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Tenn. 385 — the new frontier

23 years in the making, highway's gaps near closing

By **SHIRLEY DOWNING**
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When farmer Howard Bragg's ancestors settled in Shelby County in the 1830s, they were on the new frontier.

Today, Bragg says Shelby County's new frontier lies just east of his home place in rural Arlington. It's Tenn. 385.

Bragg predicts the highway that dissects cotton fields will eventually support another layer of suburbia.

Tenn. 385 is a 54-mile suburban loop that has been under planning and construction for 23 years. Portions of the road will dip into

western Fayette County.

Taxpayers have spent \$342 million on the highway so far, with another \$75 million to be done, said Scotty Plunk, regional construction supervisor with the Tennessee Department of Transportation in Jackson.

Construction funds come from federal and state fuel taxes, Plunk said.

When completed, Tenn. 385 will run from U.S. 51 in Millington to I-240 near Mt. Moriah.

The northern leg is known as Paul Barret Parkway; the southern leg is called Bill Morris Parkway.

Plunk said about 15 miles in four sections from U.S. 72 north to I-40 should be completed by decade's end.

Those sections are:

- Infrastructure, bridges and grading have been completed from U.S. 72 to just north of Tenn. 57 (Poplar Avenue). Paving should be done in 2006.

- A portion from Tenn. 57 to Tenn. 193 (Macon Road) will be let for contract in 2007 or 2008.

- Bridge and dirt work are under way from Macon Road to Tenn. 205 (Collerville-Arlington Road), just south of U.S. 64 near Arlington. Paving could be done in 2007 or 2008, although the date is not certain.

- Bridges and dirt work have been done

See **PARKWAY, B2**

Finishing the parkway

Fifteen miles of Tenn. 385 are left to build -- from U.S. 72 in Collerville to I-40 in Arlington. State officials expect to finish by the end of the decade. Two segments -- U.S. 72 to Tenn. 57 (Poplar) and Collerville-Arlington Road to I-40 -- are expected to open in 2006.



PARKWAY

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from Collerville-Arlington to I-40. Paving will be let for contract in 2006, opening to traffic by year's end.

In the Arlington area, the highway cuts through a proposed 1,480-acre Donelson Farms planned community on Arlington's southwestern edge.

The development as proposed in 1991 would consist of residential, commercial, retail and warehouse.

Opening next year is an interchange off Paul Barret Parkway that runs through the Donelson Farms site.

One of the largest landowners in the area is Bragg Brothers Farm, whose managing partner is Howard Bragg. Generations of Bragg family members have farmed the land but the young adults have chosen other vocations.

Eventually, most of the farmland likely will be sold or leased for development, Bragg said. That means more traffic.

"Paul Barret is still very sparsely traveled," Bragg said. "But as each

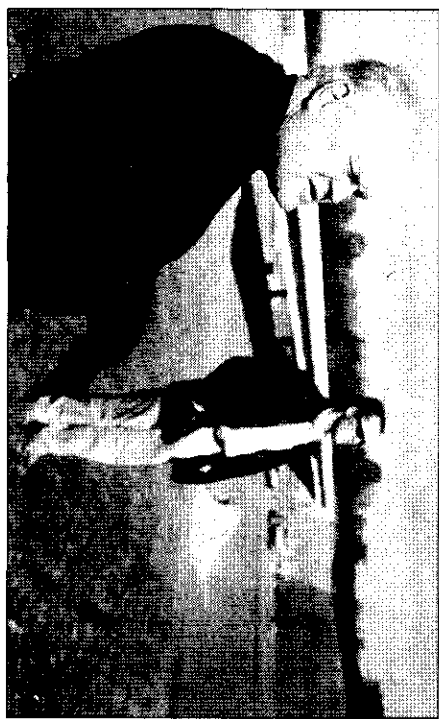
piece of the puzzle goes together, pretty soon, you will have something with 385 like the loop around Atlanta.

"They built that highway about 1970 when I left Emory and if you drove around it then, it would be like this today, with cows and farms and bean fields.

"Now you go up there and there are hotels everywhere and apartments and office complexes by the thousands. It's just another layer of city out there."

— Shirley Downing
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Howard Bragg and son Henry Bragg look back toward their 1,400-acre family farm, from a Paul Barret Parkway interchange being built south of Arlington.
 Jim Weber/The Commercial Appeal



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1 DAVIDSON

All lanes of Briley Parkway section open

All lanes of Briley Parkway between Gallatin and McGavock pikes are open to traffic, state officials announced yesterday.

Briley Parkway is now four and five lanes wide in each direction from just south of Interstate 65 to Opry Mills Drive, according to a Tennessee Department of Transportation press release.

The press release states that some minor work on the roadway remains incomplete. Work on those items is scheduled to be performed during off-peak travel hours, nights and weekends. No work requiring lane closures is scheduled during the Christmas and New Year's Day holidays.

TDOT's press release advises motorists traveling to the Opryland/Two Rivers area to take I-65 to the Briley Parkway East exit to avoid construction on the east side of town.

CLAY CREEK

Construction causes delays, detours on Sevier roadways

By **JOEL DAVIS**
Staff Writer

JD

SEVIERVILLE — Motorists on Lower Middle Creek Road will face a short detour around construction near the intersection with East Ridge Road.

About 100 feet of the roadway will be closed while construction workers rework the road surface. Traffic will be routed around the construction on a temporary basis, Sevierville Public Information Officer Bob Stalkhe said.

A section of State Route 449, known as New Middle Creek

Road, opened Wednesday from East Ridge Road in Sevierville all the way into Pigeon Forge.

The road is open with two lanes of traffic at a speed limit of 25 miles per hour from East Ridge Road to Centerview Road. From Centerview Road into Pigeon Forge, the roadway will have three lanes open.

Due to construction, Centerview Road is temporarily closed to through traffic, from State Route 449 to Middle Creek Road.

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Curt Habraken/The Mountain Press

Motorist use the newly opened section of State Route 449, known as New Middle Creek Road. The section from East Ridge Road in Sevierville into Pigeon Forge opened to traffic Wednesday afternoon.

Authority gets ready to run Downtown Island Airport

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BY REBECCA FERRAR
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The Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority took steps Wednesday to prepare its staff to begin operating Knoxville Downtown Island Airport on Jan. 1.

The airport currently is run by KnoxAir, but the authority terminated that lease effective Dec. 31 because of unresolved differences between KnoxAir and the pilots using the airport.

Airport Authority President Bill Marrison presented several steps to the board to get the authority staff ready for the transition.

"We are prepared," Marrison said. "It should be a smooth and seamless transition."

Steps approved by the authority Wednesday:

■ Approval of payment of \$51,512 to KnoxAir for aircraft equipment, including an aircraft tug, aircraft power tows, ice machine, radios, golf cart, office furniture, lobby furniture, computers and other items needed to run the airport.

■ Approval of \$53,025 for improvements KnoxAir made to the hangars, lobby area and flight school. KnoxAir had a five-year lease to run the airport, which began Oct. 1, 2004. It was terminated by the authority in September.

■ Approval of a 90-day agreement to purchase aviation fuel from Avfuel Corp., a nationwide supplier of aviation fuel based in

Ann Arbor, Mich. During the 90 days, the authority will receive competitive bids to supply aviation fuel to Downtown Island Airport.

■ Approval of a lease with Aircraft Technicians to maintain a maintenance operation at the airport. The company now has one mechanic at the airport but will shift most operations to McGhee Tyson Airport. The company will keep one mechanic on call 24 hours a day to maintain equipment at Downtown Island. The company will pay \$750 a month for maintenance space and pay the authority a fee of 3 percent of gross revenues.

Business writer Rebecca Ferrar may be reached at 865-342-6357.

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Friends of Short Springs gets \$2,000 grant to construct new bridge over Bobo Creek

Friends of Short Springs has been awarded a \$2,000 grant through the Neuland Glisson State Park Connections to construct a bridge over Bobo Creek at Short Springs State Natural Area.

Sponsored by the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation, this grant program helps fund greenway or trail projects in Tennessee's state parks or natural areas.

The award for Short Springs is one of 11 given by the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation this year.

"We are very appreciative of receiving this award," said Marjorie Collier, president of the Friends group, "because it will help enable us to enhance the trail system of this beautiful area and open up access to some 90 acres which at present have no trail system.

"The bridge will be an attractive addition which will provide more recreational and educational opportunities for visitors."

Funding for this award was made possible through the

generous support of Bill and Rita Bruce, Ms. Collier said. "Although the individual award amounts are small for each project, we believe this will stimulate long-distance trails and greenway projects," said Bill Bruce, Foundation Board member. "That's why Rita and I wanted to make this contribution for Tennessee. We also wanted to honor the memory of Rita's father, Neuland Glisson."

The Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation is a four-year old nonprofit foundation dedicated to preserving the beauty of Tennessee. The foundation's mission is to preserve Tennessee's scenic beauty and rich wildlife by creating an interconnected system of parks, greenways, and wild areas from the Mississippi River to the Great Smoky Mountains.

"Since September 1997, we have spent considerable energy and time building funds and a constituency of supporters, enrolling over 1,050 mem-

bers," said foundation president Kathleen Williams.

"Simultaneously, we began accomplishing work 'on the ground' for Tennessee. Our first project was this State Park Connections program. By giving away approximately 30 small grants each year to others, we will stimulate big projects that contribute to our mission.

"Another strategy to accomplish our mission is to purchase and protect scenic properties throughout Tennessee," Ms. Williams said. "In 1998 we protected 419 acres in Fall Creek Falls State Park."

For more information on the foundation, call Kathleen Williams at 615-386-3171.