



TACIR

The Tennessee Advisory Commission
on Intergovernmental Relations



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226 Anne Dallas Dudley Blvd, Suite 508
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0760
Phone: (615) 741-3012
Fax: (615) 532-2443
www.tn.gov/tacir

MINUTES OF THE TENNESSEE ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

November 5, 2020

Meeting Called to Order

The Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations met virtually via GoToWebinar at 8:34 a.m., Vice Chairman Kevin Brooks presiding.

Present 20	Absent 5
Mayor Rogers Anderson	Representative Mike Carter
Assistant Commissioner Sammie Arnold	Representative Susan Lynn
Mayor Tom Bickers	Representative Antonio Parkinson
Mayor Buddy Bradshaw	Senator Katrina Robinson
Mayor Kevin D. Brooks	Senator Ken Yager
Mr. Calvin Clifton	
Representative John Crawford	
Deputy Commissioner Paula Davis	
Mayor Terry Frank	
County Clerk Mary Gaither	
Mayor Jill Holland	
County Executive Jeff Huffman	
Representative Harold Love Jr.	
Senator John Lundberg	
Mayor A. Keith McDonald	
Mr. Jeff Peach	
Mayor Larry Waters	
Senator Bo Watson	
Comptroller Justin Wilson ¹	
Senator Jeff Yarbro	

¹ Lauren Spires represented Justin Wilson.

1. Call to Order and Approval of the Minutes

Vice Chairman Kevin BROOKS called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. He took a moment of personal privilege to say that the Commission members and staff were thinking of and sending their best wishes to Chairman Mike Carter, who could not be at the meeting. Following that, roll was called and the minutes from the September 2020 meeting were accepted without objection. Executive Director Cliff LIPPARD then read the statement of necessity for the meeting being held remotely.

2. Commission and Staff Update

Executive Director Cliff LIPPARD asked the members to join him in thanking longtime member Henry County Mayor Brent Greer, who had decided not to seek reelection, for his service to the Commission. A resolution honoring that service was adopted without objection. Dr. LIPPARD also asked the members to welcome new member Anderson County Mayor Terry Frank.

Next, Dr. LIPPARD asked for approval of a new section to the TACIR bylaws, section 8, dealing with the process for approving reports referred by the General Assembly or requested by a member of the Commission. Mayor Keith MCDONALD moved approval, and following some discussion, Mayor Larry WATERS seconded that motion. The section was approved by rollcall vote.

Finally, under staff updates, Dr. LIPPARD asked the members to join him in bidding a fond farewell to TACIR Senior Research Associate Dave Keiser, who has decided to pursue owning his own business. Dr. LIPPARD also asked the members to congratulate Rabia Chaudry, who will be taking Dave's place as the lead researcher on the public infrastructure needs inventory project and who will be receiving a promotion to senior research associate.

3. Public Chapter 228, Acts of 2017 (Status of Broadband Internet Deployment, Availability, and Adoption) – Panel

Dr. Matthew OWEN introduced a panel of broadband provider representatives who discussed the progress that has been made in expanding broadband access as well as the challenges faced when trying to fill the state's remaining coverage gaps. The panelists included

- Mr. Andy MACKE, Vice President of External Affairs, Big South Region, Comcast;
- Mr. Jeremy ELROD, Director of Government Relations, Tennessee Municipal Electric Power Association;
- Ms. Joelle PHILLIPS, President, AT&T Tennessee;
- Ms. Lisa COPE, General Manager and CEO, Ben Lomand Connect; and
- Mr. Mike KNOTTS, Vice President of Government Affairs, Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association.

Mr. MACKE provided several suggestions on ways to encourage more investment in the expansion of broadband in the state. He started by saying that Tennessee has the highest pole
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attachment rates in the country. The national average for Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulated pole rates is \$6.84 while broadband providers pay an average of \$33.47 per year to attach to Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) regulated poles in Tennessee. He said the state could create a pole attachment tax credit or a credit on franchise and excise taxes in the amount of the difference between what a provider might pay under TVA pole attachment fee and what it would pay under the FCC formula. Alleviating the effect of these rates could have a meaningful effect on the cost of deploying and maintaining broadband networks especially in rural areas.

Establishing fair and consistent processes for permitting and right of way (ROW) access could remove barriers to broadband deployment as well. He noted that the Broadband Ready Community designation could be made more robust by adding additional requirements such as use of the FCC pole attachment formula, establishment of a universal permit fee, appropriate permitting timelines and expanding the definition to include the owner of the ROW. The state could incentivize communities to become broadband ready by requiring the Broadband Ready designation for state broadband grants as well as other state grants like the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development's (ECD) FastTrack grants.

Mr. MACKE also suggested that ECD could diversify the selection committee of the state's broadband grant program to include other members beyond ECD staff. In addition, he said that more electric providers are providing broadband services and these electric providers dictate the costs and terms and conditions for other broadband providers attaching to their poles. To make certain the regulatory framework environment is fair for all providers he stated that their needs to be transparency with regards to the electric providers' permitting and decision-making process and this should include an avenue of appeal to ensure that current protections in the state law are being adhered to.

Mr. ELROD said that currently municipal electric providers can only provide broadband service to people in its electric service area--it cannot provide broadband to people outside it. Municipal electric providers can't consider serving these areas or partnering with other utilities because state law doesn't allow it. To deploy broadband in areas like these more proactive steps by the state and others are needed to get service to these areas that don't have it.

One major step could be giving current municipal electric providers latitude to partner with new providers outside their electric service areas to provide broadband service to consumers. These can be partnerships with other municipal electric providers, electric or telephone cooperatives, or even public-private partnerships. These partnerships would save new providers significant startup costs, increase flexibility and planning and put expertise to work in these communities.

Ms. PHILLIPS stated that broadband adoption is a long-standing concern for the industry. It fuels their ability to keep deploying. COVID may have helped people to better understand the need for broadband connectivity. In an effort to meet that need for connectivity, AT&T, like other providers, has provided \$10 per month broadband service for families eligible for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. She said this type of program might be one state policymakers might consider supporting in the future.

She noted that as technology has changed it is opening up opportunities to partner with entities considered to be competitors in the past. As businesses continue to grow and offer new services it gives them more incentive to work with their colleagues in the private sector and municipal and electric cooperative service sector because there are more ways they can work together. Ms. PHILLIPS said Tennessee has been wise not to limit the types of activities that private sector providers can engage in, and it will be a good thing to continue to incentivize innovative partnerships across the spectrum of providers.

One barrier to broadband deployment is cost. It is incredibly expensive to deploy and maintain networks. COVID has made it even more costly as they continue to do it in a safe manner. There are lots of good grant programs like the state broadband grant program and federal Connect America Fund (CAF) II program to help with deployment costs. She suggested that the state consider expanding grant programs to provide some ongoing support or ability to use funds to support operation of those networks. Tax policy changes should also incentivize deployments. There is a sales tax exemption for equipment they use to build networks, but it's capped at a certain amount. She said that removing the cap would be good tax policy and a way to incentivize additional deployment.

Another issue is the cost of pole attachments. Tennessee is in a unique position because of TVA's regulation of pole attachment rates. She suggested that it would be wise for the Commission and Tennessee policymakers to do as much as possible to facilitate ongoing conversations about the cost of pole attachments not just with electric providers that are part of TVA system but with TVA itself. She added that the Commission would be a great venue for connecting some of those folks together.

She said there is a lot of misinformation out there about new technologies such as 5G. The FCC has tried hard to debunk some of those myths. She suggested the Commission could help educate policymakers about these new technologies. She also encouraged policymakers not to lose sight of the importance of education policy as an area related to digital success. Companies like AT&T need tech savvy employees and consumers.

Ms. COPE praised the Tennessee Broadband Accessibility grant program, saying that it has been the impetus needed to firmly deploy broadband in areas that would not have otherwise been feasible to serve. In a study compiled by Ferdinand Difurio and others from Tennessee Technological University called "An economic impact study of a broadband expansion project in Tennessee," it was estimated to cost \$1.7 billion to deploy broadband to the remaining unserved areas in the state. Even with the planned \$400 million investment by Tennessee Broadband Association members additional funds are needed to bridge the digital divide in the state. Ms. COPE asked that the Commission recommend the continued funding of the grant program and maybe recommend increasing the funding because it is so necessary to the economic viability of this state.

Mr. KNOTTS said the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association wants to see the Broadband Accessibility Grant Program continue and be funded at adequate or increased levels. He also recommended the examination of the territorial restrictions that exist on willing broadband providers. There are some electric coops that are nearing the territorial limits of where they can

build out broadband to, and there are adjacent areas outside these limits they could provide broadband to if the law allowed it. He suggested that the Commission should also consider how the state might encourage continued investment in technologies that provide sufficient upload bandwidth.

In response to Mayor MCDONALD's question about the possibility of wireless internet service, Ms. PHILLIPS said there are many situations where wireless is the best alternative. For example, fixed wireless can be a good option in areas that are sparsely populated. She emphasized the need to take advantage of all the technologies as opposed to thinking one technology is the wave of the future. Technology neutral policymaking that leaves room for new technology is important. Mr. KNOTTS added that electric cooperatives are primarily investing in fiber but some are investing in fixed wireless as well. Ms. COPE said that many members of their group are looking at deploying wireless technologies, and some are currently offering fixed wireless.

Mayor MCDONALD then asked how electric systems were built and whether something similar could be done with broadband service. Mr. KNOTTS replied that the federal government created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). It helped and incentivized electric cooperatives, which are private corporations owned by the people they serve, to provide electric service in rural areas. This was the solution to the problem. There are very strong parallels between broadband deployment and electrification in the 1930s, but electric cooperatives don't have a presence in every place that needs broadband.

Mr. MACKE said one of the key differences between electrification in the 1930s and broadband deployment today is the technology is rapidly changing with regards to broadband. There may be innovations in the way electricity is delivered but not at the same pace as you have in the communications industry. It is not only the scale of massive capital deployments for broadband but also the continual investment in the network and continual innovation of the technology that is important to bear in mind.

Ms. PHILLIPS highlighted significant distinctions between broadband deployment now and electrification in the 1930s. When electrification took place there were not multiple providers of power using the same ROW space. In the case of broadband, you already had several established communications service providers. She added that the life cycle of technology is eight years in the broadband industry; you can look to replace your infrastructure investment every eight years. This was not the case with the electric industry where an initial infrastructure investment was expected to last longer. Mr. ELROD said that the main difference between electrification then and the deployment of broadband today is that there wasn't the restriction on nonprofit electric utilities in the 1930s and 1940s like there is today. Currently there are municipal electric utilities whose broadband networks have been built out for years, but because of restrictions in state law, they are not able to provide broadband to people who live outside their service areas.

In response to Mayor HOLLAND's question about what restriction in state law prevents municipal electric utilities from providing broadband service in areas that need it, Mr. ELROD said that when the law to allow municipal electric utilities to offer broadband was passed there

was a limitation put on them that they could only offer broadband in their electric service area. Mayor HOLLAND asked whether there would be a problem with rethinking the law. Mr. ELROD replied that they had been trying to get the law changed for many years. Removing regulatory barriers in state law would allow for more partnerships between municipal electric utilities and other municipal electric utilities or electric or telephone cooperatives that could help get broadband service to those areas of the state that are having difficulties getting service.

Mayor HOLLAND asked if an electric utility doesn't want to provide broadband in its service territory what would be their biggest objection to having another entity come in to provide broadband in the area. Ms. PHILLIPS responded that there has been a concern that a municipal electric that would go outside its territory and overbuild in an area that already has broadband. There have been pilot projects where that has happened. She said that now with better broadband mapping and the fact that the CAF has provided funding for some additional build out there might be an opportunity to find totally unserved areas where targeted expansion might make sense. Mr. MACKE stated that there were also concerns from a legislative standpoint about the risk of electric providers deploying capital beyond their territorial borders and the effect that might have on the electric ratepayers. Mr. ELROD said they are in favor of putting those decisions in the hands of local decision makers. If their needs for speed or service are not being met, municipal electric providers should have the opportunity to partner with another municipal or cooperative utility service provider.

In response to Senator YARBRO's question about what could be done to improve the broadband adoption rate in Tennessee, Ms. PHILLIPS suggested that government could explore more ways of subsidizing broadband service especially for lower income households. Public funding to help provide students with devices to access the internet could also make a meaningful difference. Moving as many things as possible to online platforms will move people to adopt broadband. She recommended that people keep in mind when developing online platforms that lower income people will use broadband first on a smartphone or tablet so the platforms should be designed to be mobile friendly. Mr. MACKE added that people might not be subscribing to broadband because they may not understand the relevance of the internet. He said it's important to partner with organizations, particularly nonprofits, who are already helping people and expanding digital literacy training. Investing in training is critical.

County Executive HUFFMAN asked whether the bonds a municipal electric provider issues for a broadband project are revenue bonds or bonds backed by the taxable authority of the city. Mr. ELROD answered that they are revenue bonds. He said he had never heard of their being problems with their bonds.

In response to County Executive HUFFMAN's question about the status of the FirstNet initiative and whether there will be sufficient megahertz (MHz) in Tennessee in the future, Ms. PHILLIPS said AT&T is the sole provider of FirstNet, a network with dedicated spectrum for emergency services that prioritizes first responder traffic. Spectrum dedicated to FirstNet should be adequate for the task. In the future, AT&T plans to continue to build out FirstNet sites to make the network more robust.

In response to County Executive HUFFMAN's question about how Tennessee compares to other southeastern states in terms of its accessibility to adequate broadband, Ms. PHILLIPS answered that there are still some tax policy improvements that would put the state on better footing like removing the cap on the sales tax exemption on equipment they use to build network. Limiting government debt is also one of the most important things a government can do to make it attractive for broadband investment. When governments get too far into debt, property taxes are often the place they go to get money to pay off the debt by raising taxes. AT&T owns a lot of property in the state and pays property tax on it. Limiting property taxes can make an area more attractive for broadband development. She said that TVA needs to satisfy its goals of avoiding extra costs on electric providers while at the same time not chilling broadband deployment with high pole attachment costs. She suggested that one way to help with this would be to talk to electric providers about problems they may have with pole attachers that may be driving up their costs and whether there is anything AT&T and other providers could do to help them bring their costs down. One thing they have talked about with TVA is a valley-wide policy that would apply the existing formula for wireline to wireless attachments as well so that it was a technology neutral process.

Ms. Lauren SPIRES asked whether municipal electric providers and the electric cooperatives are offering broadband service to everyone in their service areas and how many unserved individuals actually have the option to sign up but choose not to. Mr. ELROD replied that most of the municipal providers serve their entire service and if they don't it is their goal to serve all their customers. He said that people may not sign up for broadband because they think it is a luxury they don't need. Mr. KNOTTS responded that an electric cooperative that forms subsidiary and becomes a retail internet service provider (ISP) is required by state law to provide service to all of its electric customers.

In response to Mayor Larry WATERS' questions about what sources are available to help local governments identify areas that need internet service and how local governments can get internet service to these areas, Ms. COPE responded that the Tennessee Broadband Association members work with local officials in their areas to see whether they can help provide a solution. The federal Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) will provide funding to deploy broadband in these unserved and underserved areas. Mr. ELROD added that when municipal electric providers look to get in the broadband service they talk to elected officials and send out surveys to residents to find out whether they need service or are happy with their existing service. This helps them make a decision about deploying broadband in an area.

Ms. PHILLIPS said there are opportunities under state law to do a joint provisioning or community project where the local government can put out a request for proposal (RFP). A local government can do a sort of reverse auction for providers who may be interested in deploying broadband in an area with financial support from the community. During this time of COVID, some cities have decided to be the customer and pay all or part of the bill for access to the internet for families for a certain amount of time so their children can have access to the internet for educational purposes. Ms. PHILLIPS recommended that local governments first reach out to ECD Commissioner Arnold to get some examples of the state broadband grants they have done and some guidance about where to go to get the best broadband mapping for their community.

Mr. MACKE suggested that with regards to identifying homes that need internet service local governments often have better data about where homes may be located and this would good starting point to make sure the prospective provider and local government are on same page in terms of where these households are. Once you identify a cluster of homes looking to be served, try to get information on exactly how many want to be customers. This can dramatically affect the amount of capital that can be spent to deploy broadband, and you can find out the revenue that would result from connecting these people to the internet. If you need funding to deploy broadband, there are a number of options including the state grant program and numerous other federal grant programs. Local governments could also consider a tax abatement for the property taxes paid by private providers on their networks thus offsetting some of the cost that way. Communities have reached out about rolling back the pole attachment rate and create savings to help finance incremental investment in broadband. In Georgia, the county association has suggested a proposal to create a special service district created in partnership with the local government to help fund broadband deployment.

4. Public Chapter 819, Acts of 2018 (Small Cell)-Draft Report for Review and Comment

Dr. OWEN presented the draft report on Public Chapter 819, Acts of 2018, for review and comment. The Act, which created a framework governing the regulation of small cell wireless facilities in public rights-of-ways, directed the Commission to study its effects and recommend any changes based on the Commission's findings. Small cells are typically installed on utility poles, streetlights, or standalone poles and are being used to enhance existing mobile wireless service and the latest advance in service referred to as 5G. Dr. OWEN reviewed the draft's findings. Although there are several new or enhanced applications for transportation that could be supported by small cells and 5G, there is skepticism regarding whether small cells and 5G will yield benefits in the short-term, given uncertainty about how soon advances in wireless services will fuel new products people are willing to pay for. Initial deployments of small cells have been located primarily in urban and suburban areas, so the effect on broadband deployment in unserved areas has been minimal, so far. Commission staff did not attempt to quantify the Act's fiscal effect because of the limited number of local governments that had received more than a dozen small cell applications at the time of their interviews, but several local officials raised concerns that limits for local application fees in the Act are too low.

Dr. OWEN said that aesthetics was the most widespread concern among local officials who were interviewed. He said that local officials already have authority under the Act to require small cells to conform with adopted aesthetic standards and many are using this authority. But adoption of aesthetic standards won't fully address the concerns of some local officials that installation of new poles for small cells would create visual clutter in public rights-of-way, because these standards must comply with other provisions of Public Chapter 819. Local governments are currently authorized to propose design alternatives, which include collocation on existing poles, during the application process. This offers applicants the opportunity to collaborate on solutions acceptable to both parties. However, some local officials are concerned wireless providers won't allow competitors to collocate on small cells on poles that wireless providers own.

DR. OWEN said that because the concerns related to community aesthetics are unlikely to diminish, the draft report includes two recommendations: First, the draft report encourages

local governments to both update existing ordinances that set aesthetic standards for their communities to ensure their requirements apply to small cells and include small cells in any new standards they adopt. Second, the draft report finds that the General Assembly should consider authorizing local governments to require colocation of small cells in areas with existing poles. Care would need to be taken to ensure this authority could not be used to block the deployment of small cells in situations where applicants can demonstrate that colocation is not feasible either for technical reasons or because of added costs, similar to limitations on colocation requirements adopted in Georgia. Regardless, some new poles will be necessary to improve wireless service given the limited distance traveled by some of the wireless signals used by providers. And because colocation will likely involve the use of electric utility poles, any colocation requirements should also ensure the continued authority of local power companies to protect the safety and reliability of the electric grid.

5. House Bill 971/Senate Bill 1075 (Local Revenue and Services)—Draft Final Report For Review And Comment

Executive Director Cliff LIPPARD said that the third and final report of the Commission's comprehensive study of the revenue sources of counties and cities in Tennessee and the services counties and cities provide would be dedicated to the memory of former TACIR member and House Finance, Ways and Means Chair Representative Charles Sargent. Senior Research Associate Michael MOUNT then presented the report. The House Finance, Ways and Means Committee requested this comprehensive study during its discussion of House Bill 971 by Representative Sargent in the 110th General Assembly and directed TACIR to address the duties of counties and cities mandated by law and the funds that go from the state to counties and cities to comply with the law. Mr. MOUNT said the first interim report, published in February 2019, addressed online sales tax collection and distribution, and included recommendations to expand sales tax collection requirements to more out-of-state sellers. He added that the second interim report, published in January 2020, focused on K-12 education services and funding and included a recommendation for a comprehensive review of the components to be made by the BEP Review Committee or other designated state and local officials and other stakeholders. He concluded by saying that the third and final report makes no specific recommendations but instead is intended to provide policy makers with the information needed for further discussion and policy consideration.

In response to a question from County Executive HUFFMAN about whether the single article sales tax will expire in July, Mr. MOUNT said that without action by the General Assembly, the streamlined sales tax provision set to take effect would change the single article cap in July 2021 and limit the tax to sales of motor vehicles, aircraft, watercraft, modular homes, manufactured homes, and mobile homes. The cap currently applies to any sale. Mr. MOUNT added that since 2009, the General Assembly has delayed the implementation of this provision every two years. County Executive HUFFMAN asked how much local revenue is in jeopardy, and what the effect on state single article tax revenue would be, if this provision were to be implemented. Mr. MOUNT said revenue would increase through local option sales tax and for the state single article tax because the cap would be removed from certain items. County Executive HUFFMAN asked what the effect on state single article tax revenue would be. Mr. MOUNT said it would also increase.

In response to Major Jill HOLLAND's question about whether there is a conflict in the principles local government members of the Commission agreed should guide the Commission's study, Executive Director Cliff LIPPARD said that the local members wanted to look at ways the state could do more to assist local governments but did not want the state to assist by shifting the distribution of revenue among cities and counties.

Mayor Tom BICKERS moved, and Mayor Rogers ANDERSON seconded, to approve the report; however, they later withdrew their motion after Mayor HOLLAND and Mayor MCDONALD each asked that additional information be added to the front part of the report. The mayors want it noted that local governments' share of state-shared tax revenue has not again reached its 2002 level. The percentage declined in 2002 after tax rates for several taxes increased, but none of the additional revenues from the increases were shared with local governments. Staff will add this information and present the final report at the December 2020 Commission meeting.

6. Public Chapter 407, Acts of 2019 (Right to Shop)—Draft Report for Review and Comment

Senior Research Associate Jennifer BARRIE presented an overview of the draft report addressing cost savings of right to shop programs in other states. It was prepared in response to Public Chapter 407, Acts of 2019, Tennessee's Right to Shop law, which directs the Commission to perform a study of any cost savings realized by enrollees with health plans in other states that have adopted incentive program legislation or incentive programs that reward enrollees for shopping and choosing lower-cost healthcare service providers. The study is to include cost savings resulting from programs offered by both private health plans and state employee health plans and, at a minimum, to look at programs in Arizona, Florida, Kentucky, Maine, and New Hampshire. The final report will be presented for the Commission's approval at the December meeting and is due to the General Assembly no later than December 2020.

Ms. BARRIE summarized the draft report's findings, noting that it does not make any recommendations. Shopping for healthcare services can result in some savings for both consumers and insurers, and when price tools are combined with incentive programs, they have the potential to save more. A few states have implemented incentive programs for state or other government employee health plans or have required private plans to implement them. But usage for both the tools and the incentive programs varies widely. The data show the programs produce cost savings, but there is not yet enough data to determine whether the savings are significant over the long term.

Mayor BICKERS commented that medical care is not a commodity, and he is concerned that the report portrays it that way. He would like the report to acknowledge that people consider more than just cost when making decisions about their medical providers and that patients' relationship with their doctors is not a hurdle but is a natural part of healthcare. He would also like more focus on the importance of educating consumers about their healthcare and their choices. There are different ways they can save money, such as when making choices about their health insurance plan. Ms. BARRIE responded that the report can address those concerns.

Chairman Robin SMITH commented that she plans to introduce legislation next session that will expand services and savings opportunities. She agrees that incentive programs enhance participation, but legislators need to help promote the tools. In response to a question from

Mayor MCDONALD about the range of participation rates, Ms. BARRIE said more detail can be added to the report about the rates. In response to Mayor Jill HOLLAND's question about people's access to and awareness of the public shopping tools, Ms. BARRIE explained that 14 states have public tools that anyone can access, but Tennessee does not have one. Most insurers already have online tools and toll-free phone numbers that their enrollees can use to shop, but for people without insurance, it is more challenging to gather the cost information. She also clarified that people who are using their insurer's tool would be shopping in their insurer's network, but people using a public tool would be searching the providers listed on those websites, not necessarily ones that are in their insurer's network. Mayor Terry FRANK asked whether the programs include pharmacy. Ms. BARRIE said that because pharmacy is usually separate from medical services, the programs in other states do not include pharmacy, but it could potentially be included in a separate shopping program.

Mayor BROOKS asked whether the report could encourage the state of Tennessee to establish a public website modeled on New Hampshire's. Ms. BARRIE said the report provides information about the other states that have websites, including cost, but does not encourage Tennessee to start one. During conversations with staff, stakeholders in other states that manage websites said it is a costly and challenging undertaking to start and maintain the websites. Mayor BICKERS agrees with the idea of a recommendation but expressed concern about listing providers and cost information on a website without also having information about quality. We want to encourage people to make the most cost-effective decision that provides them with the care they need and not just to choose the cheapest provider. Director LIPPARD responded that although there are concerns about the cost of a website, if it is the will of the Commission, staff could develop a recommendation for the state to develop a public website and present it in the final report at the December meeting.

Other Business

It was decided that staff would contact members to poll them on the best time for a December meeting.

Vice Chairman BROOKS adjourned the meeting at 12:29 p.m.