

Tennessee Infrastructure In The News

February 09, 2010

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.

[Truckers Vote I-40 In Tenn. Best Road In US \(Associated Press\)](#)

Over-the-road truckers have voted Interstate 40 in Tennessee the best stretch of highway in the country. It's the fourth straight year the section has been so honored in a survey of truck owners and operators by Overdrive Magazine. Criteria included road quality, smoothness of the riding surface, road markings and construction detour availability. More than 300 truck drivers were surveyed. Additionally, Tennessee roads overall were rated third best in the country for the 11th straight year.

<http://content.usatoday.net/dist/custom/gci/InsidePage.aspx?cld=tennessean&sParam=32747045.story>

[Rocks, Trees Tumble In Plateau Slide \(Associated Press\)](#)

A rockslide on the northern Cumberland Plateau is expected to block all traffic on a state road until Wednesday afternoon. The Tennessee Department of Transportation said both directions of Route 85 in Fentress County were blocked when rocks and trees tumbled onto it before dawn Monday. No one was hurt. Meanwhile, the National Park Service said Monday that a contractor had cleared the second rock slide that occurred on a section of U.S. 441 between Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg on Friday. Concrete barriers will funnel southbound traffic into the left lane as a precaution for a few weeks, but the barriers and cones that sent drivers on a detour were scheduled to be removed Monday evening. A larger, earlier slide in the southbound lanes of the road still requires a detour. The state announced Monday that Charles Blalock & Sons Inc. has been awarded a contract of about \$714,000 to clear the site of the initial rockslide by March 12 and open the southbound lanes.

<http://content.usatoday.net/dist/custom/gci/InsidePage.aspx?cld=tennessean&sParam=32747701.story>

[Rail Could Be Answer To I-81 Gridlock, Report Says \(The Roanoke Times\)](#)

Virginia could eliminate about one in three trucks from Interstate 81 with extensive --and expensive -- rail improvements, a consultant says. Given the high cost and logistical barriers to such a plan, however, the consultant endorses a more modest approach that will shift fewer trucks -- perhaps one in seven -- much to the disappointment of some railroad supporters. Three years in the making at a cost of \$75,000, the December report from consultant Cambridge Systematics recommends Virginia stick to its present plan to address truck congestion on I-81: funding the Crescent Corridor. The Crescent Corridor is a proposed new intermodal rail service under which Norfolk Southern Corp. intends to expand its rail system to better compete with, and integrate with, highway trucking. The corridor is designed to link the southern freight hubs of New Orleans and Memphis, Tenn., with those in New Jersey.

<http://www.roanoke.com/news/roanoke/wb/235894>

[TDEC: Sewage Leaking Into Creek \(Columbia Daily Herald\)](#)

The city's incomplete multi-million dollar wastewater lagoon has been leaking sewage into Quality Creek since January and may be in danger of losing its operations permit, according to a letter sent from the state's environmental office. The notice of violation letter, which was sent to Interim City Manager Debbie McMullin Jan. 27, states agents from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation tested the facility off Hoover Mason Road and found several deficiencies. The \$8-million facility, which has been under construction since 2007, was touted as the state's largest lagoon system at the time the plans were unveiled. The system was designed by engineering firm James C. Hailey & Company to collect up to 1.5-million gallons of waste per day — more than twice the capacity of the city's outdated wastewater plant. Officials had hoped to have the lagoon system complete by 2008, though several factors have delayed the project, including trouble obtaining an operating permit from the state and weather conditions.

http://www.columbiadailyherald.com/articles/2010/02/08/top_stories/lagoon%20system.txt

Rockslide Cleanup Begins In Smokies (Associated Press)

Construction workers started to arrive on the scene of a rock slide that is blocking both southbound lanes of U.S. 441 in East Tennessee. National Park Service spokesman Bob Miller said in a news release that on Saturday a large crane is scraping the rock face above the debris on the Pigeon Forge-Gatlinburg Spur. The purpose is to dislodge any remaining unstable rock before starting to scoop up the fallen material. Four dump trucks are ready to haul the material away. Miller estimated it would take several hours to finish bringing all the loose material down.

<http://content.usatoday.net/dist/custom/gci/InsidePage.aspx?cld=tennessean&sParam=32735861.story>

Interstate 24 Paving Washes Out In Chattanooga (Associated Press)

Chattanooga police say the pavement surface of Interstate 24 has been damaged by heavy rain. One lane was closed for a time Friday morning, but has now been opened. The problem is in the westbound lanes of I-24 in the ridge cut, east of downtown. Police spokeswoman Rebecca Royval said in a news release that heavy rain damaged both lanes, but the Tennessee Department of Transportation decided they were useable.

<http://content.usatoday.net/dist/custom/gci/InsidePage.aspx?cld=tennessean&sParam=32725113.story>

Legislator Will Ask For Road Support (Chattanooga Times Free-Press/Crisp)

The state representative of Polk County, where a Nov. 10 rock slide still blocks a major east-west highway, will ask his colleagues to show support for an alternate route that could cost \$1 billion. Rep. Eric Watson, R-Cleveland, said he intends to present a resolution asking Tennessee legislators to show support for Corridor K. The project would replace U.S. Highway 64, which winds along the Ocoee River and is prone to accidents and rock slides, but is currently the most practical route between Cleveland and eastern Polk County. "I'm asking the entire General Assembly to support this," Rep. Watson said. "We're asking that this be made the top priority of the Tennessee Department of Transportation." In 1965, the federal government passed a plan to connect the rural South with the East Coast through a series of road projects. Corridor K was one of 27 corridors throughout Appalachia that was supposed to be built, with the federal government paying for 80 percent of the road's construction cost. Parts of the corridor are finished, but it's not a continuous link from Chattanooga to the coast because the Polk County piece has not been built, Rep. Watson said.

<http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2010/feb/06/legislator-will-ask-road-support/>

Rains Limit Navigation (Chattanooga Times Free-Press/Flessner)

Chattanooga's river artery remains off limits for barge traffic this weekend after heavy rains boosted the flow of the rain-swollen Tennessee River. "The entire Chattanooga industry that is tied to barge transportation is affected," said Mark Mayfield, vice president and general manager for Tennessee Valley Towing Co. in Paducah, Ky., which has more than a dozen barges stalled in and around Chattanooga. "The last time we were able to get a boat into Chattanooga was Jan. 22 and even then we were running only daylight hours due to the high water in the river." Barge operators say this has been an unusual winter in which river shipments from Chattanooga have been restricted by the high water and heavy flow in the Tennessee River. The Tennessee Valley Authority, which controls the flow of the Tennessee River through its network of 49 dams, has been spilling water through its dams for 103 of the past 132 days. After three years of drought, above-average rains during 2009 and so far this year have forced TVA to open spillways on most of its dams and kept the Tennessee River on the Nickajack Reservoir in Chattanooga above levels acceptable for most river navigation.

<http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2010/feb/06/rains-limit-navigation/>

-Opinion-

[EPA, State Sue City Over Waste Water Discharge \(Memphis Daily News\)](#)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the state of Tennessee are taking the city of Memphis to federal court. The plaintiffs filed a nearly 20-page federal lawsuit against the city Friday alleging a series of major environmental violations. The lawsuit is a civil action that seeks injunctive relief and damages from the city under terms of the federal Clean Water Act and the state's Water Quality Control Act. The federal and state governments focus on the city's Public Works Department. They claim the department contributed to the discharge of pollutants from the city's sanitary sewer system and two wastewater treatment plants in violation of state environmental permits issued to the city. The complaint alleges that between July 2003 and this month, the city "discharged untreated sewage into Memphis area waters and other Tennessee waters." <http://www.memphisdailynews.com/editorial/Article.aspx?id=47742>

[Editorial: No. 1 In The World \(Commercial Appeal\)](#)

For most folks, it's hard to visualize a number like 3,697,806 metric tons of cargo. That is the amount of goods that moved through Memphis International Airport last year, making it the world's largest cargo airport for the 18th straight year. In fact, the airport widened the cargo gap between it and Hong Kong International Airport in 2009. Early last year, some experts were predicting Hong Kong would knock Memphis off the cargo-landings pedestal. The cargo news is something that surely has placed big smiles on the faces of airport and local chamber of commerce officials. It's certainly a worthy accomplishment to pitch to a major company seeking a place to expand or to relocate its headquarters. Beyond the airport and chamber, though, 3,697,806 metric tons of cargo should reinforce for all of us in Greater Memphis the value of the airport, from the tens of thousands of jobs through FedEx Express to the thousands of spin-off jobs created by the airport's cargo muscle. <http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2010/feb/06/no-1-in-the-world/>

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