



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Association director urges local engagement on Bradley, Tennessee infrastructure issues**

Statewide group pushes prioritization for infrastructure funding

**Cleveland** - In a speech before the Cleveland Rotary Club on Tuesday, Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance executive director M.S. "Susie" Alcorn outlined critical issues facing infrastructure in Bradley County and across Tennessee. Citing a host of data on the status of Tennessee's water, sewer, transportation and flood control infrastructure, Alcorn made the case that, while Tennessee's communities have been well-served by infrastructure, the commitment to properly maintain and improve infrastructure is in question.

"Tennessee's infrastructure system is a lifeline for every community in the state," Alcorn stated. "It delivers the very basics of life: the water we need for agriculture, sanitation and sustenance; protection from the forces of nature; and the means to seek employment, education, healthcare and commerce," she continued. "Adequate infrastructure can, for Cleveland and similar communities around the state, help insure for its citizens a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, standard of safety and quality of life."

But Alcorn, citing an October, 2005 report from the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR), warned the civic group that continuous use of Tennessee's infrastructure system necessitates regular maintenance and upkeep. She further noted that increased demands on the system require system improvements and expansion. "In all, TACIR pegged the state's infrastructure maintenance and improvement needs at more than \$24 billion through 2008," Alcorn stated.

“Despite those great needs, though, only \$10.1 billion have been committed statewide to those identified projects from the federal, state and local governments.” Alcorn attributed the shortfall between infrastructure needs versus financial commitments to growing financial demands on the federal and state governments. “With more pressure to fund other priorities like education and TennCare, infrastructure has taken a back seat,” Alcorn said.

As further evidence of the growing gap between infrastructure needs and funding commitments, Alcorn pointed to the Tennessee Department of Transportation’s recently published Long-Range Transportation Plan. The 25-year plan identifies a shortfall between road improvement needs and committed funds of \$16 billion. “And that’s just for roads”, said Alcorn. “The long-range needs for our state’s water, sewer and flood control infrastructure make our challenge even more daunting.”

Alcorn noted that, according to the TACIR report, Bradley County has identified more than \$192 million in infrastructure improvement projects through 2008. That equals a cost of \$2,132 per citizen of Bradley County, the state’s ninth most densely populated county.

“Our leaders must recognize that without adequate infrastructure, delivery of services like healthcare and education are impossible,” she continued. Alcorn urged the assembled community leaders to help their elected officials understand the importance of infrastructure to their businesses, safety and quality of life. “Unless our leaders at the federal, state and local levels elevate the maintenance and improvement of our infrastructure to a higher priority, our communities will not in the future benefit from it the way they have in the past.”

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