



CHATTANOOGA, TENN (May 21, 2024) – Thrive Regional Partnership joined the Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance today in the 2nd annual sharing of alternative routes for drivers to use in traveling in and around the Greater Chattanooga Region.

In advance of the summer travel season, Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance encourages drivers to utilize state routes and highways instead of interstates for daily commuting and extended travel destinations. These alternative routes in and around Chattanooga allow for varied scenery and avoid interstate bottlenecks.

With the potential to greatly improve quality of life, fuel efficiency, and decrease hauled freight delivery time, travelers through the greater Chattanooga region are encouraged to test out seven routes on five core maps that provide alternatives to the Greater Chattanooga interstates.

Five core routes that drivers can drive across the greater Chattanooga region include:

- US Highway 321 & TN State Route 320: Ooltewah, TN to Ringgold, GA & Ooltewah, TN to Downtown Chattanooga, TN
- TN State Route 58: Downtown Chattanooga, TN to Ooltewah, TN through Decatur, TN to I-40 at Kingston, TN
- TN State Route 318: St. Elmo/Lookout Mtn. to US Highway 11 through Wildwood, GA to near Trenton, GA
- TN State Route 111 toward Cookeville, TN & to TN State Route 8: Cleveland, TN through McMinnville, TN to I-24 in Manchester, TN
- TN US Highway 411: Maryville, TN to I-75 near Cartersville, GA, North of Marietta/Atlanta, GA

"Given the challenges drivers often encounter while traveling the interstates in Chattanooga, we are promoting these alternative routes to assist drivers in getting off the interstate," said Bill Moore, chairman of the Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance and former chief engineer for the Tennessee Department of Transportation. "Alternative routes inherently provide beautiful scenery and a more peaceful experience while avoiding the ever-increasing interstate traffic that rides atop Chattanooga's unique topography."

Growth in Tennessee and the southeastern region is noticeable on the interstate system both related to private travel and to freight traffic. In particular, Tennessee's interstate system was designed when the population was approximately 3 million and today Tennessee's population hovers just over 7 million which increases on a weekly basis.

Chattanooga traffic congestion and bottlenecks are commonplace occurrences that regional drivers know to expect. The motoring public is often experiencing very slow or standstill traffic, encountering significant delays while traveling interstate systems across the Greater Chattanooga area in addition to the other urban areas in Tennessee.

In 2018, Bridgett Massengill, President and CEO of Thrive Regional Partnership led efforts to begin a campaign to encourage commuters across the region to utilize backroads to help alleviate common bottlenecks experienced throughout the Greater Chattanooga interstate system, recognizing that increased population and industry would continue to increase commutes.

“The upcoming holiday weekend surrounding Memorial Day presents the perfect opportunity for folks across the greater Chattanooga region to discover and test scenic routes that help them not only get to enjoy a long weekend with less stress, but to prepare for summer travel volumes,” Bridgett Massengill said, “By charting the best routes for their commute to work, school, and outdoor activities, road travelers can take advantage of this weekend to spice up their routine and help improve region-wide navigation flow.”

Not all scenic routes are graded to support the weight restrictions, height limitations, or daily use of heavy truck volumes, though all should be able to handle that of regular commuter vehicles and some short-haul trucks.

The Chattanooga area interstates have traffic flow coming from the Port of Savannah, which has been billed as the fastest-growing container terminal in the U.S., handled 4.9 million TEUs (Twenty Equipment Units) in 2023. In the first quarter of 2024, TEUs totaled 1.3 million.

Each day, more than 93,000 vehicles travel along I-24 north of East Ridge, TN and along Interstate 75 at Exit 1, according to the Tennessee Department of Transportation. Between 18-28% of those vehicles are classified as single- and multi-unit trucks (tractor trailers), one of the highest percentages of truck traffic on an urban interstate in the greater Chattanooga region.

Connie Vaughan, the Government Relations Manager for McKee Foods and the Chair of Thrive Regional Partnership is encouraging commuters to help support our local economy by creating space on interstates for our short and long-haul trucks to maximize efficiency for transport and delivery of materials and goods that are needed to keep companies, communities, and citizens going strong.

“I am proud to support the efforts of the Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance as they encourage commuters to try out alternate routes, which in turn could also increase the efficiency of our freight movement, while protecting our hardworking professional truck drivers from logging wasted hours sitting in standstill traffic,” Connie Vaughan said, “When we stop to reflect upon the original intent of our Federal Interstate System to support our military efforts and transportation of supplies, the natural evolution for 18 wheelers to utilize the available infrastructure makes total sense. If you think about it—it's not trucks clogging up our interstate system, but commuters who are bogging down our trucks.”

“During my very enjoyable and peaceful drives through TN State Route 8, and U.S. Highway 11, as interstate alternatives—I hope I get to see friends and neighbors out on our beautiful scenic routes with their windows rolled down and radio turned up—breathing in the fresh air of the greater Chattanooga region,” Connie Vaughan said.

In recent years, both Georgia and Tennessee have increased the sustainable funding for their transportation systems. In 2023, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee introduced the Transportation Modernization Act which was passed by the Tennessee General Assembly. In both states, interstate enhancements are anticipated as a result of the new funding.

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CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Susie Alcorn

Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance

Executive Director

615.418.9931 (Cell)

615.248.5900 (Office)

info@TNinfrastructure.org

Rhett Bentley

Thrive Regional Partnership

Chief Communications Officer

843.597.0439 (Cell)

423.541.3888 (Office)

rbentley@thriveregion.org

MEDIA KIT

Download seven Chattanooga alternative routes on five core maps:

www.TNinfrastructure.org/News-Room

www.TNinfrastructure.org/ChattanoogaAlternatives

About Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance

Since 2005, Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance has served as an umbrella organization and advocate for adequate and consistent funding for Tennessee's infrastructure needs. The key drivers of the organization are safety, mobility, economic competitiveness, and overall quality of life. Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance is the presenter of the podcast series *Highway See* (found at www.HighwaySee.com) on the history of Tennessee's roads and bridges.

To learn more about Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance visit www.TNinfrastructure.org.

About Thrive Regional Partnership (Thrive)

Thrive Regional Partnership inspires responsible growth through conversation, connection, and collaboration across the tri-state greater Chattanooga region which spans northeast Alabama, northwest Georgia, and southeast Tennessee. For more information, visit www.ThriveRegionalPartnership.org.