

May 31, 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.

[Redrawing Flood Maps Proves Challenging \(Tennessean/Cass, Schrade\)](#)

Officials crunch new data, confront old misconceptions When Ben Climer bought his Franklin home in 1997, it wasn't in the Harpeth River's 100-year flood plain. Ten years later, after the federal government updated the city's flood maps, it was. But no one told Climer. The retiree, who lives in the Fieldstone Farms subdivision, says that if someone had notified him, he would have bought flood insurance, which would have helped him recoup his losses after the Harpeth swallowed one of his cars, his water heater and other items four weeks ago. Typically a mortgage lender will require a property in the 100-year flood plain to carry flood insurance, but Climer had paid off his mortgage by the time the maps changed. "It should be someone's responsibility to notify the homeowner," he said. With the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Metro officials already working to redraw Nashville's flood maps for the first time since 2001, more people could find themselves living or working in flood plains.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100530/NEWS0202/5300354/Redrawing+flood+maps+proves+challenging>

[Nashville Works To Keep Conventions After Floods \(Associated Press\)](#)

Nashville tourism officials are working to keep conventions in town in the aftermath of widespread flooding in early May that swamped the massive Gaylord Opryland Resort. Two hundred meetings in Nashville had been scheduled over the next five months at the resort, the cornerstone of the city's convention business. It accounts for 12 percent of the rented hotel rooms in Nashville, and on average 20 percent of the tax revenue. The resort, with 2,881 rooms, bills itself as the largest non-gaming hotel in the continental United States. It will be closed at least three months. "A lot of cities, before you can bat an eye, were there with incentives: cash, free rent," said Butch Spyridon, president of the Nashville Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Those are the things going on that I don't appreciate. Groups are bailing on us and other cities are taking advantage."

<http://content.usatoday.net/dist/custom/gci/InsidePage.aspx?cld=tennessean&sParam=33659577.story>

[Disaster Help Unit On Way To Woodbury \(Daily News Journal\)](#)

A Mobile Disaster Recovery Center will open in Cannon County on Tuesday to provide assistance to people affected by the severe storms and flooding that occurred between April 30 and May 18. The mobile center will be located at the Community Center and Headstart Building, 630 Lehman St. in Woodbury. Hours of operation will be from noon to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday. Mobile Disaster Recovery Centers allow the Federal Emergency Management Agency to travel to counties that have been designated as disaster areas to answer questions about applications and to review information FEMA needs to process applications. Recovery specialists can supply contacts for other programs. Disaster officials suggest that, before visiting the centers, people register online anytime at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, or call 800-621-FEMA (3362) or (TTY) 800-462-7585 for those with speech and hearing disabilities. Lines are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Help in all languages is available.

<http://www.dnj.com/article/20100530/NEWS01/100529016/1002/Disaster+help+unit+on+way+to+Woodbury>

[Volunteer State Lives Up To Name, Sets Red Cross Record \(Tennessean/Cousins\)](#)

Tennesseans set an American Red Cross record for local disaster volunteer response this month. Of the 3,000 Red Cross trained workers serving since May Day floods, 70 percent were from Tennessee, according to a news release. Historically only 30 percent are local volunteers. The Red Cross-trained volunteers from Virginia, Minnesota, Missouri, North and South Carolina, Iowa and Washington, D.C., are returning home as the national nonprofit organization winds down from its disaster relief response to Middle Tennessee flooding. They manned mobile feeding units, helped in shelters and provided nursing and counseling. Of the 37 shelters that provided 8,000 overnight stays, only the shelter in Memphis remains open. Red Cross has distributed more than 20,000 clean-up kits, and nearly 11,000 comfort kits have been handed out.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100530/NEWS01/5300334/1001/NEWS/Volunteer+State+lives+up+to+name++sets+Red+Cross+record>

[Most Rutherford Flood Repairs Won't Require Permit \(Gannett\)](#)

Rutherford County residents facing costly expenses to rebuild after this month's extensive flooding may get a break. The county's Public Works & Planning Committee is considering waiving the required fee for building permits for flood victims. It could act when it meets at 6 p.m. June 8. "We've had a couple of commissioners mention that, and (Rutherford County) Mayor (Ernest) Burgess wanted the Public Works Committee to make that decision," said Vicki Taylor, executive assistant at the mayor's office. While many homes were damaged by the flood, Burgess said only a few will need a building permit, which is required only for structural changes. "But if they need a permit, I'm going to recommend that we waive those fees for the flood victims," he said.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100530/NEWS01/5300337/1001/NEWS/Most+Rutherford+flood+repairs+w on+t+require+permit>

[Tdot Takes Several Cameras Offline \(Chattanooga Times Free-Press\)](#)

Several Tennessee Department of Transportation SmartWay cameras in the Chattanooga area are offline and may not function again until September, according a TDOT spokeswoman. About nine of the 63 cameras normally in service are down for technical reasons, and others are being transferred to fiber-optic lines as TDOT moves its traffic camera control office and equipment from a temporary facility on Cromwell Road to a new Transportation Management Center at Enterprise South, TDOT's Jennifer Flynn said. The public cannot view images online from those cameras, she said, and might not be able to access them until September. "The situation will eventually get better, but we still have to go through some growing pains to get there," Ms. Flynn said in a news release. The \$2.5 million construction project on the Transportation Management Center -- where the TDOT SmartWay traffic cameras will be controlled -- began in March 2009 and is expected to be completed by this summer, Ms. Flynn said.

<http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2010/may/30/tdot-takes-several-cameras-offline/>

[Flood Damage Estimate Is \\$36.5 Million For Montgomery County \(Gannett\)](#)

An estimated \$36.5 million in damages to city and county residences and businesses was caused by the early May flood, Montgomery County Emergency Management Agency reported Thursday. Jerry Buchanan, EMA deputy director, noted that the numbers do not include government facilities like the water treatment plant and various pumping stations, as well as damage to roads and parks, so the total will climb higher. "When we get all the numbers, I think it will rank close to the top as one of our most costly natural disasters," Buchanan said. The Jan. 22, 1999, F-3 tornado that ripped through downtown caused an estimated \$72.7 million in damages. A total of 562 buildings, including 209 businesses and offices, were hit, as well as 18 buildings on the APSU campus. From the Flood of 2010, the bulk of the dollar amount was commercial damage within the city, which totaled \$33,255,398 for 133 businesses.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100529/NEWS01/5290321/1001/NEWS/Flood+damage+estimate+is++36.5+million+for+Montgomery+County>

[Officials Open Giles County Flood Center \(Columbia Daily Herald\)](#)

A Mobile Disaster Recovery Center is open in Giles County to provide assistance to people affected by the severe storms and flooding between April 30-May 18. The mobile center began operating Wednesday and will continue from 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Friday and Saturday at the Giles County Fire and Rescue Headquarters, 120 Jimmy Scruggs Drive, Pulaski. Mobile Disaster Recovery Centers allow the Federal Emergency Management Agency to travel to designated counties to answer questions about applications and to review information FEMA needs to process applications. Recovery specialists can supply contacts for other programs that may be able to provide assistance. Disaster officials suggest that before visiting the centers, people first register online any time at www.DisasterAssistance.gov or call 800-621-FEMA (3362) or (TTY) 800-462-7585 for those with speech and hearing disabilities. Lines are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Help in all languages is available.

http://www.columbiadailyherald.com/articles/2010/05/28/top_stories/05flood.txt

[Relatively Few Complaints of Opportunism After Flood, State Says \(WPLN-Radio\)](#)

Tennessee has seen relatively few complaints of price-gouging and other scams in the wake of this month's flood. Jeff Hill is the state's senior counsel for consumer advocacy and protection. He says the state has received about fifteen complaints stemming from the flood. "Some of the areas that we've received information about were hotels, HVAC units, pumps, and then getting water out of basements, bottled water and rental cars." Hill says it's hard to know how many of those complaints will stick, but those that do could face a thousand dollar fine, plus restitution. Hill points out that in addition to civil charges, scammers, gougers and frauds could face criminal charges from the district attorney. In Davidson County, only a handful of charges -- about ten in all -- have come for post-flood opportunists, a spokesperson said, mostly from looting.

<http://wpln.org/?p=18092>

[Bacteria Returns To Normal Levels After Flood \(Associated Press\)](#)

The state environmental agency says most of the increased bacterial water pollution caused by flooding early in the month has ceased. The exception is the Cumberland River downstream of the wastewater treatment plant in Clarksville. The plant failed when it flooded after record rainfall the first weekend in May and is only partly operational. A news release Friday from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation stated water samples taken from streams and lakes in Middle Tennessee show bacteria levels have returned to the same readings as before the flooding. TDEC officials say it's not uncommon for creeks and streams to contain bacteria and people should wash with soap and water after getting into them.

<http://content.usatoday.net/dist/custom/gci/InsidePage.aspx?cld=tennessean&sParam=33651381.story>

[Flooded Mid-Sized Businesses Pressing For State Assistance \(Nash Biz Journal\)](#)

A few weeks ago, they nearly floated away. Now they're in danger of slipping through the cracks. Companies in the Visco Drive industrial area argue their businesses are too large to be made whole by federal assistance, but too small to command the special attention of a giant like Opryland Hotel owner Gaylord Entertainment Co. The group of 13 businesses employing about 1,500 has turned to state and local government for help. If they're successful, flood-damaged businesses statewide could qualify for a mix of tax incentives worth a combined \$25 million a year, according to a state fiscal analysis of three separate proposals. Yet, the budget environment is far from accommodating, and state officials aren't convinced the Visco Drive Business Owners Coalition has the answer.

<http://nashville.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2010/05/31/story4.html> (SUBSCRIPTION)

[Councilman Bruce Stanley May Shape Post-Flood Rebuilding \(Tennessean/Ross\)](#)

Stanley has devoted career to protecting flood plain Bruce Stanley isn't the sort of councilman who tends to stand out in Metro's 40-member governing body. He's has lived in the same Donelson-area home his entire life and represents the surrounding District 14. He's co-written a 433-page tome on the history of the suburban communities of Donelson and Hermitage and penned a memoir. He's quiet. He's earnest. But what distinguished Stanley's political career was an intense interest in Metro's flood plain. He conducted a 21-month independent study of development in the flood plain in 1999. Four years later, he sponsored a bill that successfully cut in half the amount of residential development allowed there. That news might have bored some people in April, but since the May 2 flood that damaged thousands of Metro properties, Stanley's ideas have captured more attention. Now, his 11 years on the council could put him in a position to help shape a critical post-flood debate.

<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20100529/NEWS01/5290315/Councilman+Bruce+Stanley+may+shape+post-flood+rebuilding>

[Tennessee Requests Disaster Designation \(Southeast Farm Press\)](#)

According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service's weekly crop survey, Tennessee farmers are reporting moderate to severe damages to 39 percent of the state's corn crop and 21 percent of winter wheat. Damages to fruit and vegetable crops and nursery stock have also been reported as well as significant damage to farm infrastructure including access roads, levees, fences, conservation practices, buildings and equipment. Governor Phil Bredesen has requested a Secretarial designation of natural disaster for agriculture for 13 counties across middle and west Tennessee as a result of the historic rainfall and devastating floods that began April 30. Bredesen made the request this week in a letter to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. The 13 counties include: Benton, Chester, Dickson, Fayette, Hardeman, Hickman, Humphreys, Lauderdale, Lewis, Maury, McNairy, Perry and Stewart.

<http://southeastfarmpress.com/grains/disaster-declarations-0527/>

[Tn Gets \\$4.6m Flood Grant For Jobs \(Nashville Business Journal\)](#)

The U.S. Department of Labor has awarded \$4.67 million to the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development in order to create temporary jobs in the wake of this month's devastating flooding. "The images of Nashville under water have been heart-breaking," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "This grant will support ongoing recovery efforts and provide temporary employment to Tennesseans as they clean-up flood-impacted areas and return their lives to normalcy." The announcement comes the same day that Catholic Charities USA announced that it has not seen the same level of giving in response to Nashville's flooding that it saw in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the Haiti earthquake. The huge human services and disaster response organizer also said that giving in the wake of the Gulf oil spill has also been disappointing.

<http://nashville.bizjournals.com/nashville/stories/2010/05/24/daily32.html?surround=lfm>

Flood Damage Total Put At \$36.5 Million (Leaf Chronicle)

An estimated \$36.5 million in damages to city and county residences and businesses was caused by flooding earlier this month, Montgomery County Emergency Management Agency reported Thursday. Jerry Buchanan, EMA's deputy director, noted that the numbers do not include government facilities like the water treatment plant and various pumping stations, as well as damage to roads and parks, so the total will climb higher. "When we get all the numbers, I think it will rank close to the top as one of our most costly natural disasters," Buchanan said. The Jan. 22, 1999, F-3 tornado that ripped through downtown caused an estimated at \$72.7 million. A total of 562 buildings, including 209 businesses and offices, were damaged, as well as 18 buildings on the APSU campus. From the Flood of 2010, the bulk of the dollar amount was commercial damage within the city, which totaled \$33,255,398 for 133 businesses.

<http://www.theleafchronicle.com/article/20100528/NEWS01/5280313/1002/Flood-damage-total-put-at--36.5-million>

Opinion

Region must weigh cost vs. Transit plan (tennessean)

Middle Tennesseans got a glimpse last week of what a multibillion-dollar mass transit system for the 10-county area might look like, and now it's time to think about why such an investment should be made. The draft plan, put forth by the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, proposes light rail or bus rapid transit lines to connect Nashville to Franklin, Gallatin and Murfreesboro by 2035. Plans call for commuter rail to Clarksville and Wilson County; express coach service to Dickson, Springfield and other areas; and commuter and suburban circulator buses. In addition, it lists about 500 potential roadway, pedestrian and bicycle projects. The Nashville Area MPO is a federally designated transportation planning agency covering more than 1.5 million people throughout Cheatham, Davidson, Dickson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, Wilson and parts of Maury and Robertson counties. Working with city and county mayors and other regional community, business and civic leaders, MPO officials said they will soon post a schedule for public and stakeholder meetings on the project, so that the plan submitted to the federal government this fall reflects the desires of the people who live, work and play in Middle Tennessee.

<http://blogs.tennessean.com/opinion/2010/05/30/region-must-weigh-cost-vs-transit-plan/>

Such Projects Will Pay Off In Long Run (Tennessean)

If you've ever purchased a tax-free, high-end good while passing through an international airport, you can thank Chuck Feeney, the billionaire founder of Duty Free Shoppers. He doesn't own a car and takes public transportation everywhere he goes. Why? Because it saves him money. Considering that congestion-related costs to Nashville-area citizens in fuel and time are around \$420 million a year, it would seem that Chuck's got the right idea. The high cost of personal transportation is a major concern for Tennesseans and, more recently, policy-makers in Washington. A recent report found that homeowners in areas without access to transit are at a greater risk of foreclosure. Intended for mortgage underwriters, this report recommended incorporating transit access and walkability into measurements for borrowing terms. The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development was listening, and it announced last week they'll begin gauging the "location efficiency" — a project's potential to connect residents to surrounding communities — of all HUD grant applications.

<http://blogs.tennessean.com/opinion/2010/05/30/such-projects-will-pay-off-in-long-run/>

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