



**STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**


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**BILL LEE**  
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**MEMORANDUM**

To: Beth Emmons, Director  
Community Relations Division  
  
Regional Community Relations Officers

Through: Shawn Bible, Transportation Manager   
Highway Beautification Office

From: Mike McClanahan, Transportation Manager   
Highway Beautification Office  
Scenic Roadway Coordinator

Date: 7/25/2022

Subject: Scenic Roadway Program Summary

Tennessee's Scenic Roadways Program is housed within TDOT's Highway Beautification Office and is made up of three (3) distinct types of designations:

- Scenic Highway
- Tennessee Parkway
- National Scenic Byway

**Tennessee Scenic Designations:**

*Scenic Highway & Tennessee Parkway* – Both programs are rooted in State code, originating in 1971 and 1981, and are administered by TDOT. Scenic Highway and Tennessee Parkway routes provide for the conservation of a road's scenic qualities by limiting the encroachment of new outdoor advertising and junkyards. Scenic Highway routes have limitations to the height of new structures. Tennessee Parkway routes must be on numbered State Highways and are marked by green and white mockingbird signs. Tennessee Parkway routes are designated by the Commissioner of Transportation and a formal request process is outlined in the Scenic Handbook.

Routes in either program should have:

- Logical termini
- Provide an alternative to nearby highly travelled roads
- Unique historical, scenic and natural qualities
- Furnish visitors with a safe and relaxing drive where they can experience the natural beauty of Tennessee.

Provisions of the Scenic Highway Act of 1971 can be found in TCA § 54-17-114. Information on the rules and regulation of outdoor advertising along Tennessee Parkways Program routes can be found in TCA § 54-17-206. Tennessee Parkway System original routes can be found in TCA § 54-17-203.

National Scenic Designations:

*National Scenic Byway* - Scenic Byways are a concept dating to the 1880’s, when Americans began to travel more frequently and created paths to nearby recreational locations and features outside of major cities. As America grew, and the nation’s road network grew. Scenic routes were paved, and Scenic Byways were established. Today, the National Scenic Byway Program is comprised of 184 routes, all with federally defined archeological, historic, cultural, recreational, scenic or natural intrinsic qualities.

National Scenic Byways all have:

- Planning documents
- A managing organization (local government, non-profit, or other)
- 1 or 2 intrinsic qualities
- 7 or 14 supporting features
- Regionally or nationally significant
- A Scenic Highway or Tennessee Parkway state designation.

A list of Tennessee’s collection of National Scenic Byways is included in Figure 1 below:

<b>Route</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Cumberland National Scenic Byway	National Scenic Byway
Cherochala Skyway	National Scenic Byway
East Tennessee Crossing	National Scenic Byway
Great River Road	All-American Road
Great Smoky Mountains Byway	Scenic Byway
Natchez Trace	All-American Road
Newfound Gap	All-American Road
Norris Freeway	National Scenic Byway
Ocoee Scenic Byway	National Scenic Byway
Sequatchie Valley National Scenic Byway	National Scenic Byway
Tennessee River Trail	Scenic Byway
Walton Road	Scenic Byway
Woodlands Trace	National Scenic Byway

Figure 1 – Chart of TN Scenic Byways and Designation Status

Tennessee boasts 13 Scenic Byways, 10 of which are designated as either a “National Scenic Byway” or an “All American Road” by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. This number is the 4<sup>th</sup> most nationally, and most of any state east of the Mississippi River. Designated routes are eligible for National Scenic Byway Program grants and are included in the Federal Highway Administration’s “America’s Byways” marketing campaign.

A highly regarded category of National Scenic Byway is “All-American Roads”. Across the country, these 35 routes are public roads that have been designated by the federal government, have satisfied criteria to join the America’s Byway Program, and are destinations unto themselves. Tennessee has three (3) All-American Roads, one in each Grand Division of the State.

The National Scenic Byway Program and America’s Byways marketing program are operated by the Federal government, not TDOT. TDOT’s Highway Beautification Office plays an important role in connecting individual Scenic Byways to resources and promoting the collection of byways but does not operate the program outright.

Figure 2 below, shows Tennessee’s collection of Scenic Byways and which routes have received a “National Scenic Byway” or “All-American Road” designation.



Figure 2 – Map of Tennessee’s Scenic Byways

Discover Tennessee Trails:

*Discover Tennessee Trails* - In addition to Scenic Highways, Tennessee Parkways, and National Scenic Byways, a fourth program was launched in 2010, which operates adjacent to TDOT’s Scenic Roadways Programming and is operated by the Tennessee Department of Tourism Development (TDTD). Discover Tennessee Trails is a partnership between TDOT and TDTD and includes marketing and promotional of communities throughout the state. TDOT is responsible for way-finding signage along the various routes. The 16 routes that comprise the Discover Tennessee Trails program touch all 95 counties in the state.

Additional Resources:

TDOT Website	<a href="https://www.tn.gov/tdot/environmental-home/environmental-highway-beautification-office/beautification-national-scenic-byways.html">https://www.tn.gov/tdot/environmental-home/environmental-highway-beautification-office/beautification-national-scenic-byways.html</a>
Tennessee Scenic Handbook	“Resources” Tab at the bottom of the TDOT Website.
Federal Highway Administration Website	<a href="https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways">https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways</a>
Scenic Roadway Program Contact	Mike McClanahan Scenic Roadway Coordinator <a href="mailto:Michael.McClanahan@tn.gov">Michael.McClanahan@tn.gov</a> (615) 741-0803