

## Road to Nowhere <sup>[1]</sup>

### "Road to Nowhere"

by Laura Hegyi, 2006



Photograph of a section of the 'Road to Nowhere.' Image from Flickr user Smoky Dan.

<sup>[2]</sup>The "Road to Nowhere" is the droll nickname of an unfinished six-mile stretch of highway that is the result of an unfulfilled promise by the U.S. government to a small community in [Swain County](#) <sup>[3]</sup>. The genesis of the road began in the 1930s and 1940s, when the federal government and the Tennessee Valley Authority took over 67,800 acres of public and private land in [Graham](#) <sup>[4]</sup> and Swain Counties to build [Fontana Dam](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, creating Fontana Lake and part of the [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#) <sup>[6]</sup>. In compensation for the land, which had been owned by many families for generations, the government promised to reimburse Swain County for the loss of flooded Highway 288, which had provided access to the area. Another assurance was the construction of a road approximately 30 miles long that would follow the northern shore of the lake and help substitute for the highway and allow the displaced residents access to their family cemeteries.

Begun in the 1940s, this road, called Lakeview Drive, extended about six miles by 1969 but was stalled by environmental issues. Although Congressman Charles Taylor and Senator Jesse Helms obtained \$16 million in federal funding for the North Shore Road Project in October 2000, the road was never completed, partly because of the projected costs of construction. It remains a sensitive issue for area residents, who continue to view the "Road to Nowhere" as a broken promise.

Despite the difficult social and political issues surrounding the road, it offers some of the least-crowded views of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Beginning about three miles outside of [Bryson City](#) <sup>[7]</sup>, the drive provides views of Fontana Lake and the Tuckasegee River as well as encounters with woodlands and many small streams. Several hiking trails, like the approximately 44-mile Lakeshore Trail, lead from the road to some of the highlights of the park, including its highest peak, Clingman's Dome, reached by Noland Creek Trail.

#### Additional Resources:

Williams, Margaret. "Settlement for North Shore Road will bring \$52 million to Swain County." February 3, 2010. *Mountain Xpress*. <http://www.mountainx.com/article/26676/TL-U6ZiGf9k> <sup>[8]</sup> (accessed August 17, 2012).

Swain County Chamber of Commerce. "Bryson City: The Road To Nowhere." VisitNC.com, North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development. December 18, 2008. <http://www.visitnc.com/journeys/articles/smoky-mountains/2> <sup>[9]</sup> (accessed August 17, 2012).

"North Shore Road EIS Website" National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. <http://web.archive.org/web/20080515230126/http://www.northshoreroad.info/index.htm> <sup>[10]</sup> (accessed August 17, 2012).

National Park Service, United States Department Of The Interior. *Record Of Decision: North Shore Road Final Environmental Impact Statement*. November 2007. <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/parkmgmt/upload/ROD%20signed.pdf> <sup>[11]</sup> (accessed August 17, 2012).

Igelman, Jack. "Road to Nowhere <sup>[12]</sup>." *Wildlife in North Carolina* 70. Issue 2. February 2006. p.4-9.

Ball, Julie. "North Shore Road deal is 'done'." *Asheville Citizen-Times*. February 3, 2010. pg. A.1.

Neal, Dale. "Swain board OKs historic deal for road." *Asheville Citizen-Times*. February 6, 2010. pg. A.1.

Barrett, Mark. "North Shore deal tops \$12M." *Asheville Citizen-Times*. December 18, 2009. pg. A.1.

Barrett, Mark. "Swain to get \$6M payment." *Asheville Citizen-Times*. December 21, 2007. pg. A.2.

"Bipartisanship In North Shore Deal Commendable." *Asheville Citizen-Times*. May 30, 2007. pg. B.6.

Barrett, Mark. "Park Service backs North Shore road deal." *Asheville Citizen-Times*. May 26, 2007. pg. A.1.

Ball, Julie. "Pave Or Preserve? North Shore Debate Lingers- Part 1." *Asheville Citizen-Times*. December 1, 2006. pg. A.1.

"North Shore Road Numbers Looking Worse." *Asheville Citizen-Times*. March 10, 2006. pg. A.8.

#### Image Credits:

"Road To Nowhere." Great Smokey Mountains National Park, North Carolina. May 10, 2009. Image from Flickr user Smoky Dan. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/smokydan/3572752041/> [2] (accessed August 17, 2012).

#### Subjects:

[21st Century \(2001-present\)](#) [13]  
[Great Depression \(1929-1941\)](#) [14]  
[Post War 20th Century \(1946-2000\)](#) [15]  
[Roads](#) [16]  
[Slogans, slang, and sayings](#) [17]

#### Authors:

[Hegyi, Laura](#) [18]

#### Origin - location:

[Swain County](#) [19]

#### From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) [20]

1 January 2006 | Hegyi, Laura

---

**Source URL:** <https://ncpedia.org/road-nowhere>

#### Links

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/road-nowhere> [2] <https://www.flickr.com/photos/smokydan/3572752041/> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/swain> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/graham> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/fontana-dam> [6] <https://ncpedia.org/great-smoky-mountains-national-park> [7] <http://www.greatsmokies.com> [8] <http://www.mountainx.com/article/26676/TI-U6ZiGf9k> [9] <http://www.visitnc.com/journeys/articles/smoky-mountains/2> [10] <http://web.archive.org/web/20080515230126/http://www.northshoreroad.info/index.htm> [11] <https://www.nps.gov/grsm/parkmgmt/upload/ROD%20signed.pdf> [12] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/wildlife-in-north-carolina-2006-february/1204254?item=1204276> [13] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/21st-century-2001> [14] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/great-depression-> [15] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/post-war-20th-cen> [16] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/roads> [17] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/slang> [18] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/hegyi-laura> [19] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/mountain-3> [20] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/encyclopedia->