

# TDOT Public Meeting and CAPPE Response

February 19, 2008

1. ***TDOT's traffic analysis is seriously flawed.***

According to TDOT's traffic studies, the PPE will produce marginal and short-lived improvements to traffic conditions on a few roads, and within 20 years even these limited improvements will have disappeared.

Becky White, whose firm did the traffic analysis for TDOT, said that this projection assumes the Southern Loop and other proposed new roads will be built. The Southern Loop is a proposed 26-mile beltway encircling Alcoa and Maryville. (*For why the projection makes this assumption, see below.*)

The Southern Loop (officially known as the Southern ByPass) is in the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization's (TPO) Long Range Transportation Plan for 2030 (or later).

By the time the Southern Loop is projected to be built, any of the (limited) positive impact of the PPE on traffic flow will be gone.

***Are you confused? Here's why TDOT's traffic analysis includes the Southern Loop:***

Transportation planners rely on a region's Long Range Transportation Plan for basic assumptions. The Plan for our region includes the PPE, Alcoa Parkway, Southern Loop, and Montvale Road projects -- none of which would be ready for use when the PPE is projected to open.

In 2001 TDOT Commissioner Bruce Saltsman announced the results of a feasibility study and said the Southern Loop, with a projected price tag of up to \$276.6 million, was too expensive to build at that time. The feasibility study was requested by Blount County, Blount Chamber of Commerce, Blount Industrial Board, Metropolitan Knoxville Airport Authority and the cities of Maryville and Alcoa.

In 2004 the City of Maryville was considering alternatives to the Southern Loop as proposed by Hunter Interests. According to an article in the Daily Times on June 14, 2004,

***"After discussion, it was agreed that federal and state governments could likely be convinced to invest in a set of smaller road projects, rather than spending large sums on a major project such as the proposed Southern Loop, included in the long-range Transportation Planning Organization outlook."***

***So why is TDOT including the Southern Loop in their analysis of the impact of the PPE?***

Because the Southern Loop is still in the regional Long Range Plan of the TPO. The TPO's Long Range Plan reflects requests from and is approved by the elected officials of the municipalities in the region.

***What you can do***

- Tell TDOT that they need to do credible traffic studies of the impact of the PPE on our existing road system – the road system that will be in place when the PPE is in use. Until this is done there is no objective data supporting the assertion that the PPE will alleviate traffic congestion anywhere in the cities or the county.
- Ask Mayor Swann, Mayor Mull and Mayor Cunningham to explain their position on the Southern Loop and if they no longer support it, to instruct the TPO to remove the Southern Loop from the TPO's Long Range Plan.

**2. *Local officials say that growth following the PPE will not add to sprawl and will be 'managed' because the interchanges are within the cities' Urban Growth Boundaries***

This notion is either naïve or disingenuous.

Alcoa and Maryville will 'manage growth at the interchanges' to the extent the cities enforce their own zoning regulations. It is the area in the County (*outside* the UGBs) that will become more attractive for subdivision development. This acreage will be less closely 'managed' and is most likely to be residential development that costs the county more in services than it generates in revenue (unless property taxes go up as they have in Maryville)

In 2000 city officials and real estate agents observed that the widening of 411S was a spur to growth. According to a Feb. 26, 2000 *Daily Times* article,

**As the vacant land fills up near the new road, the subdivisions will develop farther and farther back into the county.**

**"It's developing pretty much the way we thought it would. Basically any time you take a U.S. highway and make improvements, that spurs commercial growth." said Maryville City Manager Gary Hensley.**

**Pat McGill, the president of Blount County Board of Realtors with Realty Executives, said that the U.S. 411 widening has definitely made that one of the real estate hot spots in the county. It is also a contributing factor to the popularity of the William Blount school district, she added.**

***What you can do:***

- Insist that the Blount County Planning Commission consistently fulfill its obligation to comply with the state's enabling language for planning commissions, which prohibits approval of any subdivisions unless the infrastructure (schools that are not already at capacity, roads, utilities) are already in place

**3. *Three new schools will be using 411N/Sevierville Road in the coming years.***

The City of Maryville is building a new school on Sevierville Road in the John Sevier area. Blount County is purchasing land for a new school off of Sevierville Road in the Prospect area. At the Feb. 19, 2008 TDOT meeting, County Mayor

Cunningham announced a plan for another Blount County school to be located between the existing Porter Elementary (in Wildwood) and Prospect. All of these schools will add traffic to Sevierville Road/411N.

Imagine the number of school busses and parents driving two-lane shoulder-less Sevierville Rd/411N to deliver students to these schools in the morning and pick them up at the end of the day – along with the teachers and staff of all three schools.

Now imagine all the drivers who will use Sevierville Road/411N to get to or from the PPE/Sevierville Road interchange to travel to work, shopping, and health care in Knoxville.

***What you can do:***

- Ask local officials how they will protect the safety and well-being of residents by making improvements to Sevierville Road/411N before any more traffic is added to this unsafe federal highway.

**4. *TDOT is not going to provide projections of the impact of the PPE on the County budget.***

In July 2006 CAPPE requested that TDOT include, in the economic analysis that is part of the EIS, a projection of the impact of the PPE on the County budget.

The accelerated growth that will follow the highway will put new pressures on our County resources to provide schools, teachers, law enforcement, road maintenance and other services.

The Blount County Growth Strategy developed by Hunter Interests, Inc. states that one outcome of the PPE will be “acceleration in the rate of residential development.”

Gary Hensley, former City Manager of Maryville, said in a January 29, 2002 *Daily Times* article that the PPE will spur residential growth. In the same article Alcoa City Manager Mark Johnson said:

**“New roads create growth. . . . Our theory is you'll see people who are moving to the area that might normally choose to live in West Knoxville will find it just as convenient to live in Blount County. . . . We think there will be development pressure from a residential standpoint.**

At the Feb. 19, 2008 TDOT public meeting, Ed Cole of TDOT said the agency is not going to get involved in ‘Blount County’s future finances.’ For example, the County will decide how many schools to build and what they will cost. (See #3 above.)

However, TDOT is already committed in its Project Data Summary to complete an EIS that will “consider the indirect impacts resulting from the project that would occur later in time or further removed in distance,” and “those impacts may include growth-inducing effects or other effects related to changes in the pattern of land use, population density, or growth rate and related effects on air, water and ecosystems,” and “cumulative impacts on the study area’s resources that would result from this project in combination with other past, present and reasonably future actions by public and private entities.”

### ***What you can do***

- Ask TDOT to include in the EIS the cumulative and secondary impacts and ‘growth-inducing effects’ of the PPE on population growth rates in northeastern Blount County, not only within the two cities’ urban growth boundaries, that extend later in time and further removed in distance.
- Ask County elected officials how they plan to pay for more schools, more teachers, more road maintenance, more law enforcement officers and vehicles, and how large the property tax increase will be to pay for these services to the anticipated ‘accelerated residential development.’

### **5. *TDOT is not considering improvements to SR 33 among the alternatives***

SR 33 (Old Knoxville Highway/East Broadway) is a two-lane state road lined with businesses and driveways and no turn lanes. This road fronts the new Pellissippi Centre at the current terminus of the Pellissippi Parkway. TDOT has encouraged Blount County to apply for a TN Industrial Access grant of \$4.525 million to redesign and build the entrance to the Centre at SR 33. This will aid traffic flow in the area around the Centre (Sam Houston Schoolhouse Road, Clayton headquarters, Jackson Hill subdivision and onto and off the PP) but will do little to aid bottlenecks on SR 33 west of the Centre (for example, Wildwood/Lincoln Road intersection).

Among the alternatives to the PPE being considered by TDOT is ‘upgrade existing roadways’ but SR 33 is not listed as one of the roads to be improved under this alternative.

### ***What you can do***

- Ask TDOT to include SR 33 among the roads contained in the ‘upgrade existing roads’ alternative.
- Ask State Representatives McCord and Overbey and Senator Finney to advocate for improving SR 33 instead of building the PPE.

### **6. *The PPE is not needed for the success of Pellissippi Centre***

A story in the Feb. 20, 2008 edition of *Blount Today* quotes Maryville City Manager Greg McClain saying “the park is positioned “wonderfully” to be successful whether Pellissippi stops or goes through it.”

### ***What you can do***

- Spread the word to help others understand that the current traffic problems on weekday mornings and evenings at the intersection of the PP and the Pellissippi Centre will be fixed without the PPE (see # 5 above).
- Encourage TDOT and the cities of Alcoa and Maryville to design the terminus of the PP and the area at PP and SR 33 as a destination along the lines recommended by Hunter Interests.

7. ***Alternate Route B is not a credible alternative***

TDOT is required seriously to consider feasible alternatives. The proximity of Route B to important historic sites, a school and the Little River make the selection of this alternative highly unlikely.

Large numbers of residents of subdivisions in the path of Alternate Route B came to the Feb. 19, 2008 TDOT meeting to protect their homes and neighborhoods. Having heard that Mayor Cunningham prefers Route A, the people in the path of Route B have now gone home relieved that their residences are safe. What they don't understand is that even if the PPE doesn't go through their subdivision, the PPE will affect their quality of life because this new highway and the Southern Loop will affect the entire County.

The Southern Loop will have interchanges at U.S. 321 (West Lamar Alexander Parkway) near William Blount Drive, U.S. 411 east of the intersection with U.S. 129 (Calderwood Highway), Montvale Road between Ridge and Raulston roads and U.S. 321

8. ***The safety and interests of tourists and commuters are being promoted at the expense of residents***

Making Blount County a bedroom community for Knoxville and Oak Ridge may benefit commuters but we will all pay the price in costs of services, losses to businesses in Maryville and Alcoa, more cars on our unimproved roads and loss of the rural character of the County.

Building roads that encourage and accommodate longer commutes in an era of declining oil reserves is short-sighted.

***What you can do***

- Write letters to TDOT and elected officials telling them you do not want the PPE built and that you want TDOT to "upgrade existing roads. Your letter to TDOT must be postmarked or e-mailed by March 11, 2008 to be included in the official record of the Feb. 19, 2008 meeting
- Send your letter to: Project Comments, Tennessee Department of Transportation, Suite 700, James K. Polk Building, 505 Deaderick Street, Nashville, TN 37243-0332  
OR by e-mail to [mike.russell@state.tn.us](mailto:mike.russell@state.tn.us)  
**Your letter must be postmarked or e-mailed by March 11, 2008.**
- Send a copy of your letter to elected officials. Their names and addresses are in this Update.
- Send a copy of your letter to CAPPE at PO Box 494, Alcoa, TN 37701 or email it to [cappe@saveitdontpaveit.org](mailto:cappe@saveitdontpaveit.org)
- Talk to your friends and neighbors. Ask them if they know that there is no plan to improve 411N in the near future and that the traffic projections that show only limited improvement to traffic flow assume the Southern Loop and the Alcoa Parkway will be built.

- Ask local businesses if they are concerned that the PPE will direct traffic away from their business. If they are concerned, encourage them to write to TDOT.
- Even if you do not live near the proposed PPE or Southern Loop, these roads will affect you, our schools, our existing road system, our County budget, our tax rates and our quality of life. Do not assume it is 'a done deal. Speak out by writing a letter to TDOT.
- Learn about the alternatives proposed by CAPPE and The Raven Society. On CAPPE's website are examples of improvements to SR 33/East Broadway/Old Knoxville Highway and to the Lincoln/East Broadway/Wildwood Road intersection. You can also find an analysis from the October 2007 TDOT meeting that outlines CAPPE's recommendations. On the Raven Society website [www.theravensociety.org](http://www.theravensociety.org) you will find their detailed analysis of the proposed PPE.
- When you hear people say that the PPE will be good for Blount County, ask them for objective facts and analysis. Until the EIS is complete, they are only speculating about the impact of a new highway on our community. This is not responsible planning. We should not spend millions based on assumptions.

**Elected Officials**

Send letters to the Editor of *The Daily Times* to: Editor, The Daily Times, 307 E. Harper Ave., Maryville, TN 37804

OR

Editor, The Daily Times, P.O. Box 9740, Maryville, TN 37802-9740