

# I-40/I-81 Corridor Feasibility Study

## Issues/Deficiencies from Initial Stakeholder Interviews

Initial interviews with key corridor stakeholders were held between mid-May and mid-June, 2007. The primary purpose of the initial stakeholder interviews was to establish a collaborative framework for the development of feasible multi-modal solutions for the I-40/I-81 Corridor. Representatives of the affected Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) / Transportation Planning Organizations (TPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs), various State agencies, as well as surrounding state DOTs play a vital role in transportation and thus were interviewed as stakeholders in this corridor. In addition, several other agencies and organizations with an interest in the movement of freight in the corridor were interviewed.

These initial interviews were intended to engage these stakeholders early in the planning process and to validate key planning assumptions prior to the plan being developed and to garner input on existing issues and deficiencies in the corridor. General categories of discussion at stakeholder interviews pertained to corridor issues of

- Capacity and Congestion
- Freight Movement
- Maintenance and Operations
- Economic Access
- Safety and Security
- Intermodal Facilities

A total of 36 initial interviews were conducted with representative of the following organizations:

- Memphis Area MPO
- Lakeway Area MPO
- Jackson Area MPO
- Kingsport Area MPO
- Nashville Area MPO
- Johnson City Area MPO
- Knoxville Area TPO
- Bristol Area MPO
- Memphis Area RPO
- Greater Nashville RPO
- First TN RPO
- Northwest RPO
- Center Hill RPO
- East TN South RPO
- Southwest RPO
- Dale Hollow RPO
- East TN North RPO
- Tennessee Department of Safety, Highway Patrol
- Tennessee Department of Safety, Commercial Vehicle Compliance
- Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development
- TDOT Regional Directors (Regions 1-4)
- TDOT Incident Management Program
- Mississippi DOT
- Virginia DOT
- Arkansas DOT
- North Carolina DOT
- Tennessee Trucking Association
- Tennessee Shortline Alliance
- CSX Transportation
- Norfolk Southern Corporation
- US Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District

The following issues and deficiencies were identified during the course of the initial stakeholder interviews.

### **Capacity/Congestion**

- Additional capacity needed
  - Through downtown Nashville from I-40/I-24 to I-40/I-440, and from existing eight lane sections out to SR 840 both east and west.
  - Through Jackson.
- Complete Nashville's "inner loop" (e.g. I-40, I-24, and I-65).
- Updated the functionally obsolete interchanges in Nashville and Jackson.
- Install lighting at exits in and near urban areas or where there is substantial truck traffic on and off the interstates.

### **Operations/Management**

- More Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) elements needed in rural areas.
- Expand HELP (roadside assistance) services:
  - In Jackson, Crossville and Tri-Cities
  - Beyond Davidson County, to SR-840 in both directions
  - In Memphis, east to Arlington area
- Install gates in concrete barrier walls for quick access to incident scenes, with remote control from emergency/HELP vehicles.
- The Highway Patrol has interest in being able to view TDOT camera images statewide (particularly rural ITS locations being implemented) in order to improve emergency response.
- Use ITS (variable message signs) to divert through truck traffic onto northern or southern loop of I-240 in Memphis during congested times.

### **Safety and Security**

- Ramp configurations onto I-81 via I-26 is a significant safety location.
- Interchange at I-81 and SR-25 identified by the public (and TPO) as needing improvements for safety (tractor-trailers flip over).
- Crash investigation sites are needed at key locations across the state.
- Sharp curves are an issue on I-40 between Rockwood and Kingston.
- Monterey Mountain (Putnam County) is a critical area in adverse weather conditions.

### **Freight Movement/Diversion**

- Truck passing lanes needed on I-81 just north of I-26.
- Lack of truck parking areas and spaces is major problem statewide.
- Norfolk Southern (NS) is working with Virginia on I-81 Freight Rail Study (extending west to Knoxville). NS plans to improve the Crescent Corridor between New Jersey and Louisiana.
- Use I-240 loop in Memphis to divert truck traffic.

## **Economic Access**

- Growing industrial development at Exit 56: Tri-City Crossings
- New exit to provide needed access to East TN Progress Center (industrial center).
- Two TVA certified mega sites within the study corridor (I-40 Advantage Auto Park in Haywood County and West TN Auto Park in Crockett County).
- I-40 at SR-66 interchange improvement needed for existing and new development in Sevier County.

## **Intermodal Facilities**

- There are no intermodal containers on any of the shortline railroads.
- Significant capacity issues on I-40 between Memphis and Jackson affect access to the Memphis Airport and the Port of Memphis.