

Tennessee Infrastructure In The News

December 21, 2009

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

For the full story, click the headline or use the link.

[Time To Dust Off Old Plan For Signal? \(Chattanooga Times Free-Press/Crisp\)](#)

Nearly 20 years ago, Signal Mountain residents balked at plans to straighten and widen U.S. Highway 127 because of fears of spoiling the scenic beauty, having more trucks on the mountain and not solving the issues tied to the road that crumbled two weeks ago. "But I think we squandered an opportunity back then to say, 'We don't like this, but we might like that,'" said Signal Mountain Mayor Bill Lusk. "In any negotiation, you don't just scream at people and walk away." Mountaintop residents "overwhelmingly and emphatically opposed" the widening plan, Tennessee Department of Transportation region spokeswoman Jennifer Flynn said. The result: it was shelved. Signal Mountain resident Jim Hall, former chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, said he was involved in developing the 1992 plan. Mr. Hall, who worked in the administration of Gov. Ned McWherter at the time of the plan, said residents should take a hard look at the proposal, which would improve safety for the approximately 23,000 commuters who use U.S. 127 every day.

<http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2009/dec/21/time-to-dust-off-old-plan-for-signal/>

[TDOT Drops Columbia Road Project \(Columbia Daily Herald\)](#)

For years Columbia and Maury County officials have pressed the state to expand U.S. Highway 412 East to four lanes. Now the Tennessee Department of Transportation has dropped the project from its priority list. Columbia Mayor Bill Gentner said the city would send a letter to the state asking TDOT officials to reconsider the matter. Currently there are no TDOT projects planned for the next four years in Columbia, Gentner said. The city has run sewer lines out the road in hopes of spurring development, but except for a few businesses at the Interstate 65 exchange, the area has remained mostly rural.

http://www.columbiadailyherald.com/articles/2009/12/21/top_stories/05tdot.txt

[Lawmakers Ask State For Help With Rockslide \(Associated Press\)](#)

Tennessee lawmakers are asking Gov. Phil Bredesen for help after a rockslide shut down travel through part of the southeastern section of the state. State Sen. Dewayne Bunch and state Rep. Eric Watson sent a letter to Bredesen petitioning him to ask the federal government for help for residents of Polk County. The Cleveland Daily Banner reported that a rockslide shut down travel through the Ocoee River Gorge, causing residents longer commutes and costing residents money. The rockslides have shut down U.S. Highway 64, the only east-west highway connecting the two halves of the county. Watson and Bunch asked Bredesen to either visit the site or review video of a Dec. 15 Tennessee Department of Transportation meeting.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/dec/20/state-briefs-dec-21/>

[Local Lawmakers Ask Governor For Polk County Disaster Relief \(Daily Banner\)](#)

Local legislators have asked Gov. Phil Bredesen for relief regarding residents of Polk County whose daily transportation needs are directly affected by the rockslide which shut down travel through the Ocoee River Gorge. Extra expense and travel time are hurting the residents' pocketbooks as well as vendors and other service personnel. State Sen. Dewayne Bunch and state Rep. Eric Watson drafted a letter to the governor asking for relief. According to Watson, he and Bunch petitioned Bredesen to appeal to the federal government for help. "Your immediate attention to this matter is greatly appreciated by the many citizens of Polk County who are suffering substantial hardship due to the recent rockslides that have closed U.S. Highway 64, the only east-west highway that connects the western half of Polk County with the eastern half. It is our hope that your request for federal disaster relief would be granted, bringing much needed relief to the citizens who suffer lack of emergency medical transportation to trauma centers, economic loss due to lack of tourists traveling and staying in the region, as well as the economic hardship on each family that must drive that extra hour to hour-and-a-half to their jobs," wrote the legislators.

<http://www.clevelandbanner.com/index.cfm?event=news.view&id=AA6F49E3-19B9-E2E2-67D61470F12D39E6>

[Both Lanes To Signal Open \(Chattanooga Times Free-Press/Lukachick\)](#)

Signal Mountain Boulevard is reopened as crews finished paving the road early Saturday afternoon, officials said. "The contractors got finished early," said Jennifer Flynn, a TDOT spokeswoman. "We are very pleased this roadway is back open." The Wright Brothers completed emergency repair project on Signal Mountain around 2:15 on Saturday, Ms. Flynn said. The Tennessee Department of Transportation closed the road Friday night and had scheduled to keep U.S. Highway 27 closed until Monday at 6 a.m. to give worker enough time to finish repairing the washed-out road. But crews finished early. "We are thrilled," said Signal Mountain mayor Bill Lusk. Traffic will run on a temporary surface until TDOT maintenance crews can put down a permanent surface, including pavement markings, Ms. Flynn said. The maintenance crews plan to close the road to complete work on Monday after the peak hours of traffic in the morning, she said.

<http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2009/dec/20/both-lanes-signal-open/>

[T-DOT Pulling Resources To Concentrate On Clearing Interstates \(Herald-Courier\)](#)

T-DOT pulled snow plows and other resources away from State Routes to concentrate on clearing interstates in northeast Tennessee. The state routes that won't be plowed, at least until the interstates are cleared, are as follows: Washington County, TN SR 81, 107, 353, 354, 381, 400 Sullivan County, TN SR 126, 346, 347, 355, 357, 358, 390, 435 Unicoi County, TN SR 352, 395

<http://www2.tricity.com/tri/news/local/article/t-dot-pulling-resources-from-state-routes-to-concentrate-on-clearing-interstates/37543/>

[Emergency Crews Prepare To Make Roads Safe In Case Of Winter Weather \(Volunteertv.Com\)](#)

Emergency and road crews have prepared to respond to any emergency you might have in the incoming winter weather.

<http://www.volunteertv.com/home/headlines/79702002.html>

-Opinion-

[Guest Columnist: River Infrastructure Critical To Economy, Environment \(Tenn.\)](#)

Some things in life are out of sight, out of mind. But Tennessee has something critically important to our state's economic viability that is in sight but still out of mind: our navigable river system. Nashville exists because of its proximity to the Cumberland River, but Tennessee also benefits from its proximity to other important navigable rivers, including the Mississippi and Tennessee rivers and the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. Tennessee contains more than 600 miles of navigable waterways in the Ohio River basin and more than 165 miles in the Mississippi River basin. These are vital segments of the inland waterway system, providing an economic transportation link from the Upper Midwest and upper Ohio River basins to the lower Mississippi Valley and Gulf of Mexico. Tennesseans are familiar with our rivers and their boats and barges but may not be aware of the critical value of the cargo moving. Barges transport 20 percent of our nation's coal burned to generate electricity and around 22 percent of our petroleum products. The system is the primary artery for more than half of our country's corn and soybean exports.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20091220/OPINION03/912170368/1007/opinion/River+infrastructure+critical+to+economy++environment>

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