

Community planning is crucial for progress

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Middle Tennessee is a growing community with growing needs. Tennesseans need access to a modern, efficient, high-quality transportation system, now and in the future.

The current transportation system has been the backbone of economic growth in Tennessee for the past 50 years, and it is expected to continue as a major factor in our economic health in the future.

Congestion on our transportation systems in both urban and rural areas is one of our greatest challenges, even as the cost continues to grow tremendously. By making transportation a key component in the planning of communities, offering transportation options to travelers, maximizing the efficiency of existing systems with technology, along with strategic investments in new and improved facilities, Tennesseans can expect to continue to have one of the nation's premier transportation systems.

The shift in how TDOT identifies and assesses transportation needs is already under way. Transportation Planning Organizations in metropolitan and rural areas work with TDOT to ensure all those affected are involved in the early development of transportation strategies. TDOT is also making changes in the way construction projects are delivered in an effort to reduce impacts to the public. TDOT limits any road work that requires lane closure to non-peak travel hours and at night. TDOT is also using incentive/disincentive contracts to encourage contractors to complete projects faster and adding more "drop-dead" deadlines.

Expanding our road network is one strategy for addressing traffic congestion problems, but we will never solve congestion issues through construction alone. In Nashville and across the nation, multiple strategies must be used to reduce the delays on our roads, highways and interstates.

Strategies to cut travel delays

First, we must ensure that we are getting maximum use out of the road network already in place. Nearly 60% of all congestion is non-recurring. It is caused by delays from crashes, disabled vehicles and weather. To combat non-recurring congestion, TDOT uses the "SmartWay" Intelligent Transportation System. TDOT employees monitor traffic cameras and use message boards to inform drivers of upcoming traffic conditions, while also dispatching HELP trucks to clear incidents quickly. Traffic updates are also presented in real time to Tennessee 511, which allows drivers to call ahead for updates and plan alternate routes around congestion.

A second group of strategies for managing congestion focuses on the demand placed on our road network each day. TDOT's Long Range Transportation Plan recommends more transportation options for commuters. Today, more employers are encouraging public transit by purchasing bus passes for their employees. Employers are also beginning to see the benefit of working from home as not only a congestion-reducing strategy but also a way to attract valued employees who need flexibility in their work schedules.

There is no magic bullet to fix congestion. TDOT must continue to look for innovative solutions while employing the strategies mentioned above to ensure that Tennesseans experience the state-of-the-art transportation system they deserve.