

May 27, 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.

[Middle Tennessee Transit Plan Envisions Light Rail, Bus Lines \(Tennessean\)](#)

Light rail or bus rapid transit lines should connect Nashville to Franklin, Gallatin and Murfreesboro in 25 years, according to a new vision of mass transit's role in Middle Tennessee. The vision, developed by the [Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization](#), looks at what the 10-county region would need to do to move around an additional 900,000 people or more by 2035. MPO will formally unveil it — along with a draft of a plan to achieve it — at a meeting of 500 public and private sector leaders today. "If you can get 10 percent of the people who normally drive by themselves to use transit 50 percent of the time — or whatever combination of percentages you want — you're effectively reducing the burden on the roadway system," the organization's executive director, Michael Skipper, told *The Tennessean's* editorial board Tuesday.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100526/NEWS0202/5260378/2066/NEWS03>

[Mass Transit Projects Play Big Role In \\$5 Billion Regional Transportation Plan \(NBJ\)](#)

A \$5 billion long-range regional transportation that will be formally unveiled later today includes an ambitious vision for mass transit projects such as light rail and so-called bus rapid transit lines. The Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's draft plan includes the goal of connecting Nashville to Franklin, Murfreesboro and Gallatin with rapid transit in the next 25 years. The vision also includes commuter rail to Clarksville, which would be similar to the Music City Star service to Wilson County. The plan also includes hundreds of smaller road, bike and pedestrian projects needed to keep goods and people moving efficiently in the MPO's 10-county region, which is expected to grow by about 1 million people by 2035. After today's presentation of the draft plan, it will enter a public and stakeholder review process. "The plan's guiding principles of livability, prosperity, sustainability, and diversity can provide a collective vision for the way our region will live, work, and play over the coming decades," MPO Executive Director Michael Skipper said in a news release.

<http://nashville.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2010/05/24/daily22.html?surround=fn>

[Railroad Between Nashville, Memphis Reopens \(Miami Herald/Associated Press\)](#)

CSX Transportation is reopening the main rail line from Memphis to Nashville after this month's flooding damaged bridges and rails. WPLN-FM reported the railroad company originally thought it would take until mid-June before service could resume, but officials said employees worked long hours to get the track operating again.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/05/26/1648857/railroad-between-nashville-memphis.html>

[Last Flooded State Building Reopens \(Tennessean/Sisk\)](#)

Andrew Johnson Tower was closed for more than 3 weeks The last state office building closed by this month's flooding has reopened. The Andrew Johnson Tower, a 12-story office building on James Robertson Parkway, reopened Tuesday after being closed for more than three weeks. About 800 people work in the building, which houses offices for the Department of Education, the Department of Health, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. The flood forced the shutdown of MetroCenter and four downtown state buildings, but the Andrew Johnson Tower received the most extensive damage. About 12 feet of water filled that building's basement, where most of its operational functions, including its electrical, heating and ventilation systems, were located. Workers were moved to other state buildings while the Andrew John-son Tower was being repaired. One state building, the State Records Center on the east bank of the Cumberland River, remains closed. The building is primarily used for storing state documents such as invoices and defunct contracts until they can be destroyed.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100527/NEWS0201/5270323/1009/news>

[East Tenn. Stream Polluted With E. Coli \(Associated Press\)](#)

Environmental officials say a stream in Bradley County has high levels of E. coli and pathogens that residents suspect is coming from a nearby septic system for a mobile home park. Dr. Richard Urban, head of the Chattanooga office of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, told the Bradley County Commission on Monday that tests on Wilkinson Branch have shown the pollution is mostly human fecal matter. The Cleveland Daily Banner reported that Urban said the state has put the owner of the mobile home park on notice of violation due to problems with the septic system, but the owner has not responded. He said because the owner lives out of the state, the state is limited in what action can be taken to fix the problems.

<http://content.usatoday.net/dist/custom/gci/InsidePage.aspx?cid=tennessean&sParam=33629485.story>

[Disaster Status Sought In 13 Counties \(Jackson Sun\)](#)

Governor's request will make farmers eligible for federal aid Gov. Phil Bredesen has requested that 13 more counties be designated as natural disaster areas, making farmers in those areas eligible for federal financial help if approved. Hardeman and McNairy counties, according to a news release. The request was made after May 1 floodwaters rose more than 7 feet on some farmers' fields, destroying levies, drowning crops, and eroding farm land. "A Secretarial disaster designation will help bring more federal assistance to farmers who experienced significant crop and livestock losses," wrote Bredesen in the release. Farmers in counties that adjoin Benton, Chester, Hardeman and McNairy counties also could apply for federal disaster relief if those counties are declared disaster areas, the release states. Farmers should apply for federal help through their local U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency.

<http://www.jacksonsun.com/article/20100527/BUSINESS/5270305>

[Flooded Businesses Will Get Relief \(Nashville Post/Lind\)](#)

Tax breaks apply to commercial, residential property A bill unanimously approved Monday by the Tennessee House of Representatives will give some tax relief to flooded businesses. The bill – which was already approved by the Senate, but will require another vote in the upper chamber because of slight differences – will permit local governments to reassess flooded properties and to allow taxpayers to pay a prorated tax bill for 2010. Bradley Jackson, vice president of governmental relations at the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce & Industry, said it's hard to say exactly how many businesses were impacted by the flood, but the chamber has been using an estimate of 10,000 to 15,000 people put out of work because of flooded businesses. He said the tax break isn't just helpful – it's an accurate reflection of what happened. "If something has been damaged, it won't be worth as much. We think it's totally appropriate," he said.

http://www.nashvillepost.com/news/2010/5/26/flooded_businesses_will_get_relief

[SBA Loans To Tennesseans Hit \\$11.7 Million \(Nashville Business Journal\)](#)

Tennesseans have received nearly \$12 million in disaster loans, the Small Business Administration announced today. So far, 284 disaster loans have been approved totaling \$11,716,500 for victims of this month's flood. "We are pleased to be able to get these loans approved so the residents and businesses of Tennessee can start rebuilding and resuming their normal lives," Frank Skaggs, director of SBA Field Operations Center East, said in a news release. Those seeking help to repair damaged property have until July 6 to apply for a physical property damage loan. Applications to recover economic damages from the flood are due Feb. 4. Victims can register at disasterassistance.gov or by calling FEMA at (800) 621-3362.

<http://nashville.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2010/05/24/daily24.html?surround=lfm>

[Government Tells Flood-Aid Recipients to 'Use Disaster Grants Wisely' \(TN Report\)](#)

Disaster recovery officials urge Tennessee recipients who were affected by recent storms and flooding and are recipients of federal grants in the disaster-designated counties to use the money wisely. "If the grant assistance is used properly, it doesn't have to be paid back and eligibility for further help is possible," said Gracia B. Szczech, Federal Emergency Management Agency Federal Coordinating Officer in charge of the recovery efforts. Most funds are deposited electronically and a letter follows in the mail to explain how the money is to be used. If the grant is in the form of a check, it should be deposited promptly and not cashed. Don't:

- Use the funds to pay household bills.
- Use the funds to make purchases unrelated to needs created by the disaster.
- Use the funds to travel. Housing funds may be used for:

<http://www.tnreport.com/2010/05/government-tells-flood-aid-recipients-to-use-disaster-assistance-grants-wisely/>

[Flood-Damaged Trailers Inspected For Health Risks \(Commerical Appeal/Connolly\)](#)

Several city code enforcement officers were at the Memphis Mobile City trailer park in Frayser on Wednesday to look for flood-related mold that can cause breathing problems. One group of inspectors had taken off white face masks as they emerged from a trailer where women sat on a porch and children played. Officials haven't yet produced a report on their findings, but it's possible that they will recommend that no one live in some of the trailers again, said the leader of the inspection team, Johnie McKay, deputy director of the city's Division of Community Enhancement. That would affect some of the current and former residents of the mobile home park on Thomas. Some have returned home since the May 1 flooding, but some are still in an emergency shelter at Ed Rice Community Center. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is in the process of providing financial aid to the 62 shelter residents, said Red Cross spokesman Bill Schlicht. They could use the money toward rent at Memphis Mobile City or elsewhere, he said.

<http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2010/may/27/flood-damaged-trailers-inspected-for-health/>

[\\$1.3M In Flood Permits Issued To Rehab Company, Including One For Own Office \(NBJ\)](#)

Commercial Industrial Construction Inc. has received \$1.3 million in permits to help repair businesses in Antioch's Space Park business park, which were heavily damaged by this month's flood. Among the floods victims: Commercial Industrial Construction itself. "Right now our office is located in my home and the front seats of the vehicles of our project managers," co-owner Tony Williams said. He said floodwaters rose more than four feet inside his office at 101 Space Park South, covering desks, computers and file cabinets. Among the permits that the company received Monday was one for \$30,000 to repair its own office. Williams said he's fortunate because the firm's office was mainly a meeting place for clients and subcontractors. Its warehouse was in another part of town and did not flood. The company also had backed up its computer and accounting system. "Some companies, everything they had was in the building and they lost everything," Williams said. "We were blessed and fortunate to be sure."

<http://nashville.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2010/05/24/daily19.html?surround=lfm>

[Franklin May Offer More Flood Buyouts \(Tennessean/Walters\)](#)

Number of homes in floodplain with severe damage increases Franklin officials are upping their estimate of the city's hardest hit flood-damaged homes. Gary Luffman, building and neighborhood services director, believes there now are 10-15 homes in the floodplain that have suffered severe enough damage that they may need to be bought by the city. Late Friday, estimates were at seven homes, but the number has grown as inspectors meet with homeowners and assess properties. "In some cases, we haven't even been able to get inside the house because we haven't been able to get connected with a property owner," said Eric Stuckey, city administrator. Franklin might end up buying those severely flood-damaged houses through a federal emergency grant program, though details about how or when that might happen are still to be decided. More than a dozen homeowners and family members came to Tuesday night's Franklin aldermen meeting to learn more. Elected officials are urging patience through the process, which involves coordination with state and federal officials.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100527/WILLIAMSON01/5270301/Franklin+may+offer+more+flood+buyouts>

Opinion

[Put Flood Relief In 2010 State Spending \(Daily News Journal\)](#)

Flood relief legislation moving through the House of Representatives shows compassion from lawmakers in the wake of one of the worst natural disasters in state history. State Rep. Kent Coleman, D-Murfreesboro, proposed legislation this week to give property and sales tax relief to people whose homes were damaged by what is being called a 1,000-year flood. One bill would allow property tax relief for homes damaged by natural disasters as certified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. It passed unanimously Tuesday. Another bill would be amended to allow sales tax exemptions for appliances and building materials for families whose homes sustained damage in the flooding. The House would use a \$20 million fund for this form of flood relief. Coleman said the Legislature should use money from the state's "Rainy Day" fund for flood aid while balancing the coming fiscal year budget. He called the volunteer spirit in Rutherford County and across Middle Tennessee "amazing" in the flood's aftermath and urged the General Assembly to do its part in helping people rebuild.

<http://www.dnj.com/article/20100527/OPINION01/5270313/1014/OPINION/EDITORIAL++Put+flood+relief+in+2010+state+spending>

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