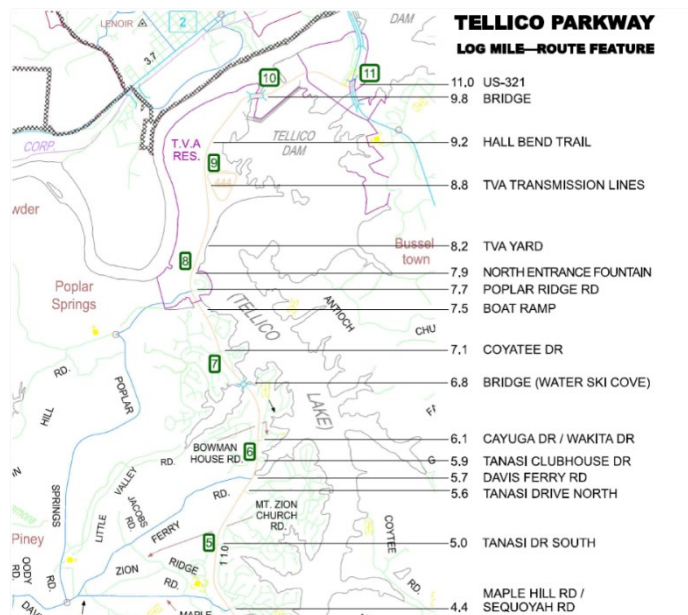


Traveling Safely on Tellico Parkway (RT 444)

For most of us, the first time we visited Tellico Village, we arrived via the Tellico Parkway (RT444). The Parkway is an 11-mile stretch (7 miles within Tellico Village) that winds around the west side of Tellico Lake between RT 321 (North) and RT 72 (South). The parkway is a two-lane road with one lane going in each direction and no median barrier.

The Parkway was built by TVA. It was part of the Tellico Dam project back in the 1980s. Upon completion of the dam project, the parkway was turned over to the Tellico Reservoir District Association (TRDA). In 1994, through a Memorandum of Understanding, the parkway was turned over to the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT). At that time, TDOT assigned route number 444 to the parkway.



TDOT's Management of the Parkway:

The parkway is managed by TDOT. TDOT not only owns and maintains the Parkway, but it also owns the land on either side, which varies from 60 to 90 feet east of the current 444 centerline and from 160 to 240 feet west of the centerline.

Driver's Safety:

Today's automobiles are safer than ever. Yet, we still have accidents. In 2022, a total of 42,514 fatal car accidents occurred on roadways across the United States. Another 1,664,598 crashes resulted in injuries, and 4,226,677 caused property damage. In all, the number of police-reported crashes that year hit 5,930,496. ¹

According to the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), human error is the leading cause of vehicular accidents, with driver-related factors—namely, driver error, distraction, and impairment—accounting for 87.7% of crashes. The U.S. Department of Transportation's most recent estimate of the annual economic cost of crashes is \$340 billion dollars per year.

How can we make a difference?

1. **Driving Under the Influence:** In the United States, alcohol remains a significant factor in traffic fatalities, accounting for 13,524 deaths in 2022. Intoxicated driving is responsible for 32% of all traffic deaths in the country. In Tellico Village, many events include alcohol for consumption. The parkway can be difficult to navigate even under the best of conditions. If you plan on drinking, make sure to have someone designated as a driver to ensure your safety and that of your neighbors.
2. **Speeding:** Driving too fast severely hampers one's ability to navigate a curve safely. Statistics show that speeding-related accidents resulted in approximately 10,922 fatal crashes in 2022. Most of the parkway's speed limit is 50 mph. The following table shows your travel time is influenced by speed:

Tavel Time (Min)	Distance (miles)	Speed (mph)
16.5	11	40
14.7	11	45
13.2	11	50
12.0	11	55
11.0	11	60

The question you need to ask yourself is, is saving a little over one minute of your time worth the risk?

3. **Distracted Driving:** The NHTSA defines distracted driving as any activity that takes attention away from safe driving, such as texting, eating, talking to passengers, or adjusting the car's controls. According to reports from the same agency, distracted driving resulted in 3,308 fatalities in 2022. We have all done things that take our eyes off the road. Tellico Parkway has a lot of turns, intersections, and traffic where taking your eye off the road can lead to an accident.

4. **Tailgating:** Tailgating leaves drivers with barely enough distance and time to react if the vehicle in front of them makes a sudden stop. Tailgating may lead to rear-end accidents. The results can be quickly fatal if these collisions happen at high speeds. The common rule of thumb is the “two-second” rule. To estimate the time, a driver can wait until the rear end of the vehicle in front passes a distinct and fixed point on the roadway, such as a road sign, mailbox, or a line, crack, or patch in the road. After the car ahead passes a given fixed point, the front of one's car should pass the same point no less than two seconds later. If the elapsed time is less than this, one should increase the distance, then repeat the method until the time is at least two seconds. On our parkway, we have numerous side roads and wildlife that can cause the car in front of you to come to a sudden stop. Following this rule will ensure you and the vehicles in front of you safety.

5. **Failure to Yield: When a driver fails to yield, other drivers nearby may be unprepared for this unexpected situation, which can lead to vehicle collisions.** The National Safety Council (NSC) reported that failure to yield accounted for 6.9% of fatal crashes in 2022. With the high volume of traffic on the parkway, drivers are prone to taking risks when entering the highway.

Reducing Road Noise Pollution:

The parkway runs between nearly all of our neighborhoods, and the noise generated from the parkway negatively impacts a substantial number of Village residents. Road noise is a form of pollution that causes damage as much as many other forms of pollution. Let's explore ways to help reduce this form of pollution.

1. **Speed:** The speed of vehicular traffic is directly related to the level of noise created. Sound or loudness is measured in decibels. A reduction of 10 decibels results in a 50% reduction of perceived road noise. Traffic moving at 45 mph is 5 decibels quieter than traffic moving at 60 mph. Since noise reduction is logarithmic and not linear, a decrease of 5 decibels results in a perceived noise reduction of over 68%. So, slowing down a bit is not only safer, but it's also a lot quieter.

2. **Tire Maintenance:** Regular maintenance and replacing tires when they become worn are crucial to prevent increased noise levels.

3. **Choosing the Right Tires** is essential for noise reduction. Tires are our car's first contact with the road, and their design has a significant impact on the level of noise

they produce.

4. **Car Maintenance:** Regularly check the exhaust system and engine components, such as the serpentine belt and alternator, to ensure they are not contributing to excess noise. Replace worn brake pads and wheel bearings to eliminate their noise output, as these parts can become significant contributors to noise when they start to fail.
5. **Driving Habits:** Avoid unnecessary acceleration and honking. Manage your speed and distance control as stated above. This will reduce the need for breaking.
6. **Drive Less:** The following are some great examples of how we can drive less:
 - a. Carpool with your friends and neighbors when going to the same location.
 - b. Plan to make the most of your trips and “trip chain.” If your grocery store is near other places you need to visit, consider doing them all at once.
 - c. Work from home periodically if your job allows it.
7. **Electric Vehicles and Hybrids:** Electric vehicles (EVs) operate at significantly lower noise levels than combustion engine vehicles, particularly at lower speeds. This difference is primarily due to the quietness of electric motors compared to internal combustion engines (ICE).

Summary:

444 is a beautiful parkway. As you head south from the bridge, you'll enjoy spectacular views of the lake and mountains, with lush greenery the whole way.

As stated earlier, human error is the primary cause of accidents. This means safety and noise pollution all start with the decisions we make. While driving, we should always ask ourselves, is the risk of speeding, playing on our phones, or tailgating worth the reward? Let's not only make it one of the most beautiful parkways in America but also one of the safest. These decisions are all within our control.

1. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration