

## Tennessee Infrastructure In The News

August 25, 2008

### ***A daily roundup of news stories and opinion pieces about Tennessee transportation, water and flood control infrastructure***

*For the full story, click on the link below the excerpt.*

#### **Airport Receives \$5.4 Million FAA Grant for Improvements (Red Orbit)**

U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Memphis, announced a \$5.4million Federal Aviation Administration grant to fund improvements at Memphis International Airport. The grant will help pay for cargo apron construction, a new taxiway and continued work on an airport master plan update.

Thursday's announcement came as Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority commissioners approved a contract amendment with master planning consultant Jacobs Consultancy Inc. The vote bumped the contract from \$1.3 million to \$3.4 million. Authority president and CEO Larry Cox said the original contract needed to be amended so Jacobs could fully explore alternative solutions to issues raised by the consultant's initial studies. The master plan will become the authority's blueprint for airport facility development over the next 20 years.

[http://www.redorbit.com/news/business/1530458/coffee\\_break\\_airport\\_receives\\_54\\_million\\_faa\\_grant\\_for/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/business/1530458/coffee_break_airport_receives_54_million_faa_grant_for/)

#### **ALCOA to repair Chilhowee Dam; reservoir drawdown starts Sept. 2 (Maryville Daily Times)**

On Sept. 2, ALCOA Inc. will begin lowering the water level of Chilhowee Lake so repairs can be made to the dam. A depression or sinkhole-like area -- called by the company a settlement or subsidence -- was discovered in 2000 on the south embankment of the dam. It is generally in the shape of an upside down ice cream cone 5 or 6 feet in diameter at its top and extends down about 20 feet to bedrock. Alcoa Power Generating Inc. (APGI), Tapoco Division, has been monitoring the depression and reported no "safety or integrity" issues were identified. The reservoir will be lowered one to two feet per day until the water level reaches a maximum drawdown of about 20-25 feet in mid- to late-September. The repairs should be complete by late 2008 or early 2009, according to APGI. Cost is estimated at \$6 million to \$8 million. Tapoco will be able generate electricity at the dam during the project at a reduced capacity.

<http://www.thedailytimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080822/NEWS/244448&template=print>

#### **Alexander visits Bedford overpass (Shelbyville Times-Gazette)**

U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander visited a newly-constructed railroad overpass Friday at the site of what will soon be a northeast bypass around Shelbyville, as local officials thanked Alexander for his help in getting federal funding for the bypass project. "I try to listen to what my constituents tell me," said Alexander, a former governor of Tennessee and a former U.S. secretary of education. The overpass, on the Walking Horse and Eastern Railroad line parallel to Railroad Avenue and just east of Stanley Boulevard, is decorated with walking horse silhouettes. Construction on the actual bypass, which will start at U.S. 231 north of Shelbyville and loop around the city's northeast quadrant, joining U.S. 41-A east of Shelbyville, could possibly start before the year is out. State Sen. Jim Tracy and State Rep. Curt Cobb said bids on the project will be let at some point after the start of the federal fiscal year on Oct. 1, although it's not clear exactly how soon. The bypass will be State Route 437. <http://www.t-g.com/story/1455334.html>

### **SmartFIX40 progress to be obvious before UT home game (News-Sentinel/Jacobs)**

The pungent odor of asphalt wafts through the air around Hall of Fame Drive, evidence that the 14-month-long SmartFIX40 project to widen Interstate 40 is making strides toward completion. Since work crews on May 1 closed a 0.9-mile downtown section of I-40, up to 250 workers a day have been scurrying across the project, said Chad Woodroof, project manager for BB SmartFix Constructors LLC. Closing I-40 from Hall of Fame Drive to James White Parkway sent about 103,000 vehicles a day onto new routes to avoid the construction. The \$104.7 million project is slated for completion June 30, 2009. "We're where we want to be right now," said Jeff Walker, superintendent for BB SmartFix Constructors. "We're on schedule." For road construction managers, two items are uneasy subjects of discussion - construction schedules and worker safety. Praising the company's performance in either realm is considered by managers as a surefire jinx. <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/aug/25/the-rewards-of-roadwork/>

### **Cost to drivers behind incentive of bonus to contractor (K. News-Sentinel/Pounds)**

As the asphalt falls on I-40, part of the hurry has to do with a \$7 million SmartFIX40 project completion bonus for the contractor. In turn, that bonus is partly an attempt by the Tennessee Department of Transportation to look out for interstate users like Heather Debord. Debord is a North Knoxville mom who works at the Knoxville Zoo. Before SmartFIX40, Debord took I-40 to work. Now she takes the I-640 detour. TDOT decided before the project began that it wanted to look at how much it could hurt Debord and other interstate users to close I-40 and divert traffic onto I-640. So they came up with a calculation: They made time lost in traffic by commuters worth \$11.40 for each hour the people spend on the road. This is a number based on national user cost studies and not adjusted for Knoxville. Truckers get \$27.60. <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/aug/25/cost-to-drivers-behind-incentive-of-bonus/>

### **State cracks down on untaxed diesel use (Associated Press)**

With diesel prices still topping \$4 a gallon, some drivers are turning to untaxed diesel in their cars and trucks. Just one problem: Using the fuel in on-road vehicles is illegal. And the Tennessee Department of Revenue is cracking down, with agents checking gas tanks and issuing fines. On Tuesday, agents pulled over 252 diesel vehicles at the intersection of U.S. 127 and State Route 111 in Dunlap, sticking a clear tube into each gas tank and withdrawing a thimbleful of fuel. Pat Cheek, manager of special investigations for the Revenue Department, told the Chattanooga Times Free Press that it's easy to tell whether a vehicle is using the untaxed diesel because it contains dye. "It's pretty clear — when it's red, it's red," Cheek said. Donald Troy, a driver for Sequatchie Concrete, said the check, which took about 20 seconds, didn't bother him. <http://www.tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080825/NEWS0201/808250345/1009/NEWS>

### **As drivers save gas, road-work funds shrink (Tennessean/Sanchez)**

Sherri Kooperman used to drive her teenage twins to school so they could sleep in a little later, but high gas prices put an end to Joe and Maggie's extra snooze. Kooperman told them that this year they would walk the half-mile to Nashville's West End Middle School. "They are going to have to live in a society that is going to have to be more conservative with the use of fuel," she said. She and millions of other Americans have driven 53.2 billion fewer miles so far this year than last, federal officials say, the biggest drop since the 1970s. When it comes to cutting fuel costs to make up for higher gas and grocery prices, "every little bit helps," said Kooperman, who also ditches her minivan on the weekends to use her husband's more fuel-efficient Nissan Maxima. Such conservation has had an unintended impact. Less gasoline sold means less tax money for states to use to build and maintain highways. <http://www.tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080825/NEWS01/808250334>

- Opinion -

**Tom Humphrey: Expect 'lively debate' on raising gas tax (Knox News-Sentinel)**

The Legislature has already paved the way for what Transportation Commissioner Gerald Nicely predicts, in a characteristic understatement, will be a "lively debate" in next year's General Assembly. But for now, as the political campaign season unfolds, there is no debate. Indeed, the commissioner's mention of the matter in a recent column distributed by the Tennessee Department of Transportation is about the only break in the general silence of public and political officialdom. The debatable proposition that is not yet being debated: Tennessee needs a gas tax increase. In late May, the House and Senate approved a little-noticed resolution creating the Transportation Funding Options Study Committee. The pave-the-way panel will have 20 members, including eight legislators and several representatives of various interest groups - road builders, county road superintendents and engineers, for example.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/aug/24/expect-lively-debate-on-raising-gas-tax/>

###