

# Tennessee Parkways Overview

Revised October 2024

## Background

The Tennessee Parkways system was established as part of Governor Lamar Alexander's Safe Growth Plan in 1981, to be an enhancement to the Scenic Highway system. The designation has different eligibility requirements than a Scenic Highways designation, and slightly reduced restrictions on encroaching outdoor advertising and junkyards. Designated Tennessee Parkways are marked by green and white mockingbird roadside signage, shown below.



## Which Routes Are Eligible?

Routes designated as part of the Tennessee Parkway system must be a numbered State Route whose termini connect to other already designated Tennessee Parkway routes.

## How is a Route Designated as a Tennessee Parkway?

Tennessee Parkway routes are designated by the authority of the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Transportation. Communities interested in applying for a Tennessee Parkway designation should begin by:

- 1) Documentation of strong local support from elected officials is highly encouraged. Municipal, county and state officials should all be engaged on a request for a Tennessee Parkway designation. A local resolution endorsing a route is one way to document support endorsing a route's inclusion into the Tennessee Parkway system. Collecting letters of support from local neighborhood groups, businesses and non-profits are strongly encouraged. City and County Commissions are elected to represent their communities as a whole, and as a result, resolutions endorsing a route's 'fitness' as a Tennessee Parkway are very meaningful when considering an application.

- 2) After engaging local elected officials, applicants should contact TDOT to submit a written request and formal application. This application should include: (1) the Tennessee Parkway Designation Application Form, (2) resolutions and letters of support from appropriate county and municipal governments and stakeholders and (3) a route map. The Tennessee Parkway Designation Application Form and sample resolutions and letters of support are included in the Appendix of the Scenic Handbook.
- 3) Once a completed application is received, TDOT's Highway Beautification Office, conducts a field visit of the route to analyze the special qualities and features of the routes. They then make a recommendation to the Commissioner of Transportation concerning inclusion in the system.
- 4) The Commissioner of Transportation considers the recommendation of the Highway Beautification Office, along with the application and local support, and planning considerations, to make the final determination for designation.

### **What are the Benefits to Tennessee Parkway Designation?**

The Tennessee General Assembly codified a series of regulations for the program within TCA § 54-27-114. Preservation of historic, scenic, and natural qualities along a Tennessee Parkway is accomplished with regulations that address junkyards, outdoor advertising, and illegal dumping.

**Junkyards:** Restrictions apply to the construction, use or operation of junkyards and auto dismantling establishments within 2,000 feet of any road or highway. This applies to designated routes existing in a county, outside the corporate limits of any city or town.

**Outdoor Advertising:** Restrictions apply to the construction, use, or operation of any advertising structure within 2,000 feet of any road or highway. This applies to designated routes existing in a county, outside the corporate limits of any city or town. Please refer to TCA § 54-17-206 for rules and regulations for outdoor advertising along the Tennessee Parkway System.

**Illegal Dumping:** Illegal dumping is prohibited along Tennessee Parkway routes. Dump sites within 500 feet of a designated route are eligible for harsher criminal penalties and double fines.

### **Where Can I Learn More About Tennessee Parkways Routes?**

On the Official Tennessee Transportation Map, Tennessee Parkways are marked by small dotted green lines. Routes originally adopted into the Tennessee Parkway system as part of the program's authorizing legislation are codified in TCA § 54-17-203. Routes adopted since the original designation are kept on-record by TDOT. Figure 6 below is a statewide map of routes includes as part of the Tennessee Parkway System.

