



# Foundation Document Overview

## Baltimore-Washington Parkway

### Maryland



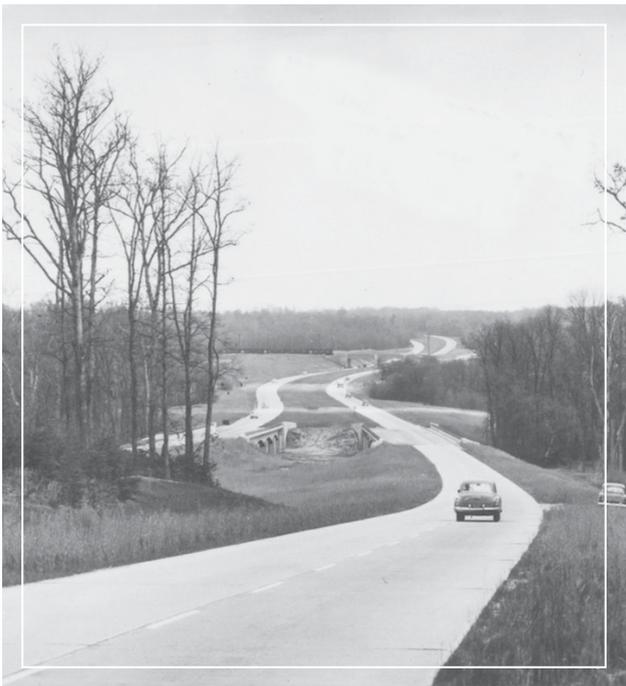
#### Contact Information

For more information about the *Baltimore-Washington Parkway Foundation Document*, contact: [bawa\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:bawa_superintendent@nps.gov)

## Purpose



*THE BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON PARKWAY, an extension of the park system of Washington, DC, is a limited access transportation corridor that provides a scenic, safe, and suitable gateway to the nation's capital while linking federal facilities.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Baltimore-Washington Parkway resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

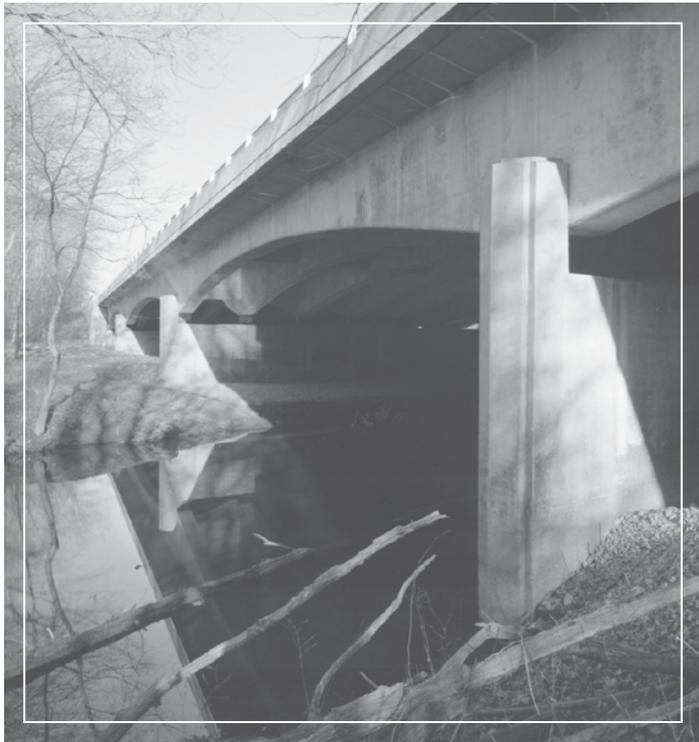
- The Baltimore-Washington Parkway was designed to blend with the natural topography and preserve a scenic, forested transportation corridor between Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Maryland.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Transportation Safety and Infrastructure**
- **Parkway Landscape**
- **Architectural Treatments**



## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- A functional highway with elements of traditional parkway design, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway provides a tangible link to the story of post-World War II suburban growth in Washington, DC, and serves as a ceremonial approach to the capital city.
- The parkway contains evidence of human habitation and use over thousands of years. These archeological resources inform our understanding of the past inhabitants and what the meanings and significance of their lives hold to present-day visitors.
- The screening along the parkway consists of thick, forested vegetation within the interspersed areas of grassy lawn. The screening frames the views and vistas for drivers, blocking adjacent intrusions and providing habitat for wildlife.
- The road corridor has a long history of providing transportation between Baltimore and Washington, DC, and is part of a wider planning effort to establish a network of parkways, playgrounds, and protected open spaces in the Washington, DC, area.
- The parkway's forested corridor serves as a dispersal corridor for wildlife. The forest reduces habitat fragmentation, protects plant and animal species against increased urbanization, and reduces potential impacts from climate change. The forested buffer along the parkway assists with the protection of regional species and enhances biodiversity.



## Description

The Baltimore-Washington Parkway was established by Congress on August 3, 1950, through Public Law 81-643. Opened in 1954, the parkway is a 19-mile scenic highway that connects Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington, DC. It is one of four parkways in the nation's capital, and integrates a majestic parkway design that serves as a scenic entry to the capital city.

Since the parkway opened in 1954, maintenance on road and park land has been aimed at the preservation of the parkway's aesthetic qualities with the objective of not only minimizing negative impacts, but also of enhancing parkway character wherever possible. The parkway features several unique architectural treatments, including stone facing on bridges and guardrails. The facing generally consisted of stone of varied colors obtained from local quarries, with granite masonry trimming. The architectural features were varied to give each bridge or guardrail a distinctive, individual appearance. This was a major departure from typical roadways of the time, which were primarily constructed of concrete.

The parkway occupies the western edge of the Atlantic Coastal Plain, on the edge of the Piedmont plateau. The topography ranges from gently rolling to steep and includes several drainage basins. Historically in the area, the dominant types of trees were red and white oak, sweet gum, and tulip trees; however, the cleared portions of the parkway were initially invaded by Virginia pine and other scrub growth such as blackjack oak and black locust. More recently, southern yellow pine, oaks, ash, and sweet birch have grown in the right-of-way, in addition to occasional mountain laurel, American holly, and tupelo.

The parkway is a cultural landscape, intended to retain a combination of thick, forested woodland forest and grassy lawn within the median in accordance with the landscape standards set forth in mid-20th century parkway construction. The native forests not only provide scenic views for visitors, but also serve as an increasingly important corridor for wildlife, from forest-dwelling species to migratory birds.

