

**PELLISSIPPI PARKWAY EXTENSION
BLOUNT COUNTY, TN
TDOT PROJECT No. # 05097- 1226-04
PIN 101423.00**

**SUMMARY OF SCOPING COMMENTS
FOR PERIOD APRIL 25 THROUGH JULY 5, 2006
AND
COMMENTS RECEIVED BETWEEN JULY 6 AND DECEMBER 31, 2006

DECEMBER 31, 2006**

**PREPARED FOR:
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION, TENNESSEE DIVISION
AND
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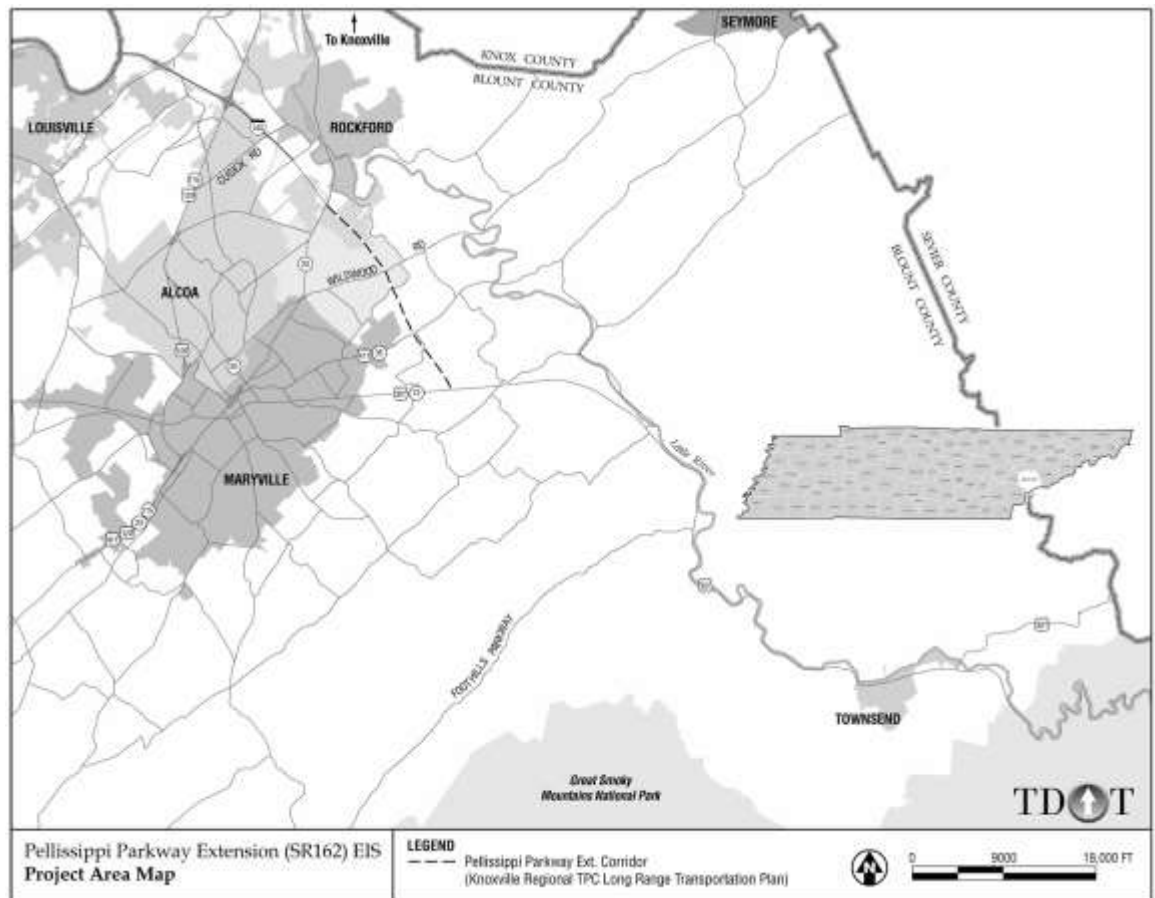
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to identify and evaluate the environmental effects of alternatives for the proposed Pellissippi Parkway Extension (SR 162 from SR 33 to SR 73 /US 321 or Lamar Alexander Highway) in Blount County. The project vicinity is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

This Scoping Summary Report describes the public and agency coordination conducted as part of the Scoping process in 2006 for the initiation of an EIS for the proposed improvements to Pellissippi Parkway Extension. Written comments received during the Scoping Period, including those received during the two Public Scoping Workshops held on June 13, 2006, are presented in this report. Copies of actual comments received and official comments provided to the court reporter at the workshops are included in appendices to this report. This report also includes correspondence by agencies in response to the Initial Coordination Package.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map



2.0 NOTICE OF INTENT

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TDOT prepared a Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an EIS that was published in the Federal Register on April 25, 2006. As required under NEPA, the publication of the NOI initiates the EIS process.

3.0 INITIAL COORDINATION PACKAGES

Initial Coordination Packages were sent to affected and interested parties on May 10, 2006. The packages included a transmittal letter, a project summary and a project vicinity map. The project summary identifies preliminary purposes for the project, alternatives to be considered, current traffic counts on specified roadways and example of environmental concerns that will be considered over the course of the EIS.

Six groups of agencies and organizations received initial coordination packages:

- 1). Lead Federal Agency;
- 2). Cooperating Agencies;
- 3). Participating Agencies;
- 4). Non-Participating Agencies and Organizations;
- 5). Local Agencies and Organizations
- 6). Section 106 Consultation Parties

As the lead federal agency for the EIS, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) received the Complete Initial Coordination Package.

Cooperating agencies are those governmental agencies specifically requested by the lead agency to participate during the environmental evaluation process. FHWA's NEPA regulations (23 CFR 771.111(d)) require that those federal agencies with jurisdiction by law be invited to be cooperating agencies for an EIS. For this project, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) were requested through the initial coordination package to be cooperating and participating agencies.

The 2005 federal transportation legislation, SAFETEA-LU (Section 6002) created a new category of agencies to participate in the environmental review process for EISs. These are federal and non-federal agencies that may have an interest in the project because of their jurisdictional authority, special expertise and/or statewide interest. These participating agencies are formally invited to participate in the environmental review of the project. In addition to TVA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, eight additional agencies/divisions received Initial Coordination Packages:

- U.S. Department of the Interior – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- U.S. Department of the Interior – Great Smoky Mountains National Park;
- Environmental Protection Agency;
- Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation – Commissioner;
- Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation – Division of Water Pollution Control;
- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency;
- Tennessee Historical Commission; and
- Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Initial Coordination Packages were also sent to 42 Non-Participating and 10 local agencies or organizations.

The National Historic Preservation Act requires the federal agency or its designee (in this case TDOT) to identify the appropriate parties that need to be involved in the process of identifying effects of a proposed project to historic resources and working through the process with such parties. This “involvement” is referred to as “consultation.” As a part of the consultation requirements for Section 106, a separate initial coordination package was sent to six parties with interests in historical and archaeological issues. The following groups were invited to request status as Section 106 consulting parties:

- Cherokee Nation;
- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians;
- Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma;
- Shawnee Tribe;
- United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians; and
- Blount County Mayor.

4.0 PUBLIC SCOPING WORKSHOPS

4.1 Notification

In order to publicize the public workshops notices were published in local newspapers including the Knox News-Sentinel and The Daily Times (Maryville). Notices were published on Wednesday, May 31, 2006 and Tuesday, June 6, 2006. The notice was also posted on TDOT's website beginning on May 31 and continuing on through to the workshop date.

4.2 Workshops

Two public scoping workshops were held in Blount County on Tuesday, June 13, 2006 at two different locations within the project area. The purpose of the workshops was to solicit public input on the purpose and need for the project, alternatives to be considered, and areas of community and environmental concerns.

Both workshops followed the same format. Upon entering the workshop location, participants registered at the sign-in table and received a handout. The four-page handout provided details on the background of the project, initial purpose and need, alternatives to be considered, potential community and environmental concerns and a map of the general project area. Also found in the scoping handout was a comment form that workshop participants were asked to complete. Participants had the option of returning the comment form before leaving the workshop, or mailing it to TDOT by July 5, 2006. A copy of the workshop handout is in Appendix C.

After viewing the presentation, attendees were encouraged to visit one of the tables set up to provide their input on the transportation needs in the area, potential alternatives they would like to see considered and areas of community and environmental concerns. Each table was staffed with several project team members that took notes on the comments and concerns voiced by the public. Each table also had a large aerial photographic map of the general project vicinity to encourage one-on-one participation. Workshop participants were encouraged to review the map and comments on all issues related to this project.

Workshop attendees were also encouraged to record their comments with the court reporter that was present at each of the workshops.

4.2.1 June 13, 2006 12:00-2:00 pm

The first public workshop was held at Eagleton Elementary School, located at 708 Sam Houston School Road, Maryville, TN from 12:00 noon to 2:00 pm. Approximately seventy five people attended this workshop.

4.2.2 June 13, 2006 6:00-8:00 pm

The second public workshop was held at Heritage High School, located at 3741 East Lamar Alexander Parkway, Maryville, TN from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Approximately ninety five people attended this workshop.

4.3 Summary of Public Comments

TDOT will seek to engage the public and encourage comments on the project throughout the course of the EIS. However, in order for the comments to be included in this scoping report, mailed or e-mailed comments were requested to be returned to TDOT to July 5, 2006. All comment forms postmarked by July 5th are considered part of this public scoping report. Comments will continue to be accepted and considered throughout the course of the project.

A variety of options was available to encourage public input during the scoping process. The public provided input through the following means:

- Comments to a Court Reporter at the public workshops;
- Written Comments – comment forms, letters and e-mails; and
- Informal Comments made to TDOT representatives at the public workshops.

During the official scoping period (April 25 through July 5, 2006), 211 public comments were received through the various formats listed above. Because there were a variety of ways to respond, some individuals commented in multiple formats. When the duplicate responses were subtracted, comments were received from 198 different individuals. Of the 198 responses, 57 percent expressed support for a build alternative (the extension of Pellissippi Parkway from SR 33 to US 321) while 37 percent expressed opposition to a build alternative; 6 percent of the respondents did not specify their support or opposition to the project. Table 4.1 below provides further detail on the overall comment summary. Sections 4.3.1 through 4.3.3 below detail the responses by the type of comment received.

Table 4.1 Summary of Comments

Type of Comment	Number Received	Note
Total Comments Received	211	Includes duplicate responses
Total Comments Received	198	Excludes duplicate responses
Responses in Support of Extension	117	Includes duplicate responses
Responses in Support of Extension	114	Excludes duplicate responses
Responses in Opposition to Extension	82	Includes duplicate responses
Responses in Opposition to Extension	74	Excludes duplicate responses
Total Unspecified Preference	12	N/A

4.3.1 Official Comments to Court Reporter

During the two public workshops held on June 13, 2006, 32 people gave statements about the project to the court reporter. Of the 32 comments, 19

people stated support for the Pellissippi Parkway Extension, nine people expressed opposition to the extension, while four did not state a preference.

Concerns expressed about the project and Blount County's transportation needs are summarized below:

- A solution is needed for the congestion on Alcoa Highway and SR 33.
- Upgrade of existing roads is also needed: Sevierville Road, Alcoa Highway, SR 33, and US 411.
- Supports a build alternative.
- Extension should be built as quickly as possible; time and money are being wasted.
- A new roadway will alleviate traffic congestion on existing roads.
- Concerned about the increasing cost of building an extension to Pellissippi Parkway because of delays.
- Opposes the construction of a new road; existing roads need to be improved first.
- It is too early to be asking for public opinion because TDOT has not provided the public with enough statistics or proof that a road is needed.
- Concerned about environmental impacts – farmlands and streams.
- Believes a new road will cause overcrowding of the Smoky Mountains National Park.
- If a new road is built, it will open up areas to development that the County cannot handle.

4.3.2 Official Comments in Writing

The public provided written comments by e-mails, letters and by filling in the comment form provided by TDOT. By the close of the initial scoping period (received or postmarked by July 5), TDOT had received 21 e-mailed comments, six letters and 152 comment forms.

4.3.2.1 Comment Forms

Public comment were received in a comment form that was distributed by TDOT at the public scoping workshops and also posted on TDOT's website. Comment forms were filled out by the public and returned to TDOT before leaving the June 13 public workshops, or were mailed in after the workshops. In total, 152 comment forms were returned, 82 percent of which came from Blount County residents, 12 percent from Knox County residents, and the remaining percent from residents of various neighboring counties.

The comment form asked the respondents to provide input on three main issues: 1) the transportation needs in Blount County, 2) issues and concerns related to the project, and 3) alternatives that should be considered. Overall, the comment respondents generally agreed that they had similar transportation needs – less congested roadways, safer roadways and more direct routes to travel through the county. The main difference came in how they thought the needs should be met. When asked about possible alternatives to address the transportation needs, 32 percent of comment forms indicated that building an extension to Pellissippi Parkway would not solve the transportation needs. Another 28 percent said that improving the existing roadways would address the current traffic needs. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of the respondents indicated that constructing an extension to Pellissippi Parkway would address transportation issues.

Respondents also indicated their concerns about potential community and environmental issues related to the project. Between 30 and 45 percent of all responses indicated concerns about impacts to the following: environment, existing homes and businesses, farmland and historic resources. Tallied responses to the questions posed on the comment forms are found in Table 4.2, Table 4.3 and Table 4.4.

Table 4.2 Transportation Needs

Less Congested Roadways	Safer Roadways	More Direct Routes	Other
113	119	90	39

* Numbers of responses will not total to 100% because more than one option could be selected.

Table 4.3 Issues and Concerns

Impacts to Environment	Impacts to Homes and Businesses	Impacts to Agricultural Lands	Impacts to Historic/Archaeological Resources	Other
67	59	61	47	31

* Numbers of responses will not total to 100% because more than one option could be selected.

Table 4.4 Alternatives to Consider

No Build	TSM	Build	Of those who stated a preference for "Build" Alternative, typical section preference indicated			Other
			2-Lane	4-Lane	5-Lane	
48	42	96	2	78	13	22

* Numbers of responses will not total to 100% because more than one option could be selected.
TSM – Transportation System Management.

Additional comments were also provided by the public on the comment forms. Public opinion in the comment forms varied among those who want the Pellissippi Parkway Extension built and those who do not want it built. The additional comments are consistent with those that were provided to the court reporter and expressed in letters and e-mails. The following bullets provide an overview of the major points written on the comment forms:

- There is a need for a more direct route from Knoxville to Townsend.
- Extension needs to be completed soon – will help alleviate traffic congestion.
- A 4-lane road (PPE) should not end as it does currently, at a 2-lane road (SR 33).
- Tourists should be routed around, not through, Maryville.
- TDOT needs to finish the project it started.
- PPE will help Blount County economically.
- Planning and zoning are needed to control the growth that a new road would generate.
- A new road would generate new development that the County cannot support.
- If PPE is built, it will change the rural character of the area.
- Consider mass transit as an alternative.
- Existing roads need to be improved before a new road is built.
- Environmental concerns such as impacts to farmland, streams and rivers, habitats and air quality.

4.3.2.2 Letters and E-mails

TDOT received 27 letters and e-mails during the official scoping comment period. A substantial majority of which (93 percent) expressed opposition to building an extension to the Pellissippi Parkway for the following reasons:

- The extension will not address current traffic problems.
- The recently opened I-140 extension did not help traffic, it made it worse.
- Environmental impacts will occur to farmlands, Little River, wildlife, air quality, noise.
- A new road will create additional development pressures that the County is unable to handle.
- Existing roads should be improved first.
- Opposes improving travel to Knoxville or to the Smoky Mountains.
- Not a good use of taxpayer dollars.

- Would prefer to see a transit system implemented.
- Would like to see a thorough economic impact study done first.
- A new road will have a negative impact on Maryville's businesses by diverting traffic and money from the city.

Those who wrote in by e-mail or letter stating support of the project indicated that a new road would help ease congestion and safety issues on Alcoa Highway.

4.3.3 Informal Comments Provided at Workshops

At each of the two public workshops held on June 13, 2006 in Blount County, the public was afforded the opportunity to voice their comments about the project to TDOT staff at a working table. Each working table had a map of the project area and at least two TDOT representatives available to answer questions and listen to the public's ideas and concerns. Although not an official means of registering comments, TDOT representatives took notes during the conversations and summarized the comments. The informal comments noted are generally consistent with the comments detailed in the above sections of this report; however, the informal comments are more detailed in terms of specific comments on existing transportation needs in Blount County and suggestions as to how to improve the problems.

The following bullets summarize major points made during the workshops:

- Some people want to see the extension built as soon as possible, while others do not want it to be built at all.
- What is the purpose of this project?
- Build the extension on an alignment that is as straight as possible and is least disruptive to landowners.
- Consider building the extension as an arterial road instead of an interstate; greater access and reduced speeds would be more beneficial to the local residents.
- Through traffic is putting a strain on local roads.
- The extension will not solve the traffic problem because most traffic continues on south to Maryville, not east towards Townsend.
- There are major congestion issues as a result of Pellissippi Parkway ending at SR 33. Residents of the Jackson Hills subdivision have a hard time getting out of their subdivision.
- New homes are already being built in the area; if the extension isn't built soon there will be no open land left.
- Concerned about loss of rural character.
- Concerned about environment issues such as habitats and streams that serve as source of drinking water.

- Concerned about the health of the downtown district if Pellissippi Pkwy is built.
- Extension of Pellissippi Parkway will spur additional unwanted development on existing farmland; Blount County will be unable to provide services for additional development.
- Spend money on the following projects in addition to/instead of building the extension:
 - Align intersection at Wildwood Road and SR 33(Broadway);
 - Add a center turn lane on SR 33 (Broadway);
 - Install traffic signal at SR 33 and Sam Houston School Road;
 - Coordinate signal timing throughout the area;
 - Improve Davis Ford Road;
 - Improve Peppermint Road;
 - Improve Sam Houston School Road;
 - Improve River Ford Road;
 - Improve US 411 (straighten curves, add center turn lane);
 - Improve Ellejoy Road; and/or
 - Construct a northbound on-ramp at Cusick Road interchange.

4.4 Comments Received After July 5, 2006

While the official scoping comment period ended on July 5, 2006, TDOT will continue to encourage, accept, and considered comments received throughout the course of the project.

Between July 6 and December 31, 2006, the public provided input through submission of comment forms, letters and e-mails. When the duplicate responses were subtracted, comments were received from 97 different individuals. Of the 97 responses, 85 percent expressed support for a build alternative (the extension of Pellissippi Parkway from SR 33 to US 321) while 10 percent expressed opposition to a build alternative; 5 percent of the respondents did not specify their support or opposition to the project. Table 4-5 below provides further detail on the overall comment summary. Sections 4.5.1 through 4.5.3 below detail the responses by the type of comment received.

Table 4.5 Summary of Comments Received after July 5, 2006

Type of Comment	Number Received	Note
Total Comments Received	103	Includes duplicate responses
Total Comments Received	97	Excludes duplicate responses
Responses in Support of Extension	86	Includes duplicate responses
Responses in Support of Extension	81	Excludes duplicate responses
Responses in Opposition to Extension	11	Includes duplicate responses
Responses in Opposition to Extension	10	Excludes duplicate responses
Total Unspecified Preference	6	N/A

4.4.1 Official Comments in Writing

There are three ways that the public provided written comments. The first was by e-mail, the second by letter and the third was by filling in the comment form provided by TDOT from the public meetings in June and subsequently posted on the website. Between July 6 and December 31, 2006, TDOT received 40 e-mailed comments, 6 letters and 57 comment forms from persons who wanted to comment on the project.

4.4.1.1 Comment Forms

A comment form was distributed by TDOT at the public scoping workshops and also posted on TDOT's website. Comment forms were filled out by the public and returned to TDOT before leaving the June 13 public workshops, or were mailed in after the workshops. In total, 57 comment forms were returned after the deadline, 75 percent of which came from Blount County residents, 20 percent from Knox County residents and the remaining percent from residents of various neighboring counties.

Overall, the comment respondents generally agreed that they had similar transportation needs – less congested roadways, safer roadways and more direct routes to travel through the county. The main difference came in how they thought the needs should be met. When asked about possible alternatives to address the transportation needs, 11 percent of comment forms indicated that building an extension to Pellissippi Parkway would not solve the transportation needs. Sixteen percent said that improving the existing roadways would address the current traffic needs. Nearly 90 percent of the respondents indicated that constructing an extension to Pellissippi Parkway would address transportation issues.

Respondents also indicated their concerns about potential community and environmental issues related to the project. Between 11 and 25 percent of all responses indicated concerns about impacts to the following: environment, existing homes and businesses, farmland and historic resources. Tallied responses to the questions posed on the comment forms are found in Table 4-6, Table 4-7 and Table 4-8.

Table 4.6 Transportation Needs

Less Congested Roadways	Safer Roadways	More Direct Routes	Other
49	48	46	10

* Numbers of responses will not total to 100% because more than one option could be selected.

Table 4.7 Issues and Concerns

Impacts to	Impacts to	Impacts to	Impacts to	Other
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Environment	Homes and Businesses	Agricultural Lands	Historic/Archaeological Resources	
13	10	14	6	9

* Numbers of responses will not total to 100% because more than one option could be selected.

Table 4.8 Alternatives to Consider

No Build	TSM	Build	Of those who stated a preference for “Build” Alternative, typical section preference indicated			Other
			2-Lane	4-Lane	5-Lane	
6	9	49	2	20	12	1

* Numbers of responses will not total to 100% because more than one option could be selected.
TSM – Transportation System Management.

Additional comments were also provided by the public on the comment forms. Public opinion in the comment forms varied among those who want the Pellissippi Parkway Extension built and those who do not want it built. The additional comments are consistent with those that were provided to the court reporter and expressed in letters and e-mails. The following bullets provide an overview of the major points written on the comment forms:

- There is a need for a more direct route from Knoxville to Townsend.
- Extension needs to be completed soon – will help alleviate traffic congestion.
- TDOT needs to finish the project it started.
- The extension will help Blount County economically.
- Planning and zoning are needed to control the growth that a new road would generate.
- A new road would generate new development that the County cannot support.
- Consider mass transit as an alternative.
- Existing roads need to be improved before a new road is built.
- Environmental concerns such as impacts to farmland, streams and rivers, habitats and air quality.

4.4.1.2 Letters and E-mails

Forty-two letters and e-mails were sent to TDOT. A substantial majority of which (88 percent) expressed support to building an extension to the Pellissippi Parkway for the following reasons:

- It will ease the traffic congestion through Maryville and thereby alleviate rat running through residential areas.
- It will make it easier access to the mountains.

- It is necessary to meet future traffic demands.
- Residents feel that time and money have been wasted in not constructing the extension yet.
- It would save time and add convenience to the commute to Knoxville and/or Oak Ridge.
- It is critical to the development of Townsend.
- It is necessary for continued physical, economic and tourism growth in Blount County.
- It will increase mobility for emergency vehicles.

Those who did not support the project highlighted concerns about losing the rural character of the region and that funding could possibly be better used in safety improvements to local roads (e.g. shoulders).

5.0 AGENCY COMMENTS

As of the end of July, 12 agencies have responded to the Initial Coordination Letter, including the Section 106 coordination. Copies of the agency responses are found in Appendix G.

5.1.1 Cooperating Agencies

TVA and the Corps of Engineers responded in the affirmative to TDOT's request that they serve as cooperating agencies. Both agencies stated concerns about potential impacts to the Little River, its tributaries and adjacent wetlands should a new road be constructed or existing roads upgraded. The cooperating agencies noted that all measures practicable should be taken to avoid and minimize impacts.

5.1.2 Participating Agencies

In addition to the comments by the cooperating agencies, which are also participating agencies, four additional participating agencies responded with comments (National Resource Conservation Service, TDEC Water Pollution Control, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission, and Tennessee Historical Commission). These agencies listed the following concerns:

- Impacts to 303(d) listed streams.
- Aquatic Resource Alteration Permits (ARAP) are needed should there be any alternations to waterways if the land disturbance is greater than one acre.
- Need for appropriate erosion and sediment control measures.
- Adherence to the requirements of TDOT's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System permit.
- Impacts to Federal and State listed species that inhabit the Little River Watershed.
- Impacts to 56 acres of prime farmland.
- Construction impacts in karst limestone areas that could potentially cause sinkholes to collapse and damage ground water aquifers.
- Impacts to properties that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

5.1.3 Other Agencies or Organizations

A total of 42 non-participating agencies/organizations and 10 local agencies/organizations received the Initial Coordination Package requesting their comments on the proposed project. To date, five agencies have responded with comments:

- TDEC Water Supply;

- TDEC Air Pollution Control;
- TDEC Ground Water Protection;
- Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development; and
- TDOT Civil Rights.

The major concerns expressed by the agencies are as follows:

- Impacts to two water supply intakes along the Little River for the Cities of Maryville and Alcoa.
- Disturbances to sinkholes.
- A 450-acre Research & Development (R&D) Park at the current terminus of Pellissippi Parkway at SR-33 is in the planning stage. If a build alternative is selected, design will need to take the R&D Park into account.
- Impacts to the subsurface sewage disposal (SSD) system.
- Air quality impacts as a result of fugitive dust and equipment exhaust emissions during construction, should a build alternative be selected.
- If structures are to be demolished, they must be asbestos free.
- Rare species have been documented within a 1-mile radius of the general project area: duskytail darter, tangerine darter, longhead darter, snail darter, and the fine-rayed pigtoe. Though impacts to these species are not anticipated by the commenting agency, adherence to site-specific Best Management Practices is recommended.
- Possible environmental justice concerns (impacts to low income and limited English proficient communities).

5.1.4 Section 106 Consultation

Of the six consulting party invitations sent out by TDOT and FHWA, to date, one Indian Tribe (Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma) has responded. The Tribe did not request to be a consulting party at this time. The representative did request that the Tribe be notified if any items under the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) were discovered during construction.