

Section 8:
Focus Group
Summary Report

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews



Conducted for

**The Tennessee Department
of Transportation**

by
ETC Institute

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Executive Summary

ETC Institute conducted four focus groups with transportation stakeholders and completed 102 interviews with a randomly selected group of residents during November 2005. The purpose of the focus groups and interviews was to gather input from the community to develop questions for a statewide customer satisfaction survey that will be administered by TDOT during the spring of 2006. The major topics that were discussed included:

- Overall perceptions of the State's transportation system
- Perceptions of TDOT
- Issues related to highway maintenance and design
- Public transportation issues
- Issues related to other non-highway modes of transportation, such as air, rail, and biking facilities
- Issues related to public information and communication
- Funding related issues

Selected findings from the focus groups and interviews are listed below:

Findings from the Stakeholder Focus Groups

- 15% of stakeholders rated the State's transportation system as "excellent", 68% rated it as "good", and 17% rated it as "average". None (0%) rated it as "poor".
- 52% of stakeholders felt that TDOT is a customer-oriented organization, 39% thought TDOT is not customer-oriented, and 9% did not have an opinion.
- 29% of stakeholders rated the maintenance of State highways as "excellent", 43% rated it as "good", and 28% rated it as "average". None (0%) rated it as "poor".
- 78% of stakeholders thought that TDOT had gotten "better" at informing residents about transportation issues over the past three years; 22% thought TDOT had stayed "about the same," and none (0%) thought that TDOT had gotten "worse" at informing residents about transportation issues.
- 84% of stakeholders felt that TDOT generally provides good value for the transportation taxes that are paid by residents; 16% felt that TDOT does not provide good value.

Findings from the Resident Interviews

- 12% of residents rated the State's transportation system as "excellent", 40% rated it as "good", 36% rated it as "average", and 12% rated it as "poor".
- 57% of residents felt that TDOT is a customer-oriented organization, 23% felt TDOT is not customer-oriented, and 20% did not have an opinion.
- 20% of residents rated maintenance of State highways as "excellent", 46% rated it as "good", 25% rated it as "average", and 9% rated it as "poor".
- 31% of residents thought that TDOT had gotten "better" at informing residents about transportation issues; 47% thought TDOT had stayed "about the same", 4% thought TDOT had gotten "worse", and 18% did not have an opinion.
- 50% of residents felt that TDOT generally provides good value for the transportation taxes that are paid by residents; 19% felt that TDOT does not provide good value, and 31% did not have an opinion.

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Summary of Focus Groups and Open-Ended Interviews

Overview

During November 2005, ETC Institute conducted focus groups and open-ended interviews with community leaders and residents across the State of Tennessee. The purpose of these activities was to gather input from the community to develop questions for a statewide customer satisfaction survey that will be administered by TDOT during the spring of 2006. Some of the specific topics that were discussed during the focus groups and open-ended interviews included:

- Perceptions of the State's transportation system
- Perceptions of TDOT
- Issues related to highway maintenance and design
- Public transportation issues
- Issues related to other non-highway modes of transportation, such as air, rail, and biking facilities
- Issues related to public information and communication
- Funding related issues

A total of 42 transportation stakeholders attended four groups during the week of November 7-10, 2005. Focus group participants included local elected officials, city/county staff, business leaders, transit operators, chamber officials, airport managers, utility representatives, representatives of non-profit organizations, and others. Participants were selected at random from a list of more than 200 community leaders that had participated in meetings related to TDOT's Long Range Plan. One focus group was held in each of TDOT's four regions. The actual locations and dates of the focus groups are provided below.

- Nashville, Nov 7, 2005
- Chattanooga, Nov 8, 2005
- Knoxville, Nov 9, 2005
- Jackson, Nov 10, 2005

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

ETC Institute also conducted open-ended interviews by phone with 102 randomly selected residents throughout the State during November 2005. At least 25 interviews were completed in each of the four TDOT regions. Residents participating in the open-ended interviews were asked the same basic set of questions that were asked during the focus groups.

The following pages list comments that were provided by those who participated in the focus groups and open-ended interviews. Since the primary purpose of the focus groups and interviews was to identify a full range of issues that could be addressed in the statewide customer satisfaction survey, the comments have not been summarized.

TOPIC #1: Perceptions of the State's Transportation System

Stakeholders and residents were each asked to rate the overall quality of the State's transportation system as either "excellent", "good", "average", or "poor".

Fifteen percent (15%) of *stakeholders* rated the transportation system as "excellent", 68% rated it as "good", and 17% rated it as "average". None of the stakeholders rated the transportation system as "poor".

Twelve percent (12%) of *residents* rated the transportation system as "excellent", 40% rated it as "good", 36% rated it as "average", and 12% rated it as "poor".

Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on this topic by stakeholders and residents.

Perceptions that STAKEHOLDERS had of the State's Transportation System

- It is a great Interstate system.
- The roads are great.
- My boss came in from North Carolina and he said the roads were very good.
- The public transportation is good.
- Roads are typically well paved.
- There has been an increase in quality and accessibility, especially in Nashville.
- Public transportation could use more accessibility.
- There is a lack of funding for public transportation.
- Mass transit between towns is needed.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- The system seems biased towards roads over public transportation.
- The roads are excellent throughout the state, and transit is at least somewhat available in both urban and rural areas.
- The roads are excellent, but the public transit is average.
- The roads are great, but we are behind in other modes of travel, such as walking and biking trails.
- I don't really know what's available in regards to public transit. It really needs to be promoted more.
- There is a big lack of sidewalks. The sidewalk system has been ignored for a long time.
- Highway construction is good.
- The quality of the infrastructure is good.
- They built the new roads the right size in regards to number of lanes for the traffic.
- The general condition of the roads is excellent. I would rate Tennessee as one of the top five in the United States.
- Tennessee is one of the few states that have public transportation in every county of the state.
- Roads are excellent in every corner of the state; it is easily one of the top states in the United States.
- Airport funding is good, especially in the more rural areas.
- Car accidents cause a bottleneck that sometimes blocks up the highway for a long time.
- Public transportation is non-existent in inner cities.
- Roads are excellent, but public transportation is poor in the cities. The airport also needs help.
- Roads are very well maintained compared to other states in the region.
- I have been here for more than 20 years and the transportation system has been steadily improving during that time.
- The pavement conditions are very good.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- I like the “pay as you go” philosophy; it’s nice to have a government organization that is fiscally responsible.
- There is a lot of lag time in the projects from beginning to end. They could expedite the process.
- Some communities lack viable transportation options.
- There is a lack of connectivity between communities.
- There is limited investment in alternative modes of travel like air, water, and rail.
- There is congestion due to truck traffic in the urban areas.
- There needs to be a more formal linkage between transportation and economic development. There should be quicker response and more commitment to building new industrial roads.
- We have the best road system in the Country. Alternative modes of transportation could be better, but the main focus of TDOT should be the roads.
- The roads are great compared to other states I have been in.
- I often hear people from other states talk about how great our roads are.
- If you travel to other states, it won’t take long to realize how great Tennessee’s roads are.
- There are too many trucks on the highways.
- The highways are excellent. The maintenance programs for highways are very good.
- I don’t leave Tennessee too much, but our roads seem good compared to roads in the few states I’ve been too.
- Our roads are very good for the most part. It just takes a while sometimes to make repairs.

*Perceptions that **RESIDENTS** had of the State’s Transportation System*

- I feel like the highways are safe.
- Compared to other places, the roads are great.
- Compared to other states, we have pretty good highways.
- You can get to where you need to go easily.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- The pavement on the roads is good.
- I travel on the highways often and I'm very happy with them.
- The roads are normally in good shape and well maintained.
- I've traveled to other states, and I think Tennessee has the best highways.
- I do not have any complaints.
- I don't see many problems while I am driving.
- I have had no problems with the transportation system.
- I think it could be better, but it also could be worse.
- The roads are in pretty good shape.
- I think the roads are generally in pretty good shape, but there is always road construction going on.
- Most of the roads are in good condition.
- Most of the time I don't have trouble getting around.
- I move along with no problems; I think the roads are in good shape.
- Other than the roads not having directional signs, they are in good condition.
- Some of the roads do need some work, but it is not as bad as other states I've been to.
- The interstate system is good.
- The roads are nice and clean and safe to drive on.
- The roads are pretty well maintained and it's easy to get around.
- Road maintenance is kept up pretty well.
- I think that the roads are wide enough and the speed limits are appropriate.
- The transportation system is very good overall.
- I used to live up north and I think the roads there are in good shape.
- The roads will be excellent when the construction is completed.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- I think there are a lot of problems with the roads.
- Some of the roads are good and some are bad.
- I believe the secondary roads do not meet the State's high quality of transportation.
- Compared to other cities, our highways are more congested.
- I don't hear any complaints about the roads.
- The highways are very crowded; there is a lot of stop and go traffic.
- Highways are being redone, but the money is being spent poorly.
- I live by a road that still is not paved.
- There are a lot of potholes.
- More lanes should be added to the interstates.
- There should be regulations forcing 18-wheelers to drive in the right lane only.
- The roads are no better or worse than in other states.
- There are not enough roads for the traffic we have.
- I think the amount of road construction is bad. It seems like there is constantly construction on major roads.
- Some of the roads are good, but some are rough.
- The roads seem wide enough.
- There is always construction.
- There are a lot of cars and heavy traffic on the roads.
- They could do more road work; the old roads especially need more attention.
- They have been in the process of rebuilding the highways for years.
- Roads are under construction all the time.
- There are a lot of barrels in the roads.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- The construction never ends.
- Transportation is just a funding mess involving a lot of politics.
- It is hard to find public transportation for the disabled.
- There is a lack of control of the heavy trucking equipment.
- Roads are bad during hazardous weather conditions.
- The trucks that drive in the passing lanes when going uphill are bad.
- We need a rapid transit system.
- We do not drive on the interstates because of all the trucks on them.

TOPIC #2: Positive and Negative Experiences with TDOT

All (100%) of the stakeholders that participated in the focus groups had interacted with TDOT during the past 2 years, but only fourteen percent (14%) of residents who were interviewed indicated that they had interacted with TDOT over the past 2 years.

Listed below are some of the positive and negative experiences that were described by stakeholders and residents.

Positive Experiences with TDOT

*Reasons **STAKEHOLDERS** described their experiences with TDOT as being “positive”*

- They understand the importance of rural roads. They have a good knowledge of how new businesses and changes will affect road use.
- They spend a lot of time planning & involving the public.
- They are more interested in getting public input than they used to be.
- TDOT is continuously improving and striving to get better.
- They build new roads well and they manage construction contracts well.
- Maintenance department employees in small communities throughout the state are excellent. They do an especially great job of clearing snow from rural roads.
- They are spending a lot of money and bringing in great consultants.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- There is a more professional approach overall.
- They are getting contracts and reimbursements out sooner than they used to.
- They have put more focus on professionalism in long term planning over the past couple of years.
- The regional office is excellent, but the state office is bureaucratic.
- TDOT has been very flexible, which is terrific.
- The people setting up the rural transportation organization have been excellent. They are constantly in touch with us by e-mail or calls. They are great communicators.
- The DBE Department and the Planning Department have been great. They are very responsive and have good communication.
- The Trolley Department people are great to work with in getting grants.
- They are always very customer oriented. I may not always agree with them, but they are courteous and customer friendly.
- The TDOT staff is always courteous.
- They are trying to change public perception by getting more involved with the public.
- At the last public meeting, I went to TDOT was more receptive to ideas and provided more information than they had in the past. They explained things better and were more friendly and open to the future.
- There is definitely a cultural change across the board at TDOT to be more customer-oriented.
- It gets more bureaucratic as you get closer to Nashville, but they are still very good overall.
- They haven't been good about providing us with data on car accidents.
- We worked with a person on a project that would only do it his way.
- TDOT representatives have actually come out to our area and were very approachable and informative when they were here.
- They've been incredibly helpful in regards to Highway I-69 and any other questions we've had for them.
- The new regime has been much more customer friendly and open to communicating with the public and other organizations.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

Reasons RESIDENTS described their experiences with TDOT as being “positive”

- My daughter broke down and TDOT came out and helped her.
- They do an excellent job keeping up with repairs.
- They always keep the highways in good condition.
- I like the fact that TDOT is trying to add more lanes on overcrowded highways.
- I like that TDOT always seems to be working to improve the transportation system.
- I had a flat tire on my car and they came right away to help.
- I was in an accident and they did traffic control and protected me from traffic.
- They responded to me promptly when I called in for help.
- They worked fast & proficiently to fix the streets in my area.
- They are usually quick to respond to clean up requests.

Negative Experiences with TDOT

Reasons STAKEHOLDERS described their experiences with TDOT as being “negative”

- They are burdened with lots of projects and not enough staff, resources or money.
- The “pay as you go” philosophy is not good. They use all cash and don’t do bonds. This policy causes a lot of money to pass by TDOT.
- They are great with the roads, but bad on other modes of transportation.
- Some areas are dangerous in my community and it takes a long time to get it fixed due to a lack of staff, resources and money.
- They should finish projects before starting a new one. There are too many unfinished road construction projects throughout the State.
- The paperwork for some programs takes up too much time.
- There is a huge bureaucracy, and it takes a lot of effort to cut through it to get work accomplished. They are changing, but it just takes time. They are moving in the right direction though.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- The rural transportation organization is a good idea, but I think they came in a little heavy-handed. Although, I think they did start to listen more once they got started.
- TDOT doesn't finish projects when they say they will. They hesitate to tell the public when a project is supposed to be done.
- Communication with the upper levels of TDOT has been very poor. It is frustrating to have to navigate through all the bureaucracies to get things done with them.
- They had a public meeting in our area about upcoming road construction and didn't really listen to the public's ideas. There are lots of problems now.
- There is a huge design backlog so they may need to hire more help.
- Work zones seem to cover a lot more distance than is necessary. Barrels especially seem to be put out much sooner than they need to be.
- There are some dangerous spots along I-40. There have been a couple of accidents in these spots that I told TDOT about and they didn't respond.
- Signage issues are too political as to which communities get signs and why.

Reasons RESIDENTS described their experiences with TDOT as being "negative"

- I feel that they just don't care sometimes.
- They need to finish highway 65.
- It takes too long to complete a lot of projects.
- There was no response to the problem I called about, which pertained to erratic trucker drivers.
- They are non-yielding on their views.
- It takes too long for them to finish projects.
- They put a new road through my yard, and I couldn't do anything to stop it.

TOPIC #3: Perceptions of TDOT as a Customer-Oriented Organization

Stakeholders and residents were asked if they felt that TDOT is a customer-oriented organization.

Fifty-two percent (52%) of *stakeholders* felt that TDOT is a customer-oriented organization, 39% felt TDOT is not customer-oriented, and 9% did not have an opinion.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of *residents* felt that TDOT is a customer-oriented organization, 23% felt TDOT is not customer-oriented, and 20% did not have an opinion.

Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on this topic by stakeholders and residents.

Perceptions that STAKEHOLDERS had of TDOT

- The top end is improving, but sometimes the front line is not coordinated with the new changes at the top.
- It takes years to close out a project and there is a lot of inertia to work through, but they are investing a lot of time in customer feedback, awareness, and planning so that is good.
- Improving simple procedures would make things more efficient, easier, and quicker for the customer. Departments don't even share the same databases, so they have to transfer you around for simple problems and questions.
- They have become a lot more customer-oriented over the past couple of years. They no longer have a "my way or the high way" attitude, but they still have a ways to go.
- They were very flexible and creative in working on a project with us.
- The new administration has reached out more. They are willing to ask our opinions.
- Regionally they do a great job, but at the state level they say they're listening to us but when they leave our area we never hear from them again and nothing happens.
- They might listen to people now, but it still doesn't mean they will do anything about your request.
- For the most part they're more customer-oriented, but some of the old guard still sticks to the old ways.
- I like that they are willing to listen, but they've almost gone too far. They get tons of feedback, but they never seem to follow up and act on it. It all gets bogged down in bureaucracy.
- I'm not sure they know who their customers are. They used to be much more helpful on projects.
- Their plans are laid in concrete; they will listen but won't change anything.
- They are very backlogged. They have said yes to too many people over the years and many projects are backlogged.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- It is so much better now; the previous regime was extremely difficult to interact with.
- They are much more open and informative now.

Perceptions that RESIDENTS had of TDOT

- They really seem to be there for the customer.
- They have good people at TDOT.
- The contact I have had with them has been pleasant, and they appeared to care.
- They need to crack down on 18-wheelers – they're everywhere.
- They are easy to get a hold of and talk to.
- They fix things when they need to be fixed.
- From what I have seen and heard they seem to be customer-oriented.
- The roads are good.
- They handle business well.
- I have not heard anything bad about them.
- I haven't interacted with TDOT too much, but I've heard only good things about them.
- Customer service is provided well.
- Just from observation, they are very visible.
- I have no problems with TDOT.
- I know some seniors who have had good experiences with them.
- They helped my daughter when her car broke down.
- They have responded quickly in past years.
- I think they do their best.
- They seem to try to take care of the traffic and problems.
- Since someone else took over they have been much more customer-oriented.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- They are advising the public of changes in construction.
- They are friendly.
- I think they try to take care of our roads.
- They are flexible and do things to help with your problems.
- They are trying to make the system better.
- I think they do a good job in being customer-oriented.
- Most TDOT employees seem to work for the people and not for themselves, which is great.
- They helped me out when my car broke down.
- They make a good effort.
- They do a good job of responding to people with car trouble on the highway.
- They seem to be there when you need them if your car breaks down.
- I think TDOT tries to be helpful towards us as customers.
- I like that they take the time to explain how the bus system works.
- They try to be customer-oriented.
- They truly seem to work for the people.
- We have been having some roadwork down here and they are doing good.
- They try to help communities by providing the best service they can.
- It is a government agency so they have to be customer-oriented.
- I have been hearing a lot about how much time it takes to complete jobs.
- I feel the customer service is poor around here.
- I went to register my vehicle and they would not help me.
- No one has been willing to help us in any way.
- They are not responsive to complaints.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- The people who actually work there don't care and don't answer questions.
- It takes too long when you call with a complaint.
- There is no transportation if you don't have a car.
- There is too much money put into other issues.
- They are stubborn and don't take suggestions.
- They do road work at rush hour times.
- To know what is going on you have to see it on the news. They won't tell you anything if you ask questions.
- They are too political.

TOPIC #4: Highway Maintenance Issues

Stakeholders and residents were each asked to rate the maintenance of State highways in Tennessee as either "excellent", "good", "average", or "poor".

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of *stakeholders* rated maintenance of State highways as "excellent", 43% rated it as "good", and 28% rated it as "average". None of the stakeholders rated maintenance of State highways as "poor".

Twenty percent (20%) of *residents* rated maintenance of State highways as "excellent", 46% rated it as "good", 25% rated it as "average", and 9% rated it as "poor".

Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on this topic by stakeholders and residents.

Perceptions that STAKEHOLDERS had about Highway Maintenance

- The pavement is smooth.
- Other states are much, much worse. TDOT is well beyond the minimum.
- There are no potholes.
- Sometimes they repave a new road when other roads are in much worse condition.
- They are a little behind in connectivity between communities and in other transportation modes like walking and biking.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- Sometimes there is an overabundance of maintenance. They sometimes resurface roads six months after they repair them. The resources could be better used elsewhere, possibly in public transportation.
- They do great on maintenance.
- They do a good job on the highway maintenance, but it comes at the expense of the secondary roads.
- They don't mow the grass along the highways enough.
- The road surface is good, but they lack in other parts of maintenance like cleaning the shoulders and mowing the grass.
- Some areas need better lighting.
- They are difficult to work with in regards to the stoplights.
- I came from North Carolina and I think the wild flowers here are not good at all. I think it's a waste of money.
- The money spent on the wild flowers is a waste, especially considering our limited resources.
- The maintenance on state roads in our area isn't great. The road might look good, but they ignore drainage issues and are slow to make repairs.
- There are some dangerous, narrow, curvy roads that need to be addressed.
- There is a lack of coordination between TDOT, contractors, and sub-contractors.
- Sometimes I wonder why I'm in a work zone when I see nobody working and the roads look fine.

*Perceptions that **RESIDENTS** had about Highway Maintenance*

- Cannon County does an excellent job on snow removal.
- Compared to other states they do an excellent job.
- They are excellent from what I have seen.
- I think the roads are well maintained overall.
- The roads are great compared to other States.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- They do an excellent job.
- I travel a lot and our highways seem a lot better than in other States.
- They are keeping up with road maintenance well.
- I know when I am driving in Tennessee because the highways are better.
- The roads are smooth.
- TDOT got to my daughter in no time when she needed them.
- They keep working on the roads to make them better.
- When repairs need to be made, they are done promptly.
- They are a little slow on the maintenance.
- There is always a lot of road construction going on.
- A lot of the roads are smooth.
- I think we are in good shape maintenance-wise.
- They do a good job overall. People need to just accept that problems will occur from time to time.
- I hardly ever see potholes.
- I feel they do as good as they can.
- I haven't noticed a lot wrong with the roads.
- The roads are fine. I very rarely see potholes.
- I never have to worry about potholes messing up my car.
- The roads are always clean.
- I think they keep the state highways in good shape.
- I have never had any bad experiences with the maintenance.
- The main highway roads are well maintained and clean and well kept.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- There are no potholes in my area.
- The roads are good.
- It seems like there is always some sort of construction.
- The roads are smooth.
- Snow removal is good and there are no potholes in my area.
- Some areas are taken care of and some areas are never fixed.
- Some of the streets are in bad shape. Especially the smaller roads.
- The general condition of the roads in our area is good.
- There are a few potholes that really need some work.
- There are too many potholes.
- It seems they're always ready to fix the roads.
- The highways are better than the county roads.
- The roads are paved, clean and don't have a lot of potholes.
- The roads are smooth enough to drive on.
- They are working on the roads all the time and that is a good thing.
- I think the roads could be cleaned up some.
- They have good maintenance on state highways.
- Overall I think they keep the roads clean.
- The roads seem to be ok. I have no problems with them.
- I think the maintenance here is better than in a lot of other states that I have seen.
- It seems like they're always doing construction.
- I don't have much to compare them to, but they do have problems.
- I can not get them to touch the highway in my area.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- I think there are a lot of roads that can use some work.
- The highways could be better.
- The highways are usually maintained well.
- I think the major roads are good, but the secondary roads need a little improvement.
- The roads are no better or worse than other states.
- Sometimes the roads get bad after big storms.
- The state highways need to be fixed. They are dangerous and congested.
- Most of the roads are not bad, and they are in the process of rebuilding the few that are.
- They do a job only half way and not all at one time.
- They do what they can as far as I can see.
- There are too many potholes and the maintenance is not performed as needed.
- We do a lot of road travel nationwide and in comparison our roads are fairly bad.
- The road construction never ends and is not safe.
- The roadwork takes too long.
- The maintenance never ends.
- There are potholes and grooves in the new highways.
- They are working on highways constantly and they have a lot of traffic jams.

TOPIC #5: Issues Related to the Design of State Highways

Stakeholders and residents were asked to rate the design of State highways in Tennessee with regard to safety and traffic flow as either “excellent”, “good”, “average”, or “poor”.

Nine percent (9%) of *stakeholders* rated the design of State highways as “excellent”, 21% rated it as “good”, 58% rated it as “average”, and 12% rated it as “poor”.

Fifteen percent (15%) of *residents* rated design of State highways as “excellent”, 42% rated it as “good”, 30% rated it as “average”, 12% rated it as “poor”, and 1% did not have an opinion.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on this topic by stakeholders and residents.

Perceptions that STAKEHOLDERS had about the Design of State Highways

- The design is better than in a lot of other states. There is a good transition from four to eight lanes, two to four, and four to two, etc.
- They could be better aesthetically.
- We need more pedestrian friendly roads. It is hard to get from our house to the public transit due to a lack of walkways.
- The roads haven't been designed to match the traffic in our area.
- The focus is only on driving, not walking. It is dangerous to cross many streets.
- Public transit depends on a good sidewalk system, which we do not have at all.
- Highway 60 should be widened. Exit 20 has major safety issues.
- Sometimes it seems like exit and entrance ramps just merge into each other.
- Projects seem short-sighted; they will build a two-lane bridge when they will need a four-lane in the near future.
- They need to pay more attention to drainage. Some areas are not leveled off right.

Perceptions that RESIDENTS had about the Design of State Highways

- I have not had any problems.
- I can get around easily.
- The roads are safe. That's really the most important thing.
- I can get to where I need to go well.
- Signage is very good; there are enough signs to caution drivers.
- I feel safe on the highways.
- I really like the way you can go around Nashville to avoid the traffic.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- They seem to be moving in the right direction.
- I think they are improving the problem areas.
- The highways seem to be very safe and I've have never had a problem before.
- I have never been in a wreck on the highways and don't see too many.
- They have done a great job in the design of the highways.
- I feel safe on the highways.
- I can get around pretty well without trouble.
- The highways are easy to get to and the designs are fine.
- I feel safe when riding on the highways.
- The traffic flows well during rush hour.
- I can get around easily.
- They seem pretty safe to me.
- I have no problem getting from one place to another.
- I can't think of any place that I have had a bad experience.
- Knoxville to Memphis is a smooth run.
- I can usually travel easily.
- I feel pretty safe on the state highways, even though they can be congested.
- The roads are banked nicely and they are marked well.
- I have never had any problems and don't hear about many accidents.
- I think the design is fine, but people on cell phones are a problem.
- Traffic flow has improved over the years.
- We need more lanes on interstates.
- The roads seem to handle traffic well.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- Some areas of the roads are under construction.
- Sometimes I find it hard to find a way around road construction.
- Overall state highways are in good shape, but as you get closer to Nashville they get worse.
- The highways are about the best I have traveled on in the country.
- I think the roads are getting better.
- They have done a good job and it seems to work well.
- I don't agree with the traffic signals and there are too many accidents.
- They have reconstructed some of the roads to make them safer.
- We are still a few years behind where we need to be.
- The highways around Jackson need to be redesigned.
- I don't think they left enough shoulder room on some of the highways.
- We have a road system that sometimes misses areas.
- I don't think the flow of traffic is good; we have outgrown the current system.
- The exits are confusing and not large enough.
- The flow of traffic is just okay.
- I feel safe enough to still drive.
- If it rains you hydroplane too easily.
- The highways get confusing.
- The left-hand turn lights are too slow.
- They are average because of all the construction going on all the time.
- I think traffic could flow better, especially in urban areas.
- The ramps are poor and the speed on the ramps is too high.
- I think the roads are getting better.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- I think a lot of highways are not safe.
- Sometimes TDOT will design a road one way and then realize it is wrong and have to fix it.
- Sometimes there are a lot of tie-ups on the interstates.
- There are a couple of areas that need to be fixed.
- We have a major traffic overflow problem.
- There are guardrails in some places and not in others.
- There is always a backup where I-40 and I-75 meet.
- There is no hassle when I travel.
- The travel is fine, but the flow of traffic needs to be better.
- Where they should build and where they do build are not meeting.
- The highways are congested and need more lanes.
- Construction seems to be an on-going thing.
- The exit ramps are poorly designed.
- I feel the highways are confusing.
- It is always congested from Memphis to Atlanta.
- The dotted lines are too close to each other.
- The traffic flow is terrible.
- Driving downtown during rush hour is a disaster.

TOPIC #6: The Quality of Public Transportation in Tennessee

Stakeholders and residents were each asked to rate the quality of public transportation in Tennessee as either “excellent”, “good”, “average”, or “poor”.

Four percent (4%) of *stakeholders* rated public transportation in Tennessee as “excellent”, 12% rated it as “good”, 28% rated it as “average”, 52% rated it as “poor”, and 4% did not have an opinion.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

Nine percent (9%) of *residents* rated public transportation in Tennessee as “excellent”, 18% rated it as “good”, 22% rated it as “average”, 20% rated it as “poor”, and 31% did not have an opinion.

Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on this topic by stakeholders and residents.

Perceptions that STAKEHOLDERS had about the Quality of Public Transportation in Tennessee

- There is public transportation at varying degrees of quality in every county, which is good considering the funding limitations.
- There is a lack of accessibility. All counties have public transportation, which is great, but some counties have much better funding than others.
- They have not developed a commuter rail.
- The buses need to be improved.
- Resources are very limited in this area, especially in the more rural areas.
- The lack of resources for public transportation funding is not just TDOT’s fault. Federal funding for public transportation is getting better, but has been a low priority for years.
- Quantity counts for something. We have public transportation in all counties.
- With more funding I think there is a lot of potential.
- In Bradley County, there is an excellent rural route people can take.
- Chattanooga is doing good things. They have bike racks and shuttle service downtown for the disabled. They just need to increase the ridership; it is very low.
- There are some high points throughout the state, but a lot more areas that are not as good.
- They try hard, but lots of things are working against them, like land use. They need to focus on the highway and the fact that there is a lack of marketing.
- They do good considering their funding and lack of riders.
- In Knoxville public transportation is great, but in the rural areas I think it is pretty spotty. There are a lot of unmet needs in rural areas.
- I’m not sure if I agree or disagree with having a commuter rail, but I think it should be looked at since there is no rail service in Tennessee.
- I think the trolley system is good.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- They don't do well with any type of public transportation.
- I think TDOT's involvement in public transportation is fairly minor.
- They pride themselves on having public transit in every county in Tennessee, but to what extent?
- I don't think public transportation in rural areas is a high priority funding-wise.
- There is no public transportation in our area that is feasible to use. It just picks up a few kids and takes them to school.
- There is a lack of transportation for the elderly.

*Perceptions that **RESIDENTS** had about the Quality of Public Transportation in Tennessee*

- I only hear good things about the quality of transportation.
- I know people who use public transportation and they seem to think it works well.
- I loved it when I had to use it to go to school.
- Public transportation in Tennessee seems good compared to other states.
- They care about the fact that we live in a "bedroom" community.
- There are a lot of buses around.
- The buses and bus routes work well.
- There is easy access to public transportation.
- I have had good experiences with public transportation.
- I think it is a good service and it gets people where they want to go.
- It is good, but it could be better if they stopped more often.
- It provides transportation for those who don't have it.
- My friends say they like the bus times.
- The state takes care of public transportation well.
- We could really use a mass transit system.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- We have a good bus system. It is priced well and well maintained.
- When there is an ozone alert day you can ride public transportation for free.
- The bus drivers need to have background checks.
- There is not enough public transportation.
- I don't use it, but I would say it is about average for this day and age.
- Public transportation needs some work, especially in rural areas.
- I have not read of any complaints about public transportation.
- The buses seem fine.
- We need more public transportation.
- There is no public transportation where I live.
- I have heard the buses don't come around very often.
- I live in Knox County and there are not enough bus stops for senior citizens.
- They need more routes.
- Public transportation is non-existent in my area.
- There is not a good system for rural areas.
- There is not enough to serve the need.
- There is not enough public transportation for those who don't have cars.
- The public transportation is not very good.
- Public transportation does not go everywhere.
- What public transportation? I've never even seen a bus.
- Public transportation is needed in my area.
- They don't seem to have much of a public transportation system in Tennessee.
- They have not been able to help us out at all with my needs.

TOPIC #7: Priority that Should Be Placed on Public Transportation

Compared to other transportation issues, stakeholders and residents were each asked if TDOT should place a “very high”, “high”, “medium”, or “low” priority on public transportation.

Twelve percent (12%) of *stakeholders* felt that public transportation should be a “very high priority”, 41% felt it should be a “high priority”, 23% felt it should be a “medium priority”, 18% felt it should be a “low priority”, and 6% did not have an opinion.

Thirteen percent (13%) of *residents* felt that public transportation should be a “very high priority”, 39% felt it should be a “high priority”, 29% felt it should be a “medium priority”, 10% felt it should be a “low priority”, and 9% did not have an opinion.

Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on this topic by stakeholders and residents.

*Comments that **STAKEHOLDERS** Made about the Priority for Public Transportation in Tennessee*

- We still love our independence and love our cars, but some type of improved public transportation is needed.
- Public transportation might not be a huge issue right now, but it will be the future due to a large aging population.
- Sometimes we look at only commuter rail, but there are other options like buses. Rapid transit might be a good way to start. It is cheaper and less drastic.
- There are a lot of options and it would cost a lot of money, so we need to take the time to develop something that will work.
- I think the increasing number of Tennessee residents becoming senior citizens over the next 10 years makes public transit a very important issue.
- We are so far behind in public transit, we need to make it a top priority or we will never catch up. It is very important with the aging population and the increased gas prices.

*Comments that **RESIDENTS** Made about the Priority for Public Transportation in Tennessee*

- Because of the population growth it needs to be a very high priority.
- We need better public transportation.
- There are other things that should be taken care of first.
- A lot of people use it and it is a concern for them.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- We need light rail and expanded services throughout the state.
- A lot of people need public transportation.
- There are a lot of people who don't have cars or a license.
- With the price of gas getting so high, more people may be relying on public transportation in the future.
- There are a lot of people who have to travel far to get to work.
- Public transportation can always get better.
- There are transportation issues in a lot of areas in the state.
- I really need public transportation where I live.
- There is a great need for mass transit throughout the State, but especially in rural areas.
- It is difficult to go back and forth to work. I think better public transportation would help everyone.
- Improvements to public transportation are needed.
- We need mass transit to make it easier to get around.
- I know a lot of people that could use public transportation.
- It is important for the state to have good transportation.
- It would be an opportunity to free up some congestion.
- More and more people are moving here and using public transportation.
- I am always looking for safer ways to travel.
- It would be safer. There would be less traffic on the roads if more people used public transportation.
- Many people need and would use public transportation if they could.
- More people are starting to use transit because of the high fuel prices.
- We need more routes; I think people would use the system if it were larger.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- I live in a small town where there is no need for it.
- So many people rely on public transportation. It's extremely important.
- I don't know if that many residents really use public transportation.
- There are people that have trouble getting kids to school and public transportation would help.
- A medium priority is all that is needed on public transportation. There are a lot of other important transportation issues in the state.
- There needs to be more and better public transportation.
- I think it is important to have good transit services.
- Too many people need public transportation.
- We need people to be safe and the bus drivers to be safe.
- With gas prices going up, more public transportation will be needed.
- More public transportation could eliminate some of the road congestion and reduce the crowding.
- I don't live in an area where transportation is a big issue.
- I know that public transportation is needed and people benefit from it.
- I don't think there are that many people who use it.
- It looks like we are doing a good job for as little as it is used.
- Maybe there are things more important than public transportation.
- I think we have a good system.
- Most people drive their own vehicles; I have not heard of that much of a need for it.
- I am not sure it would be dollar effective.
- Other things are more important.
- People who don't have cars need transportation.
- There are other areas like education that should be a higher priority.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- People have cars so there is no need for transit.
- They have bus and rail projects going, but not to relieve congestion.
- People don't need public transit services.
- There is a low population where I live and not much of a need for it.
- More money needs to be given to schools.
- Where I am it is rural and there is not much of a demand for it.
- I do not know how much effort is being put forth now.

TOPIC #8: Perceptions of Other Non-Highway Modes of Transportation

Stakeholders and residents were each asked to rate the quality of other non-highway modes of transportation, such as air, rail, shipping, and biking facilities in Tennessee as either “excellent”, “good”, “average”, or “poor”.

Fifteen percent (15%) of *stakeholders* rated non-highway modes of transportation in Tennessee as “excellent”, 41% rated it as “good”, 31% rated it as “average”, 10% rated it as “poor”, and 3% did not have an opinion.

Ten percent (10%) of *residents* rated non-highway modes of transportation in Tennessee as “excellent”, 34% rated it as “good”, 30% rated it as “average”, 13% rated it as “poor”, and 13% did not have an opinion.

Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on this topic by stakeholders and residents.

*Perceptions that **STAKEHOLDERS** Had About Other Non-Highway Modes of Transportation*

- Improve education in the different modes of transit.
- We have an excellent system for barge transportation, we need to make it more of a priority.
- They need to look at rail crossings on major roads.
- We need some type of incentives for companies to use commuter rail and we need to increase the use among the private community.
- They never include communities in airport issues. Also, they don't pay any attention to land use around the airports.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- Increase the capacity for barge traffic.
- There are not many modes of transportation. There are no trains, boats, or light rail like in California and Illinois.
- Tennessee should focus on improving rail infrastructure, especially with the increase in gas prices.
- There is a lot of effort being made towards river traffic. TDOT does not promote it enough though. We have a river port here that we haven't found a good industry to use.
- They need to improve bicycle transportation, but not bicycle recreation.
- The general aviation infrastructure in Tennessee is excellent.
- The Tennessee airports are great, especially in rural areas.
- They need to address the increasing truck traffic, especially on the Interstate.
- We need a multi-state approach to get rail, we can not do it ourselves.
- There has been a tremendous increase in off-road traffic like bike trails in Eastern Tennessee for sure, maybe even the whole state.

Perceptions that **RESIDENTS** Had About Other Non-Highway Modes of Transportation

- All of the airports are very good and bike trails are marked very clearly.
- I have had good experiences with air transportation.
- I have always left and come back alive, so it must be good.
- The airports are nice.
- They have increased the size of the airport and added flights.
- We have really good bike trails.
- Air and shipping are good, but rail is poor and doesn't exist.
- The airport facilities are good.
- The flights are on time and easy to catch.
- We have a good network of shipping.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- I have traveled by air and bicycle and they are both very good.
- I am pleased with the services provided.
- I haven't heard anything bad about it.
- I know they have airports and they are spaced out well.
- I ride my bike some and I would like to see more greenways.
- I don't think they have made a lot of improvements in this area.
- I travel a lot by air and have never had any problems.
- My son flies often and he says the airports in Tennessee are good.
- The rail is doing fine. Air travel is behind the times.
- The rail is nonexistent and we don't really have any flights down here.
- I like the biking trails and they fixed the rail.
- There are lots more bike trails, but rail is pretty bad.
- They are always building bike trails and we have a good bus system.
- I think they are good.
- The trains are especially good, they are a better mode of transportation.
- We do have some bike trails.
- Air is a mess and rail is nonexistent.
- The airports are ok.
- We do not have rail, the air is fine, and biking is ok.
- We don't have rail here, we have to go to Memphis for it. Air is ok.
- I feel that it could be better.
- I have seen nothing above average.
- I think it is about the same as other states.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- If you want to fly, you have to go to the metro area.
- There is no airport in east Tennessee.
- There is not much rail transit.
- I know it is there and available but I don't know much more about it.
- Rail is terrible; it seems to separate the town.
- The airport is not that good.
- There is always room for improvement, but overall I think it is okay.
- There is no rail system.
- There is too much politics in air travel and that has made the service poor.
- We don't have any trains and not too many trucking firms.
- The trains are not close enough.
- There are very few places to ride a bike safely in this state.
- We don't have any rail or any good air connections.
- Where we live there are not enough flights to get places.
- The air travel is poor, it is very expensive to get in or out of our area.
- There aren't enough bike lanes and there is no rail service.
- We don't have railways.
- I have not seen much advancement.
- I feel like it is impossible to ride a bike anywhere.
- There is no rail and no biking trails.
- The rail system is awful. There are not enough flights for air travel.
- There is not enough connectivity for other modes of travel.

TOPIC #9: How Well TDOT Keeps the Public Informed

Stakeholders and residents were each asked to indicate if they thought TDOT does an “excellent”, “good”, “average”, or “poor” job of keeping residents informed about transportation issues in Tennessee.

Seven percent (7%) of *stakeholders* rated the job TDOT does in keeping residents informed as “excellent”, 36% rated it as “good”, 43% rated it as “average”, and 14% rated it as “poor”.

Fifteen percent (15%) of *residents* rated the job TDOT does in keeping residents informed as “excellent”, 32% rated it as “good”, 25% rated it as “average”, 25% rated it as “poor”, and 3% did not have an opinion.

Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on this topic by stakeholders and residents.

*Comments that **STAKEHOLDERS** Made About TDOT Efforts to Keep the Public Informed*

- They did a good job informing the public on the construction on Highway 96 & Highway 840.
- They mentioned the road construction in the newspaper, which is a nice change.
- TDOT is a huge organization and I never know who to contact for certain issues.
- It is hard to find out information on road construction. Sometimes I would like to know when construction will be finished.
- Some residents don’t feel like they have any say in what TDOT does in regards to road maintenance.
- The public hearings are informative. I just wish I knew when they are. They don’t do a good job of promoting them, even to public officials.
- They keep us informed about road construction and projects that are going on.
- At the public meetings they hand out information, but they are not as available to answer our questions as they should be.
- We apply for enhancement grants, but we never know when they will make a decision on them.
- The notice they give for meetings is not enough.
- What does the new logo represent? I don’t get it.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- The most common criticism has been that TDOT will listen and gather feedback but they don't do anything about it.

Comments that **RESIDENTS** Made About TDOT Efforts to Keep the Public Informed

- I am always informed on what TDOT is doing as far as transportation.
- I see stuff about what TDOT is doing all the time.
- In ice and snow we have a number to call and radios to keep us informed.
- I see the issues on television.
- I see things in the paper about what goes on.
- They are keeping us well informed.
- They have put out bulletins on television and radio and they use billboards.
- I read things in the paper and see information on television.
- They have signs and barrels up and they tell you on television when they are closing a road.
- I receive notices all the time about issues.
- They usually say something about it on television.
- I have seen them on the road a lot.
- They want to get the residents' opinions more.
- We have good message boards and television information.
- They do a good job in getting information out.
- I hear about certain issues through the news.
- They are very blunt and tell you what they are and are not going to do.
- I get information in the mail.
- They inform people as much as they can.
- I only know what I see in the paper.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- They should keep the information flowing.
- When there is a road closing I read about it or hear about it on the news.
- They should have a meeting about construction.
- I see information on message boards and in the newspaper.
- My ex-husband works construction and he fills me in on what they are doing.
- They have new traffic boards.
- They notify us of problem areas on the message boards.
- I receive tips in the mail.
- There is information out there if you want it.
- They do keep the public informed by using the message boards.
- I see information signs on the highway.
- They make an effort to keep people informed.
- The television and radio are good sources.
- When something comes up they contact us by television or radio.
- I am only informed through the media.
- When we ask for information, it is given without question.
- You can normally find out the conditions of the roads.
- I don't have a lot of information about transportation issues.
- I feel that they are doing an ok job.
- I do not know that I have seen them informing people.
- You see signs out when they are out working.
- I hear about issues in the news.
- I know there is information out there, I just don't know where.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- Issues in the newspaper keep us informed.
- I have never been informed about anything.
- Our area has been neglected.
- I never hear anything.
- The snow conditions information gets to us.
- We need some kind of 1-800 number.
- I don't know about transportation issues.
- I don't see much information.
- They have hearings on new road conditions.
- I have to see it on the news, they don't inform us.
- They try to keep us informed.
- I don't know that they have any information out.
- I am not up on the current issues.
- The effort has not been there.
- I really have not seen any way they might be informing us.
- I have never been notified about anything.

TOPIC #10: How Stakeholders and Residents Thought TDOT's Efforts to Keep Residents Informed Have Changed

Stakeholders and residents were asked if TDOT's efforts to keep residents informed about transportation issues had "become better", "stayed about the same", or "gotten worse" over the past three years.

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of *stakeholders* thought that over the past three years TDOT had gotten "better" at informing residents about transportation issues, and 22% think TDOT had stayed "about the same". None of the stakeholders thought that TDOT had gotten "worse" at informing residents about transportation issues over the past three years.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

Thirty-one percent (31%) of *residents* thought that over the past three years TDOT had gotten “better” at informing residents about transportation issues, 47% thought TDOT had stayed “about the same”, 4% thought TDOT had gotten “worse”, and 18% did not have an opinion.

Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on this topic by stakeholders and residents.

How STAKEHOLDERS Thought that TDOT’s Information Efforts Have Changed

- They have made big changes over the past couple of years in this regard. It is much easier to get transportation information now.
- They are doing much better in providing information. Now they have kiosks in the mall and a number to call for information. It is good because people want to know when projects will be completed.
- There is now a regional contact for questions.
- TDOT is much more willing to provide information now that they used to be.
- A more detailed website would help.
- There has definitely been a philosophical change recently, old projects may be backlogged, but the new ones are moving better.
- They are doing better on giving people information as to when road construction will happen.
- They do much better than they used to at keeping us informed about issues.
- People were extremely unhappy with the last regime, so they have made a concerted effort to change. Now they have much better communication with the public & private sector.

How RESIDENTS Thought that TDOT’s Information Efforts Have Changed

- They have more personal contacts through mail than they used to.
- I see information more often than I used to.
- They have message boards now.
- They have really improved on informing people.
- I notice more construction in the area and more announcements about it.
- They have been doing better about getting the information out.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- The communication is getting better all the time.
- Even though I don't hear much, I hear more than I used to hear.
- They are giving out more information in the paper about construction.
- I think TDOT is doing a better job of informing the residents about transportation issues.
- The message boards are doing a good job.
- Previously there was no communication, now there is.
- I have never gotten any information from TDOT.
- I think it's great that they have trucks that go by to help stranded motorists.
- I think they have tried a lot harder over the past couple of years.
- They seem to be contacting people more and have improved the website.
- I am only informed through the newspaper.
- They seem to be trying to inform people more.
- They are using more media to get information out to people. Channel 10 has been especially good.
- We have good message boards.
- I feel there has been no change.
- They have meetings now.
- I haven't seen much information in the past.
- I don't think there has been any information passed on to us.
- They have progressively made more efforts over the years to keep people informed.
- I don't think it is getting better or worse.
- I have always had to call in order to find out anything.
- There is new technology to inform us, such as message boards.
- I have not seen any changes.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- I see the same amount of information in the newspaper.
- I still have not heard anything in the past three years.
- Information is still given out about on-going projects.
- They have always been good at getting information to us.
- It has stayed consistent over the years.
- I have never seen much information.
- They are making more contact with residents.
- I am not aware of the big issues.
- The information is always pretty good.
- They have always had information there if you want it.
- They are not getting the information out.
- We don't get any information.
- We are not well informed.
- I have never received information from them.
- I don't know how the community is being informed or even if we are.

TOPIC #11: Funding Related Issues

Stakeholders and residents were asked if they felt that TDOT generally provides good value for the transportation taxes that are paid by residents.

Eighty-four percent (84%) of *stakeholders* felt that TDOT generally provides good value for the transportation taxes that are paid by residents, and 16% felt that TDOT does not provide good value.

Fifty percent (50%) of *residents* felt that TDOT generally provides good value for the transportation taxes that are paid by residents, 19% felt that TDOT does not provide good value, and 31% did not have an opinion.

Listed below are some of the comments that were provided on this topic by stakeholders and residents.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

Comments from STAKEHOLDERS About the Value of Services Provided by TDOT

- I think TDOT could do a little better on road design, but for everything else I think they provide great value.
- They do a great job with what they have. I'd like to see TDOT get increased funding for public transportation though.
- I think funding is adequate.
- Funding is okay for now, but they're going to need more to keep up with the increasing population.
- I don't think funding for TDOT is adequate. They need to find a way to increase funding, possibly through tolls.
- Funding for TDOT is not adequate. They shouldn't be expected to carry the whole load themselves. They need to find ways to get more money, whether it be through increased federal and/or state funding, tolls, etc.
- I'm not sure that funding for TDOT is as low as everyone thinks. I think some money is wasted on over-aggressive road maintenance. I see the same roads get repaved when it's not necessary.
- I think TDOT provides good value. I do think they should get more funding for rural areas.
- They do a good job, but more funding is going to be needed for public transit in the future. We already have a fairly large senior population, and it's only going to increase.
- More funding needs to be provided for local offices.
- I'd like to see more money for economic development, especially for industrial access roads and land development.
- TDOT is going to need way more funding in the future for public transportation.
- It is easy to be critical of TDOT because we all want more for our own interests, but overall they do a good job of prioritizing throughout the state.
- I think the tax role in Tennessee is fairly low, so I think TDOT does good with a limited amount of funds.
- There is too much money allocated for sidewalks in the cities.
- We get good value from TDOT. Our roads are excellent. Maybe our taxes are a little higher, but I'm willing to pay higher taxes if it means the roads are kept in excellent condition.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- I think TDOT could reallocate more funds to public transportation to take some of the pressure off the roads, especially highways.

Comments from **RESIDENTS** About the Value of Services Provided by TDOT

- The taxes are low and we get good quality.
- Compared to other states, it is about the same.
- From what I see, it is a good value.
- The funds go to making the roads and highways safer. It's definitely worth the money we pay in taxes.
- It is of good value with one exception - the widening of highway 72 is not a good idea.
- I feel they use the money wisely and do their best.
- The roads look nice and the taxes we pay are reasonable.
- I haven't seen much of an increase in taxes.
- I just like what is being offered.
- I see them working on the roads all the time.
- The roads are in good shape and I have had only good experiences.
- I think they do good, but I think they can do better.
- It is much better than other states.
- I have never had any problems and I think the money is allocated correctly.
- They are not trying to waste money. It seems like it is being used where it is needed.
- Our taxes are not that high.
- Public transportation is cheap, so it must be good.
- Road construction is always needed.
- The taxes are low and the roads are good.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- They are trying to provide a good value.
- I think they use tax money wisely.
- They do a good job on improvements.
- You expect them to spend your tax dollars wisely, and I think they do.
- They keep improving the roads.
- They spend it for what they are supposed to.
- I think we have good roads and that shows the money is going to good use.
- We don't have too many problems with our highways.
- You can see where the tax dollars are going.
- It is not a good value because of the high price of gas and taxes for tags.
- Everything is too high, especially when it comes to construction.
- I feel they can do a better job.
- I don't mind paying taxes, but we don't get anything for it.
- No taxes are ever used right.
- Highway decisions are made for political reason.
- I've seen poor money allocation and management.
- Some of the money is poorly spent.
- I don't know where the value is.
- Subcontractors are all over the board as to what they charge.
- Taxes are not being used wisely, government decisions are political.
- The taxes are not being spent wisely, lots of roads need work.
- TDOT employees don't seem to work much. I always see 3-4 workers standing around.
- There is too much waste.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- They use cheap materials to fix the roads.
- I really don't know how it is spent.
- I don't know if we get exactly what we pay for.
- You see them working on the roads all the time.
- I don't know what to compare it to.
- I really don't know how the transportation taxes are spent.
- There is a lot of waste and poor construction.
- We don't get any good services, especially for the amount of taxes we pay.

Final Thoughts

At the end of the focus groups and open-ended interviews, stakeholders and residents were given time to make final comments or suggestions. Listed below are some of the final comments that were provided.

Final Comments from STAKEHOLDERS

- The department is moving in the right direction as far as better communication with the public and private organizations, rather than just dictating how they are going to do things.
- The major cultural shift in TDOT is so different and so much better than the past. I hope a new Governor doesn't affect the new direction of TDOT.
- Just continue to listen.
- TDOT does great on roads, but absolutely nothing on alternate modes of transportation. They never market park and rides or public transportation at all.
- They are too bureaucratic in a lot of ways. Lots of the processes are very cumbersome.
- I would like to take a look at the deer population. Exit 56 to Exit 60 is loaded with deer. It is dangerous in certain areas. There are two or three accidents a week North of Exit 56 due to deer.
- I don't think TDOT gives our area the attention it deserves. We have a small population, but that doesn't mean traffic volume is low.
- I don't know what TDOT does in regards to security, especially in the Eastern part of the state where there is a lot of water.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- Safety should be emphasized more.
- Put a higher priority on air and boat travel.
- Work on improving the connectivity throughout the state.
- Pedestrian and public transportation haven't gotten nearly as much attention as they need.
- Public transit is especially important for the aging population.
- Reach out to communities about the upcoming projects.
- Everything goes into voice mail. I just want someone at TDOT to answer a phone.
- Seek input from the community and businesses before starting a project.
- Finish the projects that have been on the board for a long time before starting too many new ones.
- They have made great changes in a short amount of time with increased public input and planning, keep it up.
- I would like to see TDOT senior management do a better job at filtering information down to the subordinates.
- I would tell them to continue asking stakeholders for opinions and keep them included. This meeting was good.
- I would tell them that communication is a two-way process.
- They need to understand what a customer is. At times they make it difficult to work with them.
- I would tell them to prioritize their projects on merit, not politics.
- TDOT will listen and give you information, but only on their terms. They don't follow-up or answer your questions.
- Allocate money based on needs, not politics.
- They need to reprioritize funding for public transportation in the future. There needs to be more emphasis placed on it.

Final Thoughts from RESIDENTS

- Complete the construction in one part of town before starting a new one.
- The construction in Knoxville should be thought about more thoroughly.
- I need transportation for the elderly and disabled.
- Police need to be better drivers.
- I think there are areas they should consider HOV lanes.
- There needs to be four-lanes between Milan and Mackenzie on Highway 79 to bypass.
- I think they should do more for the citizens of Tennessee.
- I-40 and 240 road construction is very dangerous.
- Keep up the good work.
- I live close to Nashville and the highways are always under construction.
- Lottery money could be used to benefit state highways.
- Most final decisions are politically motivated.
- My concern is with the speed limit enforcement.
- We need a lane that would go around Nashville and reroute the truckers.
- On Sunday, one lane was closed for no reason and we had a 30-minute backup.
- Put the semis and buses in their own lanes on the right with a 50-mph speed.
- The roads outside the city limits do not seem to get repaired.
- Stay away from the taxes.
- Stop wasting money. Try to be more efficient.
- The taxes are too high.
- TDOT should make an effort to let the public know what they do.

Summary of Focus Groups and Resident Interviews

- Thank you for your good works.
- They need new management. It takes too long to complete projects.
- I do think Knoxville is overly congested.
- They need to finish projects and quit messing around.
- I am very concerned about the elderly and disabled not having transportation.