

For Immediate Release  
October 20, 2003

**TDOT Planners Learn from UT Study Report Summary  
*Dates for Announcements on 15 Frozen Projects are Set***

**Nashville, Tennessee**—The final report from an independent study requested by the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) on 15 of its planned road construction projects is being reviewed by the department.

That report, titled "Lessons Learned," is the last in a series of in-depth project analysis studies conducted by the University of Tennessee Center for Transportation Research at the special request of TDOT Commissioner Gerald Nicely.

"Before another dollar was spent on these projects that represent more than a billion dollars in construction, I wanted to have strong, independent information on whether those projects should go forward," said Commissioner Nicely. "For two months, top members of my staff, along with other transportation planners, have reviewed the in-depth details provided on each of the 15 subjects."

Last spring, Nicely engaged the UT Center for Transportation Research to undertake the review. Governor Phil Bredesen and Commissioner Nicely targeted the controversial projects for study based largely on comments the Governor had received during the 2002 campaign.

The study involved a series of "Listening Sessions" conducted by UT across the state. It focused on collecting information from citizens, communities, city planners, and government officials about how the projects were determined as necessary in the first place. The second study goal was to provide input for TDOT to identify areas for the improvement of its highway planning and business practices.

"In putting those 15 projects on hold, and requesting the case study, Commissioner Nicely and TDOT leaders acknowledged the changing nature of transportation project planning in Tennessee," explained Dr. Stephen Richards, Director of the UT Center for Transportation Research. "Their actions also underscored the Department's goal to enhance some of its general practices. This study is an initial step for TDOT in this process of change."

More specifically, the "Lessons Learned" document includes recommended improvements by TDOT on several fronts.

"We discovered that methods involved in determining the physical need for those projects were acceptable in some cases, but that the public involvement and environmental, economic and social assessment components were inadequate," Dr. Richards said. "Citizens want a bottom-line look at what government is producing and why. Mobility and quality-of-life issues require a range of transportation solutions and frequent public involvement."

Commissioner Nicely said one of the planning techniques recommended in the study is already being used on some of TDOT's newer projects. "It's called Context Sensitive Design and Solutions. The process includes specific methods of creating a

greater balance of the inclusion of items such as preserving the historic, scenic and cultural assets of a community where a highway is built, from the very beginning, in order to achieve excellence in design and maintain harmony in that community.”

“I have given all 16 reports a thorough review and have considered the recommendations of my staff and others on each of the projects involved,” Nicely added. “I will be announcing decisions on each of the 15 delayed projects over the next three weeks,” Nicely said. “The first of those announcements will come this Wednesday.”

Commissioner Nicely will be making the announcements during a series of five news conferences held at locations central to the projects involved.

“I felt it was important to make those announcements in person,” Nicely said, “in order to communicate my decisions directly to the people who are the most affected.”

**The schedule for those project announcements is as follows:**

**Date:** October 22, 2003

**Projects:** SR 357 Extension in Sullivan County; U.S.321 Greene County; U.S.321 Gatlinburg

**Location:** Davy Crockett Birthplace, Limestone (near Greeneville)

**Time:** 2p.m. (ET)

**Date:** October 24, 2003

**Projects:** U.S.64 Bradley & Polk Counties; U.S.127/SR 28 North of Crossville; SR 451 (J Route), Cookeville

**Location:** Cumberland Mountain State Park, Crossville

**Time:** 12p.m. (CT)

**Date:** October 28, 2003

**Projects:** Jackson By-Pass; Wolf River Parkway, Germantown; Walnut Grove Relocation (Shelby Farms), Memphis

**Location:** T.O. Fuller State Park, Memphis

**Time:** 12p.m. (CT)

**Date:** October 31, 2003

**Projects:** SR 840 South; State Route 840 North

**Location:** Long Hunter State Park, Hermitage

**Time:** 12p.m. (CT)

**Date:** November 10, 2003

**Projects:** SR 475, Knoxville Beltway; James White Parkway Extension, Knoxville; Pellissippi Parkway Extension, Blount County

**Location:** TDOT Region 1 Headquarters, Knoxville

**Time:** 12p.m. (ET)