at Mill Mountain
- Vinton/Roanoke Corridor Study
- The Parkway Association is advertising for Communities
- The Visitor Center at Rocky Knob did some mapping
- Landmark offers a no-cost visitor’s guide

VII. *What are some of the easier opportunities to improve collaboration?*

- Work with Visitors’ Center to advertise events
- Use the visitor center on the Parkway for more community events
- Boy & Girl Scouts as volunteers on the Parkway
- Improve interpretation
- Share info for neighboring communities
- Create “loop” drives to guide visitors confidently into communities
- Connect Parkway visitors to existing Farmers Markets, Festivals
- Local businesses can put up web links to the BRP

- Get colleges and universities involved. Connect their efforts to the Parkway and communities.
- Consider Saturday or Friday night music to get locals up to Roanoke Mountain Campground
- Create a bicycle access point at Mountain View Road in Vinton
- Strongly connect Roanoke Valley Greenways with the Parkway
- Increase awareness of the Parkway as an asset in the community
- We all need to communicate better
- We take for granted that visitors know about the Parkway. We need to promote it! Businesses need to be informed enough to make the recommendation.

VIII. *What are some of the more difficult opportunities for collaboration?*

- Packaging the visitor's experience
- Creating trails that connect to/intersect with the Parkway
- Improve signage—Create kiosks ✓✓✓
- Create a better system of working with the Parkway on signage
- Improve safe access for bikes, and provide showers and amenities for bikers
- Ensure communities are better represented on maps, etc...
- Better coordinate (on both sides) bike races and events
- Increase interaction and communications among the many partners.
- We assume that people know about the Parkway, but we need to own it. ✓
- Work with VDOT to increase signage for Parkway
- Create a bicycle access point at Mountain View Road in Vinton
- 220 has paved shoulder on one side, but not the other. Needs to be on both sides
- Get attractions on new media, Garmin ,e-atlas, mobile browsers, etc...
- Connect school kids in volunteering

IX. *What are new possibilities, ideas, assets, attractions, products, etc..?*

- Celebrate the Parkway and the community's role with it
- Create Anniversary Specials
- Every 75 miles have something exciting
- Connect 75 events from 75 Parkway communities
- Incorporate Parkway logos on marketing material--everything
- Get locals and officials to wear Parkway pins—Send them to town council
- Explore GIS/GPS routing/ interactive web /phone maps
- Partner with Elderhostel visits
- Partner with the Appalachian Trail
- Create a shuttle for bikes to bring bikers from the Parkway to town
- Put up pine tree cell towers to increase connectivity
- Link the Roanoke Arts Festival to the 75th anniversary
- “Adopt an overlook” to improve care of facilities.
- Connect events—wineries, FloydFest
- Run shuttles for tours/hikes...birding
- Clearly label water on the Parkway for users
- Incorporate ballet/performing arts into Parkway celebrations/events

- Improve bicycle access
- Create parallel walking/biking areas in more populated areas ✓
- Create a bicycle access point at Mountain View Road in Vinton
- Get kids involved
- Get Parkway logo on publications
- Conduct 5K runs
- Conduct stargazing walks
- Create a museum trail from Charlottesville to NC
- Create a food trail—Foods of the Blue Ridge
- Create wine trails

Action Steps:

1. Figure out creative ways to promote communities at Parkway facilities. How can communities ensure that they are incorporated into the interpretive strategy, making sure that their story is being told.
2. Think about identifying as a “Blue Ridge Region,” an area connected by and fed into from the Parkway that links assets from surrounding communities...arts history, culture, nature etc.
3. Focus on the future through design and access from the Parkway. What’s the visitor’s experience now? What can it be?
4. Join the Blue Ridge Parkway Association. Sign up for e-newsletters, and use technology to communicate across communities.



Parkway 75 Anniversary Meeting Galax - 03/04/09

I. Participants:

Mary Jo Babbitt, Wytheville CVB
Janet Bachmann, Blue Ridge Parkway
Kitty Barker, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Mikkie Barker, VecTec
Tom Bishop, Patrick County Chamber
Amanda Bourne, Carroll County Office of Tourism
Chris Brooke, Galax Gazette
Dan Campbell, Floyd County
Woody Crenshaw, Floyd Country Store
Margo Crouse, Margo's Interior Decoration
Mindy DeCesar, Blue Ridge Parkway
Bernie Deck, Carroll County
Don Foster, Blue Ridge Host
Steve Galyean, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Dallas Garrett, SBDC
Mitone Griffith, VECTEC/The Big Blue
Tom Hardy, Blue Ridge Parkway Association
Felicia Hash, Grayson County
Steve Hermansen, Round the Mountain
Kari Hill, Town of Fries
Keith Holland, City of Galax
Marie Isom, Town of Fries
Brenda Marrah, Carroll County
Oliver McBride, Crossroads Institute
Brandon McCann, The Cascade Highlands
Penny Moseley, Chestnut Creek School of the Arts
Wilma Pendleton, Patrick County Administration
Debra Price, Fancy Gap Tourism
Chuck Reidhammer, City of Galax
Tom Rose, Assistant Administrator, Patrick County
Neal Satterwhite, Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority
Sue Shelor, Mountain Meadow Farm
Larry South, Town of Hillsville
Barbara Spears, Town of Fries
Dreama Stimely, Meadows Mercantile
Jim Stimely, Buffalo Mountain Cottage
Kathy Surratt, Carroll County
Molly Theobald, Appalachian Regional Commission
Jim Wallace, VDHCD
Bob Wray, Blue Ridge Tree Climbing



II. Opening exercise:

Give your name, affiliation, and the first word (One Word!) that comes to mind when you think of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Complex	Roots	Tranquility	Heritage
Skinny	Tourists	Gems	Gorgeous
Memories	Nostalgic	Slow	Culture
Camping	Buckwheat	Opportunity	Stonework
Home	Tourism	Escape	Treasures
Trees	Excitement	Waterfall	Taxes
Breathtaking	Countryside	Journey	Historical
Alternative	Scenery	Fancy Gap	Visitors
Relaxation	Motorcycling ✓	Bicycling	Tradition
Beauty	Future	Scenic	Scenery
Stories	Authentic	Revenue	Vocation/ Calling
Artisans	Serenity	Asset	Visitors
Natural	Fabulous	Majestic	

III. Relationships: Overlap, Conflict, and Enhancement

What does the Parkway offer visitors, tourists, & residents?

What do communities offer visitors, tourists, & residents?

<u>The Parkway</u>	<u>Communities</u>	
Visitors	Goods and Services	<i>These are all seen by the group as largely complementary & overlapping</i>
Recreation	Lodging – Gas –Shops	
Shopping	A different place/perspective	
Revenue	Access Points	
Point of Difference/Distinction	Entertainment	
Community Connections	Diversity	
Lifetime Memories	Friendly Faces	

IV. What is the relationship between the Parkway and communities?

While the Parkway is a destination, it's also a journey, with the communities along it destinations within the destination. The relationship between Blue Ridge Parkway communities and the Parkway itself is one of **balance** between a number of goals including:

- Community preservation
- Development
- Parkway Preservation
- Resource Conservation
- The pristine character of communities
- Revenue opportunities
- Marketing efforts

V. During the overview of the 75th Anniversary, participants presented a number of overarching strategies and suggestions including:

- Connect communities all more closely together as a “route” or a “corridor”
- Get to know neighbors and leaders to support promotion of Parkway events
- Connect community resources to the 75th Anniversary—encourage travelers to come off of the Parkway and into communities. Get visitors to the ongoing festivals.
- Promote unique visitor opportunities, such as the tree climbing business in Fancy Gap
- Promote communities as a way of promoting the Parkway
- Extend the reach of the Parkway into communities surrounding as well as immediately adjacent.

VI. In what specific ways are the Parkway and communities currently partnering?

- Visitors’ Centers
- Parkway Guides
- Website (Map)
- The Crooked Road
- Camping facilities & Outdoor Recreation
- Music
- Blue Ridge Parkway Association
- BRTA
- SVTA
- CVB
- The communications gap is getting better, although NPS is sometimes difficult to navigate
- Floyd - Rocky Knob collaboration: Patrick/Floyd/Congressman Boucher’s office and NPS
- Radio Kiosks
- Grayson County brochure
- Regional tourism
- Coordination with BRP
- Reciprocal web links between communities and Blue Ridge Parkway
- Link events to VTC.org



VII. What are some of the easier opportunities to improve collaboration and cross promotion?

- Links on websites and cross promotion of events
- Rack Cards—paid spots at welcome centers for specific town brochures in addition to BRP information
- Contact local persons regarding the heritage and opportunities: such as Bob Childress regarding the rock churches).
- Address signage
- Can communities send brochure-carrying volunteers to help at visitors’ centers?
- Target specific markets, such as birdwatchers, bikers, auto clubs, motorcycling events, RVers, campers, tree climbers
- Collaborate with organized associations and umbrella organizations of specific users

- The 75th Anniversary is a golden opportunity
- Minds Wide Open
- Parkway, Fiddler's Convention, Grand Opening of Chestnut Creek School of the Arts
- Tap into new technologies: blue tooth, listening points and kiosks
- Improve communication between Parkway and communities
- Allow brochures of communities if not specific businesses on the Parkway

VIII. What are some of the more difficult opportunities for collaboration?

- Create kiosks
- Create spots, parks in towns where BRP does not directly cut through to connect communities to the Parkway
- Split up BRP into regions, with each region having a promotional center
- Provide a brochure distribution system and charge the communities
- Create a computer access point like at state parks.
- Communities not immediately adjacent to the Parkway want to communicate. Themed driving trails off of the Parkway offer opportunities. Provide maps of communities on the Parkway.
- Tap into the Boy Scout's 100 year anniversary
- Getting NPS to promote the surrounding communities
- Keeping websites updated and linked
- Communicating through updated events calendars
- Not enough staff to plan events and coordinate with other events
- Parkway Guide Point-to-Point: Regionalize a guide by NPS
- Develop a loop guide
- Packaging with options
- Get Parkway to create regionalized brochures
- Create a Regional Passport
- If each community created their own regional guide, would NPS distribute them?
- Tap into new technologies: blue tooth, listening points and kiosks

IX. What are new possibilities, ideas, assets, attractions, products, etc..?

- A music stage at Fancy Gap, using volunteers to teach
- Agritourism: Pumpkins/ Trees / Cherries / Orchards
- Connect intentionally with Round the Mountain loop trails
- Packaged marketing—such as an area passport
- Promote Meadows of Dan at Mabry Mill
- Create a CD that plays with Mileposts that could be combined with BRP magazine; themed music in background. Tracks that could be skipped and replayed.
- Create kiosks at scenic overlooks that portrayed the history and culture of the surrounding towns.
- Create a way for locals to sell products as concessionaires at authorized points along the Parkway
- Computer Kiosks for 24/7 information
- Package guided Parkway tours and handicapped tours

- Create a biodiversity center to research flora and fauna, host tours and have exhibits on endangered species, ecology, geology. Include guided hikes, birding, research classrooms for college students, volunteer programs
- Create learning and working experiences through volunteer vacations
- Create tree house lodging, tree canopy, zip lines, squirrel study & birds
- Directional signage at the exits for goods and services
- Stone Churches Tour
- Spin off tours –have vans scheduled for mini tours
- Work together to coordinate events
- Haunted New River Trail
- Bicycle tours on Parkway and festivities in town...i.e. Tour de Floyd
- Tour the whole Parkway, festivities in each town could be an annual event—people could ride the whole Parkway or do it in parts. They could plan vacations and do a different leg each year.
- Do the same for motorcycles.
- Connect with classes at Chestnut Creek: Artsy bird tours, Pleine air painting
- Signs to let people know where to get gas.
- Travel guide
- Marketing of BRP events locally
- White Top fundraising as an example: Put on seminars and show how to fundraise
- Promote and market events and attractions to niche markets
- Birding and wildlife trail listings
- Flora and Fauna: eco-tourism, volunt-tourism, edu-tourism opportunities
- Partner with communities to improve lodging opportunities

Action Steps:

1. Tell 10 people about the 75th Anniversary, connecting community organizations and existing events with the marketing opportunity it presents.
2. Get youth involved.
3. The Blue Ridge Parkway will take the lead on setting up a working group to look into how to get community information into visitors' hands.
4. Join the Blue Ridge Parkway Association. Sign up for e-newsletters, and use technology to communicate across communities.
5. Think strategically about the big event. How to extend the energy throughout the Parkway region—Join the discussion of this working group.
6. Explore micro-enterprise development focused specifically on recreation and cultural heritage.
7. Help the National Park Service take care of what “We” have. We are all stewards.
8. Help continue to create “holy places”

ARC Gems of the Parkway Grant Discussion

Grant Objectives recommended from the:

- Promote collaboration between communities and between communities and the Parkway
- Landscaping, cell towers that blend in like trees, construction?
- Something sustainable that can be seen...something tangible
- Something that focuses on communication to tourists and guests

Grant Activities recommended from the group:

- Focus on business development / businesses
- Building/construction/landscape

Grant Criteria recommended from the group:

- Require leveraging
- In-kind match preferable
- \$50K would be more meaningful project, especially if collaborative

Partners/others needed to carry out

- Play materials in Visitor Centers through partnerships
- Play up the Crooked Road/ Parkway/ 'Round the Mountain connections
- Emphasize

Measure **outcomes** through

- An increase in visits
- Distribution of materials
- Differential in tax revenues
- Visitors coming off the Parkway

Track BRP **traffic count** efforts online:

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/stats/>

One month is needed to turn the grant application around.

One year is an appropriate implementation time.

Parkway 75 Anniversary Meeting
Asheville – 03/12/09

I. Opening exercise:

Give your name, affiliation, and the first word (One Word!) that comes to mind when you think of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Family Heritage	Trail	Green	Outdoors
Serenity	Adventure	Water Quality	Protected
Ribbon-Garden	Restorative	Volunteers	Connectivity
Opportunity	Tourism	Skinny	Exhilarating
Wondrous	Gorgeous	Priceless	Conservation
Reverence	Revitalizing	Neighbor	Integrity
Treasure	Tradition	Connector	Viewsheds
Legacy	Peaceful	Fun	Experience
Beauty	Scenic	Free	Habitat
Historic	Diverse	Lifeline	Therapeutic
Home	Tranquil	Economics	Pristine
Cool	Awesome	Inspiring	Native Plants
Visitors	Infrastructure	Historic	Memories
		Outdoors	Livelihood

II. Relationships: Overlap, Conflict, and Enhancement

What does the Parkway offer visitors, tourists, & residents?

What do communities offer visitors, tourists, & residents?

	<u>The Parkway</u>	<u>Communities</u>
	Vistas	Services
	Internationally Known Assets	Publicity
	Escape	Culture/History
	Recreation	Access
Economic Development Opportunities		Support
	Education	Arts

Is there any overlap between the lists or what each offers?

- Historic Assets – both have
- Natural Assets – both have
- They each support the other
- Each provides access to the other

Is there any conflict between the lists or what each offers—do any detract from the other?

- If there is no access from one to the other

- Commuter routes/development take away from Parkway resources
- Economic development can impact Parkway resources

How can each be enhanced by the other?

- Co-programming
- Volunteers
- Co-marketing
- Conservation

III. In what specific ways are the Parkway and communities currently partnering?

- NPS providing technical support on community project
- BRPA helps market the destination and communities
- FRIENDS of BRP partner with individuals and groups with programs as a support mechanism and volunteers
- Fundraising activities for BRP such as license plates
- Collaborate with associations for trail maintenance
- FRIENDS of BRP and BRP Association communicate and exchange of information on tourism promotion with host groups and local tourism authorities
- Signage in smaller communities
- Trip planner
- Parks/greenspaces in communities
- Businesses working with Parkway partners
- Visitor centers and travel information
- Currently collaborating through partners
- Rural communities take pride in beautification efforts
- Mt. Mitchell Marathon/Black Mountain – economic impact to town in February
- Demonstration heritage days in Alleghany Co
- Vista trimming in Haywood Co
- 5 visitor centers/collection of data
- Detour on Parkway takes people off and they don't return
- Use parkway for daily driving route
- Cultural collaboration of Little Switzerland, Mineral Museum, Folk Art Center
- Publicity, economic opportunities, education, interpretation
- Viewshed protection with bordering communities
- Haywood Co history book coming out in July – talks about Parkway and tourism
- Visitor Center partnership in Mitchell Co with Museum of NC Minerals; and annual Overmountain event
- WNC Museum guide
- Collaborating with partner groups for donation locations

VI. What are some of the easier opportunities to improve collaboration and cross promotion?

- Partnering with neighboring communities via trails and/or events
- Motorcycle group – loop development/promotion
- Interpretive Services/Cooperative activities
- FM/Radio/Satellite communications

- Integrate Websites
- Hospitality training – greater awareness of community resources and promotional opportunity
- Ongoing events calendar
- Civil War Trails
- Arts/Craft organizations linked in
- Natural Resource opportunities – NC Birding Trail, Audubon, Heritage Trout Waters/Cities program
- Use your proximity to Parkway in your marketing materials
- Communicate stewardship message at community levels
- Yancey Co – NC 80 is Scenic Byway that connects to Parkway
- Crafts fair in Yancey & Weaverville – Arts Safari
- Arts & Culture trail along Parkway
- Driving trail map connecting well-known trails and farms in communities
- Work with ASAP – tie in local food guide
- Linking farms to other communities (NC Tourism project)
- Quilt trail map w/ listed quilt blocks and their respective stories
- Special events & festivals at neighboring communities
- Links via internet and websites
- Key destination communities include BRP in overall tourism promotion campaigns

VII. What are some of the more difficult opportunities for collaboration?

- Better alternatives for detour situations to get visitors into communities
- Distribution of brochures about community trails, adventures, events along parkway
- Combine some local trail in communities with Parkway maps/materials
- DOT
- Continue BRP 75 website after anniversary to support communities along Parkway
- Kiosks and/or signage at access points
- Entrepreneurial opportunities
- Regulations/rules to support signage for communication/info
- GPS mapping of traditional arts/crafts
- GPS tourism – treasure hunting
- Using twitter/facebook
- Agritourism
- Publication/map – agritourism, arts and culture with podcasts to supplement publication

VIII. What are new possibilities, ideas, assets, attractions, products, etc..?

- Tie – in family connectedness and physical activity while in area – kids/scavenger hunt/adults/geocache

- Take inventory of natural features such as trails and package it and wayfinding signage for every access
- Bring together existing maps/trails
- Survey visitors/potential visitors about interests and then target them specifically w/ events and opportunities
- More collaboration between Parkway partners in dealing with databases of visitors and their interests
- Quilt block rallies promoted with car clubs, motorcycle clubs, etc.
- Comprehensive database/email list – create a network of non-profits associated with the Parkway and collaborate on marketing/promotion
- Common goals within communities along Parkway – and support
- Geocaching – develop thematically – campgrounds, arts/craft/galleries/schools, trails, headwaters, etc.
- Sandborn Atlases – catalog of what downtowns offer
- Wildlife Centers
- Podcasts
- Restructure Narrow Gauge Railroad from BM to Mt. Mitchell
- Youth programs
- Renewable energy tour – Wind Center @ ASU, Energy Exchange in Bakersville, FLS Design, Green dorms @ Warren Wilson, etc.
- Solar or wind power for the stations on the Parkway
- Welcome Center have kiosks dedicated to BRP and NPS
- Communities have transportation/guided tours of parkway from their community; loop a portion of Parkway - funded by traveling public
- Explore potential of using the BRNHA as a partner with the NPS to establish entrepreneurial opportunities (i.e. tour guides)
- Museum guide & other guides like these to get folks on/off parkway
- Cross connections w/ DOT, Parkway, Counties, etc.
- Markers @ overlooks about upcoming communities and communities nearby
- Parkway needs to loosen up to let communities use facilities, spotlight communities in Parkway facilities w/ displays, information, events, etc.
- Parkway to promote “gems” at each exit since all communities don’t have a visitor center nearby

GEMS OF THE PARKWAY GRANT DISCUSSION

What should the **objective** of the fund be?

- To work on projects that cross state borders
- Connect communities
- Enhance collaboration/cooperation
- Longevity/sustainability of project/program
- Encourage increased visitation for all

What's an acceptable **funding range**?

- \$5-15k
- \$1-15k
- \$2,000
- Depends on the number of partners!!!

Would you be able to provide a **50/50 match**?

- Reasonable for this amount of money
- **THE KEY IS IN KIND DONATIONS!**

What **types of funded activities** would most benefit *your community*?

- Educational Opportunities (kiosks, displays, pamphlets, wayside exhibits)
- Events
- Creating Podcasts or other Technologies
- Training (i.e. Youth or “front line” service industry folks, business owners, etc. those who provide information but aren’t “official” tourism folks)
- Enhancing economic development
- Filling stations for alternative vehicles
- Opportunities for visualizing/educating about the connections between communities

What kinds of **partners/other resources** would you need?

- Technology partners
- Media
- Elected officials
- Public relations

What kind of **outcomes** would you be looking to achieve?

- Ongoing/sustainable economic development
- Bringing established events to a higher level
- Happier visitors
- Preserving assets to keep the parkway as a protected resource
- Increased skills & knowledge
- Long lasting/strengthened connections between communities & parkway
- Better quality of life

What do you recommend for **evaluation criteria**?

- # of people/participation rates
- Did participation in a funded activity/program/event/training lead to a behavioral change?
- Use “countable things” to measure – i.e. increase in tax revenues, traffic and visitor counts

How much **time** would you need to **develop & submit** a proposal?

- 1 month
- 3-6 months
- RFP out by June 1 ok

How much **time** would you need to **implement**?

- Start in 2010
- 12 months
- Maybe longer, depends...