



Transportation Coalition of Tennessee launches education campaign amid statewide transportation and infrastructure crisis

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (May 13, 2015) – A coalition of transportation experts announced today that Tennessee is in a transportation infrastructure funding crisis that threatens the safety of drivers and the economic competitiveness of the state.

“Tennessee’s transportation system is now in crisis,” said Susie Alcorn, executive director of the Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance. “At a time when our state is growing – in terms of population and economy – we no longer have the ability to create and maintain a transportation infrastructure to support it.”

The Transportation Coalition of Tennessee formed late last year to shed light on the growing transportation issues and put pressure on Tennessee’s lawmakers to address those issues.

Bill Moore, chairman of the Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance and former chief engineer for TDOT, says the growing number of committed but unfunded transportation projects will only get larger and more expensive if they are not addressed now.

“These are all projects TDOT has identified as needs,” said Moore. “A maintenance-only budget not only means no new roads or transportation options, but it also means less safe roads, more traffic congestion and more inconvenience for motorists.”

Notable projects in the Chattanooga area include:

- I-124 (US 27) from I-24 to and including the Olgiati Tennessee River Bridge. TDOT proposes to widen and reconstruct a 1.4-mile section of I-124 also known as US 27 to provide improved access and interchange operations for this section. The estimated cost is \$25 million for this section, which carries around 75,000 vehicles/day.
- I-24 and I-75 Directional Interchange. TDOT is in the environmental phase for the reconstruction of this very important interchange in Chattanooga, just north of the Georgia state line. The preliminary estimated cost for the project is \$65 million, and a public meeting on the proposal was just recently held. Both of these interstate highways carry in excess of 100,000 vehicles/day.
- I-24 Interchange Modification at Broad Street and Market Street. TDOT proposes to modify the existing interchanges at these two connecting roadways to improve traffic operations and safety at an estimated cost of \$46.2 million. Daily traffic on I-24 is approximately 111,000 vehicles.

“This is not just a state problem. Counties are impacted too. We operate county roads and bridges that are funded largely through state transportation dollars,” said Rodney Carmical, executive director of the Tennessee County Highway Officials Association and a coalition member.

“Keeping our infrastructure adequately funded makes our roads and bridges safer for our residents, it makes our commutes better and more efficient, and it improves our state economy,” Carmical said.

State and local transportation projects in Tennessee are funded primarily by state and federal fuel-tax revenues. These projects include maintenance, repair and new construction. Tennessee’s fuel taxes have not changed since 1989, yet the state’s population has increased 14 percent since 2000, bringing more traffic to roads and highways. Transportation experts estimate it would take an additional \$6 billion to \$8 billion to begin to seriously address some of the committed but unfunded road projects across Tennessee.

“Safe roads and bridges are a key factor in overall highway traffic safety,” said Tim Wright with Auto Club Group/AAA Tennessee. “These are the roads that we travel on every day to go to work, to take our children to school or to run basic errands. We need to maintain these roads and bridges in a safe condition and we’ve got to have additional funding to do that.”

The coalition was launched to educate the public and state legislators as it seeks an increase and reform in Tennessee’s transportation fees. The coalition include businesses, residents, community leaders, public officials and organizations that are interested in continuing Tennessee’s transportation infrastructure for the long haul.

The group intends to work closely with Gov. Bill Haslam and the Tennessee state legislators moving forward in hopes that they will find a long-term solution in 2016.

“It is our hope that a permanent solution to our state’s transportation funding crisis can be found,” Alcorn said.

For more information or to join the Transportation Coalition of Tennessee, visit its website at www.TransportationCoalitionTN.org.

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