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MEMORANDUM

TO: Commission Members

FROM: Cliff Lippard
Executive Director

DATE: 18 June 2026

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2025-26 Work Program Accomplishments, Amendments, and New Research Plans

The following list of the commission's major work program accomplishments for fiscal year 2025-26 will be incorporated into the commission's biennial report for fiscal years 2024-25 and 2025-26. This memorandum includes a review of recurring mandates, including both published and ongoing reports, and research support activities. Also included is the 2026-27 work program amendment for the commission's consideration of additional studies to add to the work program. A research plan for each potential study is attached and includes a copy of the legislation.

Status of Existing Work Program Projects

Recurring Mandates:

The commission has seven statutorily mandated responsibilities, which are described below along with the status of each.

Commission Meetings

Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 4-10-105, requires the commission to conduct meetings quarterly and any other meetings of the commission or its committees, as the commission deems necessary. The commission met as required over the past fiscal year.

Education Fiscal Capacity

Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-3-109(c) and 49-3-104(13), requires the commission to study the fiscal capacity of local governments to fund education and

produce a fiscal capacity model for use with the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA) funding formula.

The fiscal capacity model for 2026-27 was transmitted to the State Board of Education, State Department of Education, and Comptroller of the Treasury on April 1, 2026, and staff will provide a recap at this meeting. The next index will be due by May 1, 2027.

Public Infrastructure Needs Inventory

Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 4-10-109, requires the commission to compile and maintain an inventory of needed infrastructure within the state and present the inventory of statewide public infrastructure needs and the cost of provision of adequate and essential public infrastructure to the General Assembly at its next regular annual session following completion of the inventory each year.

The commission approved this year's report, *Building Tennessee's Tomorrow: Anticipating the State's Infrastructure Needs*, at its February 2026 meeting. Staff collected information from 144 school systems, 95 counties, 346 municipalities, and 242 other entities. We are simultaneously gathering and checking survey data for next year's report.

Public Chapter 1101, Acts of 1998

Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 6-58-113, requires the commission to monitor the implementation of Tennessee's Growth Policy Act and periodically report findings and recommendations to the General Assembly. The commission continues to monitor this issue.

Electric Generation and Transmission Cooperatives

Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 4-10-112, requires the commission to monitor whether the current wholesale power supply arrangements between the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and municipal utilities and electric cooperatives are likely to change in a way that could affect payments in lieu of taxes from the TVA to the state and to its local governments and report annually to the Commerce and Labor Committee of the Senate; the Commerce Committee of the House of Representatives; the Finance, Ways and Means Committee of the Senate; and the Finance, Ways, and Means Committee of the House of Representatives. The report is to include recommendations, if any, on any needed adjustments to the state tax system that would keep state and local governments whole from such future changes.

The commission approved this year's report, *Tennessee Valley Authority's Payments in Lieu of Taxes: Annual Report to the General Assembly*, at its February 2026 meeting. Staff

will present the annual update for approval at the January 2027 meeting to meet the legislature's reporting deadline of February 28, 2027.

Taxes

Public Chapter 341, Acts of 2023, added additional certification tiers that would allow smaller businesses to file and pay their personal property tax without the need for a time-consuming itemization of all their property. The Act also requires the commission to monitor and periodically report on the effect of the Act to the General Assembly. The first report is being provided at this meeting.

Biennial Report

Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 4-10-108, requires the commission to issue a biennial report on its work. The next report is due in 2027.

Published Reports:

The commission responded to four studies that were either referred by the General Assembly or requested by the commission. Behind this memo is a copy for each report of the associated TACIR Insight, which is a one-page description of the background of the study and a summary of any findings or recommendations.

- *District Attorney Staffing Needs and Municipal Courts of Concurrent Jurisdictions*, September 2025
- *Reducing Tennessee's Evidence Backlog by Expanding Forensic Crime Lab Capacity*, September 2025
- *Assessing Juvenile Detention Capacity in Tennessee (Public Chapter 418, Acts of 2025)*, February 2026
- *Improving Tennessee's Continua of Care with Flexible Funding, Better Data, and Greater Collaboration across the State*, February 2026

Ongoing Reports:

There are two draft reports to be presented today for the commission's review and comment and two reports to be presented for final approval. One other report will be presented for the commission's approval at the next commission.

Transportation

Study required by Public Chapter 438, Acts of 2025, which directs the commission to study sustainable funding sources that meet Tennessee's future transportation

infrastructure needs. The report is due September 30, 2026. The draft report is being presented today for the commission's review and comment.

Ambulances

Study required by Public Chapter 413, Acts of 2025, which directs the commission to study the economic impact on counties that are required to provide ambulance services, which counties provide services directly or franchise those services, which municipalities provide ambulance services, and whether policy changes may benefit the overall health and delivery of ambulance services in Tennessee. The Act says that TACIR shall further study emergency and non-emergency transport reimbursement including from commercial payors, Medicare, Medicaid, and the way counties and municipalities fund the deficit at which these services operate. No due date for the report was specified. The draft report is being presented today for the commission's review and comment.

Speech Therapy

Study required by Public Chapter 416, Acts of 2025, which directs the commission to study the feasibility of implementing, and the potential effects of enacting, insurance coverage requirements for habilitative and rehabilitative speech therapy services as a treatment for stuttering. The report is due July 31, 2026. The final report is being presented today for the commission's approval.

Cosmetology and Barbering

Study required by Public Chapter 102, Acts of 2025, which directs the commission to study the effect that the cosmetology and barbering professions have in Tennessee. No due date for the report was specified. The final report is being presented today for the commission's approval.

Real Estate Fraud

Study required by Public Chapter 941, Acts of 2024, which directs the commission to study real estate fraud. No due date was specified for the report. The final report will be presented at the next commission meeting.

Research Support:

Responded to requests for information

- Responded to requests for information and assistance from members of the General Assembly and legislative committees.

- Responded to requests for information and assistance from local government officials, state agencies, lobbyists, the public, and the media.

Provided six presentations

- “What is TACIR?—Public Policy Impacting Tennessee’s Child Care Industry,” Middle Tennessee State University, Sociology of the Family course, October 8, 2025.
- “Juvenile Detention Challenges in Tennessee” to the County Technical Assistance Service annual conference, October 22, 2025.
- “Infrastructure and Economic Competitiveness” to the Chair of Excellence in Urban and Regional Planning Guest Speaker Series, Middle Tennessee State University, February 20, 2026.
- “Fiscal Capacity 101” to the TISA Review Committee, April 27, 2026.
- “Building Tennessee’s Tomorrow: Anticipating the State’s Infrastructure Needs,” Tennessee County Services Association’s Legislative Conference, May 19, 2026.
- “Assessing Juvenile Detention Capacity in Tennessee” to the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, May 22, 2026.

Interagency Coordination

- Participated with the development districts in a workshop to provide training and respond to questions regarding the public infrastructure needs inventory.
- Continued to serve on the Department of Economic and Community Development’s Digital Opportunity Taskforce, the sub-taskforce Digital Opportunity Series, and the sub-taskforce regarding Infrastructure Series.
- Began serving on the TISA Review Committee.
- Began serving on the Interagency Housing and Health Taskforce.

Using Technology for Public Information

- Disseminated all reports electronically and maintained detailed focus sections about continuing research on TACIR’s web page.
- Implemented procedures to improve data integrity and streamline the process of bridge projects in the infrastructure database.
- Participated in training and began implementing procedures to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for digital accessibility.

- Continued to improve and refine data visualization and interactive analysis tools for infrastructure reporting.
- Continued to improve the public infrastructure needs inventory application to work with the latest versions of Microsoft supported software and streamlined the process of processing data.
- Continued to improve and refine data visualization and interactive analysis tools for fiscal capacity data and information. [Resources \(tn.gov\)](https://resources.tn.gov)
- Provided weekly economic summaries and analyses to commission members and posted the information weekly to the agency's website.
- Posted timely information to the agency's Facebook and LinkedIn pages notifying the public of new reports, elaborating on topics of interest, and pointing out relevant research by other organizations.
- Continued to partner with Middle Tennessee State University's Business and Economic Research Center to publish timely information to the Tracking Tennessee's Economy website. [TACIR | Middle Tennessee State University \(mtsu.edu\)](https://tacr.mtsu.edu)
- Continued a collaboration with Tennessee Customer Focused Government to share and link to TACIR data, resources, and publications on the Transparent Tennessee website. [Transparent Tennessee - TN.gov](https://transparent.tn.gov)

Administrative:

Administered eleven contracts

- Nine development districts—support the public infrastructure needs inventory.
- Middle Tennessee State University—economic indicators website.
- University of Tennessee—transportation study.

Budget and Procurement

- Effectively managed the agency budget.
- Efficiently managed the procurement process—ensured fiscal responsibility as well as provided adequate oversight and controls.

Professional Development:

TACIR TRI learning pyramid, training, and conference attendance

- Encouraged staff members to complete the TACIR TRI learning pyramid.

- Enforced the requirement that all staff complete level-one training of the TACIR learning pyramid within their first year of employment.
- Effectively utilized staff training opportunities.
- Attended Tennessee Municipal League and Tennessee County Services Association conferences and staffed booths promoting TACIR's research.
- Attended the Think Tennessee Policy Forum.
- Attended Middle Tennessee State University's Forum on Regional Growth and Challenges.

2026-27 Work Program Amendment

One amendment adding seven requested studies to the work program is submitted for your consideration. Each study request passed both chambers of the General Assembly.

- Adds a study requested by Public Chapter 1103, Acts of 2026, sponsored by Senator Walley and Representative Bricken, to study Tennessee's emergency communications system. The study must include
 - an analysis of the current funding model for emergency communications systems in Tennessee and a comparison of the funding models of other states;
 - an analysis of the different operating structures of emergency communications districts (ECDs), along with the benefits or disadvantages of each;
 - an organizational chart of all ECDs from leadership down to the public safety answering points (PSAPs);
 - methods to increase operational and financial consistency and uniformity of ECDs in Tennessee;
 - a discussion regarding the consolidation of ECDs and analysis of ECD call sharing, particularly in rural areas;
 - the rationale behind maintaining multiple ECDs and whether a uniform, statewide system would be beneficial;
 - an analysis of requiring direct dispatch protocol at all PSAPs; and
 - any other related topic TACIR finds would be of interest to the General Assembly, along with recommendations for legislation.

Due Date: January 31, 2027.

- Adds a study requested by Public Chapter 1121, Acts of 2026, sponsored by Senator Yager and Representative Williams, to study the salaries and other benefits paid to state and local law enforcement officers in Tennessee. The study must include an analysis of
 - how current salaries and benefits paid to state and local law enforcement officers affect recruitment, staffing, and retention, particularly in smaller city and county departments, and evaluate potential alternatives for improvement; and

- how state salary increases and adjustments for state law enforcement officers affect recruitment, staffing, and retention of local law enforcement officers.

Due Date: January 31, 2027.

- Adds a study requested by Public Chapter 1066, Acts of 2026, sponsored by Senator Massey and Representative Littleton, to study artificial intelligence. The study must
 - identify and assess the potential risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence, including child safety risks, the risk of death or bodily injury and the risk of significant damage to or loss of property;
 - explore methods to mitigate the risks identified;
 - review national standards, international standards, and industry-consensus best practices for addressing and mitigating the risks identified;
 - explore methods to regulate or prohibit artificial intelligence from providing dangerous prompts, such as encouragement to commit suicide or commit a violent crime;
 - identify the risks of an artificial intelligence chatbot engaging with a user as if the chatbot is a human and providing emotional support, mental health care, or health care; and
 - explore any other topic related to the safe use of artificial intelligence.

Due Date: January 31, 2027.

- Adds a study requested by Public Chapter 976, Acts of 2026, sponsored by Senator Massey and Representative Alexander, to conduct a comprehensive study on public school administered early childhood education programs in Tennessee. The study must include
 - a statewide inventory of public school administered early childhood education programs, including, but not limited to, voluntary pre-kindergarten programs, early childhood education programs that serve students with special needs, federally funded early childhood education programs such as a Title I program and a school-administered head start or an even start program;
 - the actual costs to local education agencies (LEAs) for operating early childhood education programs;

- the current funding sources and amount for each funding source to operate public school administered early childhood education programs;
- an assessment of the access to, participation rates in, and unmet needs for public school administered early childhood education programs;
- a comparison of public school administered early childhood education programs of other states with Tennessee; and
- policy options and recommendations for future program development, anticipated needs, and sustainable funding strategies for public school administered early childhood education programs.

Due date: September 1, 2027.

- Adds a study requested by Public Chapter 1137, Acts of 2026, sponsored by Senator Powers and Representative Crawford, to determine whether newspapers of general circulation remain the most efficient and effective manner for governments to provide the public with transparent and accessible information. TACIR shall also examine how the efficiency of public notice methods has changed historically as part of the study. TACIR shall
 - study how the public has historically obtained its news and information compared to today. This comparison must include how the number of newspapers has changed in Tennessee, how their publication frequency has changed, and whether the number of subscribers as a percentage of the population has changed historically;
 - examine the ability of governmental entities to create public notice systems, including their ability to maintain permanent public archives, protect against data corruption, and ensure independent verification of publication. This examination must also include the review of the costs associated with governmental entities maintaining online public notice platforms;
 - review all governmental and public entities to determine the amount of tax payer money used to meet newspaper publication requirements in Tennessee. The study shall also examine whether citizens should be required to pay a subscription fee to access information that is intended to provide notice and transparency of governmental actions.
 - study how the availability of broadband access in states, especially in rural communities, affects the publication of online public notices;
 - review public notice practices in other states and any available trends or advances in technology. The review must include whether any new

practices have affected transparency, government accountability, the impact on rural communities, or civic participation in those states.

Due Date: None.

- Adds a study requested by Public Chapter 967, Acts of 2026, sponsored by Senator Massey and Representative Carringer, to study the status of the crime stoppers programs across the state and make recommendations to enhance such programs. The assessment must include, but not be limited to
 - the data collection and reporting capabilities of each crime stoppers program, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the data and reporting;
 - the funding streams and stability of the funding available, while assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the crime stoppers programs to fundraise; and
 - the partnership between each crime stoppers organization, the law enforcement agencies in the community, and the community at large.
 - TACIR shall make recommendations of methods to improve outcomes for crime stoppers programs, including
 - ◆ increased statewide coordination, accountability, and program capacity;
 - ◆ greater public engagement and higher tip volume;
 - ◆ enhanced effectiveness and cost efficiency in law enforcement efforts;
 - ◆ stronger trust and collaboration between communities and law enforcement;
 - ◆ consistent program standards and best practices across the state; and
 - ◆ establishing a statewide framework for support and accountability for crime stoppers programs.

Due Date: None.

- Adds a study requested by Public Chapter 1082, Acts of 2026, sponsored by Senator Akbari and Representative Love, to study the potential regulation of artificial intelligence systems and generative artificial intelligence chatbots in Tennessee. The study must include
 - an analysis of existing federal law and pending federal regulatory actions applicable to artificial intelligence systems;
 - an analysis of regulatory frameworks adopted or proposed in other states;

- an evaluation of potential constitutional considerations, including protections for speech and expression, due process safeguards, federal preemption, and limitations on state authority affecting interstate commerce;
- an assessment of the potential fiscal impact on state and local government, including anticipated enforcement costs;
- an evaluation of potential economic impacts on businesses, technology, developers, educational institutions, and consumers in Tennessee;
- a review of safeguards relating to minors and mental health protections, including suicide prevention protocols; and
- recommendations, if any, for legislative action.

Due Date: None.



TACIR INSIGHT

TENNESSEE ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
226 ANNE DALLAS DUDLEY BOULEVARD, SUITE 508, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243 ♦ WWW.TN.GOV/TACIR

DISTRICT ATTORNEY STAFFING NEEDS AND MUNICIPAL COURTS OF CONCURRENT JURISDICTION

Background

Twenty-three cities in Tennessee have municipal courts with concurrent jurisdiction. State law requires district attorneys (DAs) to prosecute cases involving violations of state criminal statutes in these courts where the city supplies “sufficient personnel,” but it doesn’t define what is sufficient or whether it includes funding for DA staff. DAs say these courts add to their workload—but not their total caseload—because it is another court for them to staff. In the 113th General Assembly, Senate Bill 2054 by Senator Jackson and House Bill 2205 by Representative Barrett would have required cities with these courts to fund at least one assistant district attorney (ADA) position for their DA and granted the DA sole discretion to determine whether the city needed to fund additional DA staff.

Representatives for cities opposed the bill, raising several concerns, including that the bill would have allowed DAs to make funding decisions for the city and might have superseded existing funding agreements that some cities have with their DA. Several cities questioned why they should fund a full-time ADA when their courts meet infrequently. And some said their courts already operate on tight budgets, or even at a loss, and that if required to fund a full-time ADA, they might give up their concurrent jurisdiction, transferring their criminal cases to their county general sessions court. In some judicial districts, transferring a large case volume to general sessions court could create costs.

Public Chapter 369, Acts of 2025, authorizes counties to adopt and levy a new court cost on defendants, including those in municipal courts of concurrent jurisdiction, with the revenue to be used for “promoting public safety at the sole discretion of the district attorney general.”

Findings and Recommendations

The commission recommends that

- the state undertake a weighted caseload study as soon as feasible to establish the staffing needs of district attorneys based on all the courts they serve, including municipal courts with concurrent jurisdiction and that
- in the interim, each city with a municipal court of concurrent jurisdiction that does not already have an existing funding arrangement with its DA or that does not have to collect the new court cost under Public Chapter 369, Acts of 2025, consider negotiating a per diem payment for DA staff.

See TACIR’s full report at the following link for additional information: <https://www.tn.gov/tacir/tacir-publications.html>.



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REDUCING TENNESSEE'S EVIDENCE BACKLOG BY EXPANDING FORENSIC CRIME LAB CAPACITY

Background

Evidence backlogs affect investigations; prosecutions; and justice for victims, communities, and those wrongfully accused. The ripple effects of these delays extend beyond individual cases, influencing public trust and safety. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) has increased its testing capacity by hiring additional scientists, and turnaround times for some testing categories have improved. But other categories have not improved, and on top of that, demand for testing continues to increase.

In 2024, the commission directed staff to evaluate the feasibility and need for establishing additional crime labs throughout the state. TBI and Memphis have signed an agreement to expand forensic support for criminal investigations in the city by assigning two forensic scientists at TBI's Jackson lab—one in DNA and one in firearms—to work solely on Memphis cases.

Findings and Recommendations

Without confronting the constraint of limited lab space, the state's efforts to further improve forensic evidence processing and public safety will be hindered. **The commission recommends that the state increase crime lab capacity in each grand division, in line with TBI's 2024 real estate strategic plan, specifically by expanding the existing Jackson and Nashville labs, replacing the existing Knoxville lab with a larger lab with capacity for firearms testing, and adding a smaller, focused lab in Chattanooga for drug-related evidence and toxicology. Expansions at the Nashville lab should focus on the most overburdened disciplines—like forensic chemistry and toxicology.**

While the state undertakes long-term expansion of its facilities, there are other practices to be considered that could help reduce backlogs, expedite accurate forensic results, and improve public safety. **The commission recommends that**

- TBI continue to look for areas to improve efficiency using external process improvement methods;
- the General Assembly amend DNA testing laws to allow rapid DNA implementation at law enforcement booking stations; and
- the state support resource-sharing partnerships for training local law enforcement agencies across the state through funding and technical assistance.

See TACIR's full report at the following link for additional information: <https://www.tn.gov/tacir/tacir-publications.html>.



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ASSESSING JUVENILE DETENTION CAPACITY IN TENNESSEE (PUBLIC CHAPTER 418, ACTS OF 2025)

Background

Although juvenile crime has decreased overall in Tennessee during the last decade, increases in certain types of offenses for juveniles—specifically, murder, aggravated assault, motor vehicle theft, and crimes in which firearms were used—has raised concerns among state and local officials about whether there are enough facilities for housing and providing rehabilitative services to youth who have been accused or convicted of serious crimes. In response to these concerns, Public Chapter 418, Acts of 2025, directed the commission to study the availability of pre- and post-adjudication detention capacity in the state and whether there is need for additional housing, detention, and treatment facilities.

Findings and Recommendations

- For post-adjudication capacity, the commission finds that currently funded projects, when completed, will likely meet the state’s capacity needs. The General Assembly has appropriated more than \$333 million for three new facilities.
- For pre-adjudication capacity, **the commission recommends that the state help fund a new juvenile detention center for West Tennessee, provided that a share of beds in the facility is reserved for temporary placements for juvenile offenders in DCS custody.**
- Beyond these capacity improvements, the commission finds it would be beneficial to build more oversight into the juvenile justice system, and **it recommends that the General Assembly (1) require juvenile detention centers operated by local governments to be licensed by DCS and (2) authorize the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth and/or DCS to levy financial penalties on pre- and post-adjudication facilities that violate state or federal requirements.**
- Research has shown that alternatives to detention can be cost-effective and reduce recidivism. **The commission recommends that (1) the General Assembly further increase recurring funding for the Juvenile Justice Reform grant program and (2) juvenile courts that don’t already use formal detention risk assessments consider using them to guide their decisions about detaining children prior to adjudication.**

See TACIR’s full report at the following link for additional information: <https://www.tn.gov/tacir/tacir-publications.html>.



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IMPROVING TENNESSEE'S CONTINUA OF CARE WITH FLEXIBLE FUNDING, BETTER DATA, AND GREATER COLLABORATION ACROSS THE STATE

Background

Established as part of a federal program overseen by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Continua of Care (CoC) are local or regional bodies of public and private service organizations that work to address homelessness, organizing funding applications, collecting data on homelessness, and coordinating services. There are 10 CoCs in Tennessee, each covering one or more counties. Public Chapter 445, Acts of 2025, directed the commission to study the CoCs in Tennessee, how they might be improved, and how they compare to those in other states.

Findings and Recommendations

The commission finds that Tennessee's CoCs perform on par with other CoCs around the country, according to HUD performance metrics, though there is room for improvement through flexible funding, enhanced data sharing, and greater coordination among the CoCs and state agencies. The CoCs face an enormous challenge with limited resources, and as letting people remain homeless can cost a community more than it does to rehouse them, preventing them from becoming homeless is better than trying to resolve it after the fact. **The commission recommends that**

- the General Assembly appropriate funding for uses not covered by federal CoC funds;
- the General Assembly appropriate funding to incentivize homelessness service organizations to participate in CoC data reporting;
- the General Assembly appropriate funds for the University of Tennessee's Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (SWORPS) to aggregate data from all 10 CoCs;
- SWORPS produce dashboards that make data on homelessness more accessible;
- the state reestablish a state interagency council on homelessness with representation from all 10 Continua of Care in the state as well as state agencies; and
- the state interagency council on homelessness, once established, work with the CoCs to continually improve Coordinated Entry procedures.

See TACIR's full report at the following link for additional information:

<https://www.tn.gov/tacir/tacir-publications.html>.