

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 10, 1990

CONTACT: JIM ZOIA
(202) 226-7761

SHAWNEE PARKWAY PROPOSAL ADVANCED BY RAHALL BILL
Southern West Virginia East-West Highway Link
Fashioned After Blue Ridge Parkway

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- In a move aimed at establishing an east-west highway corridor through the southern West Virginia coalfields, U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) today introduced legislation that would pave the way for the construction of what is known as the "Shawnee Parkway."

"This proposed parkway, running along the ridges of southern West Virginia, has caught the minds and imaginations of many of us looking to open up the southern coal counties; to make them more accessible, to provide that missing link in our transportation system," Rahall stated. The bill, entitled the "Shawnee National Parkway Act of 1990," seeks to establish the parkway as a unit of the National Park System in southern West Virginia.

The Shawnee Parkway is being promoted by a number of concerned citizens organized by Princeton lawyer William Sanders. The roadway would be accessed from the proposed New River Parkway and I-77 through the southern coal counties to Kentucky, where it could link up with the Daniel Boone Parkway and the Mountain Parkway near Pikeville. Rahall stated his intention to introduce the bill at a meeting of the Shawnee Parkway Association in Ghent on May 3rd.

"I think all those supporting this proposal recognize that this represents a monumental task. In these days of tight state and federal budgets, one does lightly expect that a vast new stretch of roadway of the magnitude of the Shawnee Parkway will easily be built," Rahall said. "However, I do not hold it as an impossibility. At this juncture, in fact, I believe that the concept of scenic parkways, byways or interstate connectors is gaining momentum throughout the Nation."

According to Rahall, as part of the next federal highway bill to be considered next year, Congress will give serious consideration to building a new system of roads to fill gaps in the existing interstate highway system. While southern West Virginia and particularly in Raleigh County has benefited from interstates like I-77 and I-64, they do not traverse counties like McDowell, Mingo, Wyoming or Logan. Nor do they provide east-west access for Mercer or any of the other counties south of Raleigh.

MORE

The "Shawnee National Parkway Act of 1990" is modeled after two existing national parkways that are administered by the National Park Service: In Virginia and North Carolina, the Blue Ridge Parkway stretches from the Shenandoah National Park to the Great Smokey Mountains National Park and in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee the Natchez Trace Parkway connects Natchez, Mississippi, with Nashville, Tennessee.

Rahall noted, however, that both of the parkways were constructed under Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act in the mid-1930s on land donated to the federal government by the States, built with CCC labor, and later transferred to the administration of the National Park Service. As such, even during the New Deal the federal government said "No Deal" unless the States contributed the land because of the sheer magnitude of the undertaking. "There should be no doubt in any of our minds that constructing the Shawnee Parkway would equal the existing Blue Ridge Parkway as an engineering feat," he said.

Under the legislation, the State of West Virginia would be responsible for donating the land for the right-of-way for the proposed parkway to the federal government for administration by the National Park Service. The parkway would then be constructed to national parkway standards with funding provided on an 80% federal - 20% state match basis.

"I look forward to continuing my work with those interested in the Shawnee Parkway. It will take a great deal of cooperation. In particular, the State must join the Federal government in partnership if we are ever to make the dream of the Shawnee Parkway a reality," Rahall said.