In the Matter Of:

T-DOT PUBLIC HEARING

12668610

HEARING

February 20, 2020

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IN RE: PROJECT NO. 12668610
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I-81 CORRIDOR STUDY PUBLIC MEETING
February 20, 2020
Cedar Bluff Library

APPEARING FOR TDOT: TROY EBBERT
JEANNE STEVENS

MR. EBBERT: Hello. We are with TDOT, part of the office of community transportation, which is in our long-range planning division. So the reason we're here tonight is we are working on a long-range plan currently for region one, which is what's shown here.

All of -- all of the main interstates, not the loops or the tails, but all of the main interstates have been studied in this last year and this year.

Our current study, what we are looking at, is where we're starting in Bristol and working all the way down to Memphis on I-81 and I-40 and also catching the tail that goes down into North Carolina.

So what I need is to make sure that, first of all, everybody signed in. We need your information so we know who has been here, and if you haven't, please do so on your way out.

We have comment cards out here as well with all the information. All you've got to do is fold them and put a stamp on them. Please take those, and if you have comments you want to make or you have folks that you think would like to make comments about it, put it in the cards.

These are what I highly encourage you-all to look at. This has the link to the survey, and it also has the link to the study and all of the studies across the state dealing with our interstates. So we were looking at this statewide.

There are a couple of interesting things. 75 and 40 overlap, and this wonderful little area that's that multicolored type in Knoxville, we are looking at this during this study.

So Jeanne and her group with WSP on the I-40 section, that's where we're actually going to look at a portion of it. A couple of -- you know, there's a few neat things about this one.

You know, we have these -- you see some red on there. If you look at it statewide, when you look at the reliability that we have on our interstates versus other parts of the state and the amount of downtime we have. On I-40 in Knoxville, it had -- the two highest accident numbers are in Knoxville.

It's on that overlap area, and that area actually had a very high reliability rate, especially for that many vehicles. So we do have some projection of what we're dealing with.

But when you start looking at -- I think Massey dealt with this a lot, 65, 24 and where everything comes together down in downtown Nashville, this is a breeze compared to that one. These are some of the struggles that we have to deal with.

Housekeeping, if there's a fire, go that way. The bathrooms are right out here. Everyone signed in? If anyone is interested in this presentation again in region one, my team is more than happy to come and give this presentation or something very similar to this.

What we'll probably do is tie the 75 study and this study together, give kind of a joint presentation between the two of them so you-all know what to expect, and we're more than happy to come give a presentation.

It could be either for five people in a Sunday school class to 150 people. We have done both. So I would be more than happy to do that. I have business cards that are available. Just come see me. I'll hand those to you to get in contact with me.

Now, we also do our metropolitan planning organization. We work with them. Rich is here.

He is from the Lakewood area, which is on the 81 side here.

And, of course, Jeff is here. Jeff is with the Knoxville TDOT. He deals with 75 and 40 on the colorful side. So we work closely with him. If you see any of their presentation or their meetings, we'll be presenting at those at some point.

Jeff's are televised, and they're recorded. So if you need to see it again or want to replay it, you can see the presentation on that one. You can just replay it. So, no pressure.

But, again, this will be a conversation. So if you-all have questions or there's things you want to talk about, feel free to kind of just interrupt and go with it, and we'll have a conversation and go with it and see what kind of comments we get.

So then afterwards, of course, we'll have the boards in the back that, you know, explain what we're doing with these. We'll be available afterwards to answer all of these questions for you-all.

So with that, I'll want to introduce the team leader on the project, Jeanne Stevens.

MS. STEVENS: Thanks, Troy. I'm really glad you introduced the two regional planning organizations because we see a great opportunity to get involved in the state and regional leverage planning resources.

This is a small group. So I'm not going to keep it real formal. I just want to welcome all of you and thank you for coming in because I know some of you drove quite some distance, and some of you may have wondered a couple of hours ago if the snow was going to let you.

So thank you for making it here. If you don't mind, since we are such a small group, I think Troy may have already pointed some people out, but just, if you don't mind, can we go through -- I won't pick you first since you just got here.

SPECTATOR: He drove in from Nashville, too. He's in our State Capital.

MS. STEVENS: Thank you very much for coming. And right here?

SPECTATOR: Me?

MR. STEVENS: Yeah, just state your name and --

SPECTATOR: Hi. I'm John. I saw the

presentation was going to be today on the news. So it looked interesting, and I had nothing else to do.

MS. STEVENS: We're glad you're here. This is our court reporter. I think Troy has already introduced him. He came in from Roane County.

MR. EBBERT: So with David, if you-all don't want to write anything down and you just want to give your comments right to David, you can do that as well. I forgot to mention that.

MS. STEVENS: Yes, sir?

SPECTATOR: I'm Jeff Welch with the Knoxville Transportation and Planning Organization.

SPECTATOR: (Inaudible) Lakeway area of TPO.

SPECTATOR: Anthony Arms, (Inaudible) communications.

SPECTATOR: (Inaudible).

MS. STEVENS: I knew I recognized your name.

SPECTATOR: Becky Massey, State Senator of Knox County.

SPECTATOR: I'm Josh walker, and I'm with

her.

SPECTATOR: Tom (Inaudible) from Roane County.

SPECTATOR: Mary (inaudible) with WSP.

MS. STEVENS: Joy you already know. And?

SPECTATOR: And Emory Hart with WSP.

SPECTATOR: And I'm Brian (inaudible). I'm the assistant (inaudible) for region one of TDOT, which is pretty much Roane County.

MS. STEVENS: Fantastic. Thanks for doing that, everybody. I don't always ask it, but since we have such a small group, I just wanted to get a sense of where everybody was from.

What we want to do this evening we don't want to take a whole lot of time presenting to you because we've got boards here, and we've people who are eager to write down and listen to your comments.

But what we'll talk about tonight is what this study is going to do and what will TDOT do with it when it's done. We want to talk about what the steps are and the schedule.

We want to show you what we have seen so far from the data, and then let you tell us what the data means if we're not getting it. And then

we want to get a chance to produce a general discussion.

My thought is to kind of plow through these and then have the discussion, but if there's something that looks really interesting on the slide and you want to stop, I'll be happy to do that.

The purpose of the study is not to immediately come out with road projects that are going to be done in three years. This is going to be a long-term study. It covers 20 years, and it will be phased.

So there will be some projects that are recommended be done in short term, some in mid term, and some in the long-term. I think that's a good way to structure a plan. We all need some quick wins.

If we are to provide guidance, as it says here, for decision-makers on projects, and what that means is this is a data-driven process, but it also will have stakeholder input.

So what we end up with at the end of the day -- and TDOT has actually had an I-40, 81 corridor study done before that it had used for exactly this purpose.

They say, "Oh, we've got some money. There's been some needs identified already. Where is that list?" And so that will be a list that a group like you have already had a chance to talk about, and that's exactly what you want.

When you've got money unexpected like the stimulus that came in several years back, the best thing in the world is already have a list on the shelf.

And then finally to be able to sort things into what does long-term objective verus short term mean. So that's what the study is going to be for. Troy had indicated the study area.

This is Tennessee's longest interstate corridor spanning from end to end of the state all the way from Memphis to Bristol. For I-40, that's 450 miles, and for I-81, that's 76 miles. So we are crossing the state talking to everybody because this is more than a 500-mile corridor.

The timeline, we are here where that circle is. You are at open house round one. So we have been busily collecting information on traffic, on crashes, on what kind of freight is flowing on the interstate, what projects are

already being done out there, and we are now in the process of analyzing that.

We're going to hear from you tonight, and we'll be summarizing what you told us about what the needs are. And we'll also be using a travel demand model software to predict where the trips will be in the future so that we also have a sense not just to wherever the existing deficiencies are, but where do we think the problems are going to prop up, for instance, as growth occurs. So that will be step-by-step.

We will then take those, and I don't want to -- I guess let me just keep jumping. This is exactly what I'm talking about. So we will use the model to project deficiencies that would emerge by 2040 and also opportunities because in some of the less urban areas of the corridor there are some spots where there may be industrial sites identified, but they don't have interstate access.

So perhaps one opportunity that would be identified is, hey, this is really good developable land that points to a labor force. Local government is already planning doing that with other infrastructure. Maybe we should be looking in the 20 years at the interchange here,

that kind of thing.

We will then take those needs that we've identified and the opportunity, and we'll develop that 20-year list. And TDOT has asked them to group the possible solutions as the categories that you see here. So some of them will be related to making highway improvement.

It would be transportation system management and operations, which I will talk more about in a minute. That's a cost effective way of trying to handle things without adding a lane. Safety, of course, is something we need to be planning for.

Looking at freight and goods because this is such an important busy corridor for the state. It supports a tremendous amount of our economy and a lot of supply chains that businesses rely on. And then also looking at transit, especially in with urban areas or between our urban areas.

Once we have that list of candidate solutions. We will be looking at those objectives of everybody, how would we measure whether a project is making a dent in those needs that we identified, and use those criteria to help us figure out what should be short term, what can

wait.

And then finally wrap all of that up into a final report that will be available to TDOT decision-makers and State decision-makers moving toward.

What we want to do next is just show you six or seven slides to summarize in each of these categories what are we seeing right now from field work and the data, and then, as I said, we want to get the users perspective, which is yours.

Planning is a cycle. We never start from zero. I mentioned that 10 years ago the first interstate corridor study was done by TDOT and was actually for I-40 and I-81. It came up with a project list.

We went back and looked to see if we'd done any projects. We have. The good news, the ones you see in orange on this map are some that have been complete. They include -- and I was joking with Jennifer earlier today that it seemed like forever.

I know you may not even remember, but the I-40/81 junction, the ramps were lengthened in that area where the rest area is. So that was an improvement that came out of that plan.

The same thing here. There was a short section of additional lanes built between Pellissippi Parkway and Lovell Road as you go westbound on I-40. But the study had actually recommended it go all the way to I-75, but a small section of it has been built. So it could well be with this part of the new study.

We would take a look and see if this still makes sense. Okay. If it does, we recommend you continue that because it's helping. The things you see in red are things that have some kind of official funding status, and that might be from regular funds that TDOT spends.

It might be from funds that the regional transportation planning organization has set up for projects, and many of them that legislators know are coming from the Improve Act, which is allowing us to address the backlog of projects in a way that hasn't happened in 26 years. So that's great.

I will try to name everything that's up here, but some of the big ones are expansions of TDOT's SmartWay System, the intelligent transportation system, up from I-26 all the way up to the Virginia state line.

The same thing here, the SmartWay System of cameras and such. We see it expanding from Strawberry Plains out to exit 407 for Pigeon Forge. The same thing here along I-40 going to North Carolina. So a lot of those are not highway lanage (sic). They're ways to manage the highway smart.

The Improve Act funded a section of 75 to be widened at some point down in Louden County. And then we see some thinner red lines here, and those are not actually on I-40.

But we wanted to call it to everybody's attention because they are projects that will have a significant benefit and impact an interstate traffic.

And what those are, for the most part, things that Knoxville Regional Planning Organization partners. The town of Farragut, the city of Knoxville have programed money for upgrading of the signal system with smarter software and equipment that will allow lights to be connected and then controlled remotely to be able to adapt to changing traffic conditions.

This is great technology that a lot of cities are embracing, and, in fact, Farragut and

Knoxville are doing it at the same time together. They're doing it on Kinston Pike, Middlebrook Pike, Campbell Station Road. So they're addressing it in that area. So I wanted to particularly call this out.

It's also good to look at what plans have already been done. I think Troy pointed out that the two regional organizations here both have 20 year long-range plans of their own.

So one thing we wanted to look at is this stuff in green. That's already in those organizational plans, and you see interchange at -- oh, wrong button. You see an upgrade of the Asheville Highway interchange. You see -- let me pull my cheat sheet out.

You see an upgrade to the Campbell Station interchange, widening on I-40 and 75 to one additional lane all the way from the 40/75 junction to Campbell Station Road adding a lane between Campbell Station and Lovell Road.

An upgrade at Watt Road is another big one, and then potentially -- I think we talked about Jeff. We'll double check the list, maybe a new interchange at John Sevier Highway. So there's a lot on the list.

The things you see in yellow diamonds, sort of like Lucky Charms, I guess, is studies that are currently underway, and I guess the best way to describe them might be spot studies. These are things primarily that TDOT is conducting because of immediate issues that have arisen, and they're mostly around interchanges.

In a lot of cases they are what we call ramp cue studies where the interchange is congested enough, especially as you're getting off, that traffic is backing up the ramps, and that's very dangerous if traffic is actually sitting still in an interstate lane.

So when that begins to happen, that usually sends folks out to do a study, and that's what we see here. There's a couple of interchanges that that's being done.

The next thing I want to talk about is traffic flow, and I bet most of you have a tremendous amount of expertise on this. We can do a lot better job than we used to be able to do in analyzing congestion because all of you and I are carrying around smart phones.

We're using GPS in our cars, and somebody is sucking up all that data, and the feds have

made it available to the State and to the regional planning organizations for them to analyze.

So we took one year of that data from last year or two years ago now, and we mapped it. And what you're seeing in that legion is called vehicle excess hours traveled.

And essentially that's if you add up the amount of time you spend in traffic that's on top of what it would normally take you if you had free-flow positions, how many hours a year is that.

So you can see it's color coded like Troy was pointing out early. The section that looks the worse in terms of yellow, orange and red happens to be from about 40/75 to about just past 640, which is pretty much the whole concurrent section of I-40 and I-75 through Knoxville. So the news is Knoxville has really bad congestion.

Now, as Troy said, the reliability is not bad. What that means is you know it's only going to take 45 minutes, whereas it used to take 30. If we've got unreliable congestion that it's -- I never know if I need to leave a half an hour early or 45 minutes early.

So, you know, I'll pick that up again in

a minute. We've got a difference in the type of congestion, and what would be the type of strategy you would use to deal with it.

What we're going to do with this with TDOT and with you-all and with the regional partners is to say, all right, these are showing up as orange and red, and do you agree these are the bottom "X"?

And then let's take out the really sophisticated traffic analysis tools to drill down on a few of these locations to figure out what's going on and recommend specific solutions. We can't do that for a 550-mile corridor. So this is screening it out.

We're also looking at safety. Obviously you always want to be careful when you're showing this data publically. There's a lot of verification that needs to be done with these crash databases.

So what we're doing is very high-level hotspot analysis. We're looking for areas that sort of jump out maybe because there's more crashes and identifying areas that TDOT may want to further investigate for more specific solutions.

And we're looking particularly at certain types of crashes but have the most impact on interstate traffic. For instance, if there's a truck rollover on a median crossing, if there's a fatality, it could very well shut things down for half a day.

I talked a minute ago about recurring and nonrecurring congestion. TDOT has done an awful lot in the last 10 years and quite a lot just in the last two to figure out ways to improve traffic flow without having to add a lane.

Sometimes you are going to have to add a lane, but there are also things we can do until we get the money to do it. For years and years region one, TDOT region one, has been working with UT to do special event plans for UT games. That's a great example of operations and management.

TDOT has the help trucks, and that helps with the nonrecurring congestion, the unreliability. If somebody gets a flat tire right in front of you, they need help moving the vehicle off of the road, and until TDOT gets there, traffic is going to be impacted.

So to fund the help service patrols you help everybody because you get those broken-down

vehicles off the road faster, and you avoid the secondary incidents where people start rear-ending each other.

The same thing with the SmartWay System. How many people use SmartWay? Yeah, me, too. We checked it on the way over, actually. All right. So we know that's well worth it, and that's what you see on the map in the yellow and black. That's where the message signs are, where the traffic cameras are.

And when we look statewide, Mary actually looked at this and found that region one has more cameras. Pretty much they have like half the cameras in the whole state, but you've got your fair share, and you need it.

Then a couple of the operational strategies that TDOT has been using which work well for reliable congestion, which is just how do we manage the lanes that are available in a smarter way as managed lanes?

Nashville and Memphis both have high-occupancy vehicle lanes with the idea being that if not everybody drives alone, then we've got fewer vehicles on the road with the same number of people moving. So that would be an example.

Another one would be adding a truck-climbing lane. Because it may not be an issue on this stretch of road that there's too many cars, it's just that some of the cars or vehicles have to operate a lot more slowly when they're going uphill. That was a fairly relatively inexpensive solution compared to adding an entire lane for miles and miles.

All right. I mentioned already I think the upcoming expansion of SmartWay. We have the project on I-40 and I-81, and also I thought it was worth mentioning that Sevier County itself is working similar SmartWay technology for State Route 66 going down through the Pigeon Forge and Sevierville area. So that's a great cooperation opportunity.

Let's talk a little bit about freight. A gentleman here in the front was sharing with me that he drove a truck through this region for a while. So I'm expecting some good insight.

This, as I mentioned earlier, is a corridor of national importance, I-40 coast to coast. I-81 connects us through -- up through the east coast to the northeast and even up through Canada. So we have very important economic

pipelines running through this area.

Some of the key supply chains, the parts of the economy that are being supported, include the advance manufacturing, machinery manufacturing and such. Also, the chemical industry, which the TriCities have quite a lot of. Eastman, Kodak Eastman, that sort of stuff is running along I-81.

The automotive manufacturers in Tennessee aren't directly on this corridor, but a lot of stuff traveling up 75 -- Volkswagen, for instance, will pass through the I40/75 junction. So you're going to get impacted, and that's why it's important to keep traffic flowing because reliability is really important to this.

In terms of a 500-mile corridor, it's kind of hard to look at transit at a micro level. So for the purposes of this study, what we're identifying is what areas of the corridor have regular fixed-route transit service.

And we're also looking at what kind of opportunities are there for inter city service between major cities. For instance, Greyhound provides service that goes across Tennessee, but not everybody has the mega bus option.

There are opportunities to provide a

chance for someone who maybe doesn't drive anymore to be able to visit folks even in another city in Tennessee, but we don't have a lot of those options yet.

And some of it might just be working with private providers who are providing some service but maybe not enough. So we're interested in your thoughts on that as well.

All right. Before I turn you loose to the boards, any questions that you may have from the slides? I wanted to put this up. I think Troy covered it pretty well. He showed you the little cards that have a link to the survey.

We really want you at your own social media to forward that link to everybody you know because the folks who didn't take the time to come out here tonight like you did, I think you want them to give their input, too, so we have a documentation of the needs.

Our timing that we're at right now statewide is collecting input like we will with you tonight, and then we'll be back in the summer to share a draft list for your comments on a set of recommendations.

So that's what we have got for you right

now. Any questions on the stuff that I just went through? Jeff?

SPECTATOR: From your -- you live in the Nashville area, obviously. Just a thought occurred to me that the ramp meter has been around in a lot of major cities for years and years and help manage the flow onto the main line.

MS. STEVENS: Yes.

SPECTATOR: I don't think there's any in Tennessee that I'm aware of.

MS. STEVENS: No. I think the first implementation is going to be in Nashville. Some others may know about this.

The I-24 corridor between Nashville and Murfreesboro, they have got a project called Smart Corridor, and they will be looking at ramp meter as part of that, along with several other things, like being able to run buses on the shoulder during peek hours so people riding transit have reasonably competitive travel times.

SPECTATOR: I know in the Nashville area there's a big project working with all the mayors, and TDOT is kind of a participant in that. But really they're looking at trying to find a regional solution to their issues with the

congestion on the roads, with "congestion" being an understatement there.

MS. STEVENS: Yes, it is. One of the great things about the city of Knoxville and Farragut upgrading their signal system on those roads is ramp metering. In order for it to work on the interstate, it also needs the parallel arterial roads to be functioning well and be able to be controlled.

So it's almost like the projects you have going on right now are laying the groundwork to be able to look at that stuff next. I'm glad you brought that up.

The conditions aren't right for ramp metering everywhere, but I think they're going to learn a lot on I-24.

SPECTATOR: With the cameras that you've got out there coupled with the information that you get from the federal government, you were talking earlier about travel time congestion.

Could you divert the -- substitute the cameras, and could you do less cameras and more dollars for actual pavement somewhere?

MS. STEVENS: Well, let me take a crack at it, and then I'll turn it over to somebody who

works for TDOT.

One thing that I know the cameras can do that you can't get from cell phones is if an incident happens and you can tell because -- you don't know what equipment to send out there because you don't know what kind of incident it is, the camera let's you take a look at what's going on, you know, if you need a big tow truck or if something is on fire. So there is still a lot of values to video, but I think that's a real good point.

All right. Well, we have boards that are mostly the same as the slides. So you can get a chance to comment. We have all of us here with Post-It Notes and pens ready to take your comments. Thank you --

SPECTATOR: That's another State rep.

MS. STEVENS: Thank you for coming, Representative. We sure do appreciate that, very much.

SPECTATOR: We have three here.

MS. STEVENS: I was mentioning there's a -- you've probably taken those surveys on SurveyMonkey. There's a link here that we've got.

Troy is carrying around little cards that

have the link printed, and if you are on social media or e-mail or anything that you want to send that link to everybody, anybody that's in your group.

The more people that take this survey, the better the input that we will have because we're looking -- we are at the stage of this study where we're trying to identify needs based off the users.

SPECTATOR: And so these surveys and things are for the statewide, the whole --

MS. STEVENS: They are, but the questions are set up in a way that you can identify specific locations that you're interested in that's not doing well.

SPECTATOR: Right, but in the outposts of Nashville and Memphis wanting to take it --

MS. STEVENS: They can. They sure can.

TDOT REPRESENTATIVE: There are cards up front at the sign-in table as well.

SPECTATOR: Okay. Thank you.

MS. STEVENS: Yeah, and speaking of statewide, we are also coordinating with Virginia, and we will be coordinating with Arkansas and Mississippi just to make sure we're catching our

partners at the state line.

SPECTATOR: What about Georgia?

MS. STEVENS: Yeah, but that's another study.

SPECTATOR: That's another study?

MS. STEVENS: That's right, there is another study.

SPECTATOR: That one is a long ways.

MS. STEVENS: You mentioned being a supporter of the bypass. Is that something you wanted to talk about?

SPECTATOR: Well, I just -- you know, if you look at that map where your heavy congestion is, to me that would be a natural reason to have a bypass.

I know they had the orange route back in the day and some other routes above it. Is that anywhere on the table? I know it's sort of touchy --

TDOT REPRESENTATIVE: When it happened, it was -- there are plans out there, and with TDOT there are financially issues.

I think between this study and the I-75 corridor study, it's also near the completion by TDOT. Between the two of them, there would be

more information back in -- we're looking into that.

And we have another concept in our organization that also would be looking at updating our mobility plans for the entire organized area by county.

So those types of scenarios we would be looking at to help them. Between the three of them, we can come to some conclusion on the matters of consideration or if it's now a billion dollar project, it's just not going to work, but it could be a billion dollar project of trying to do something for I-40. Widening might be a two billion dollar project.

SPECTATOR: 640 is really -- it's been outgrown for --

MS. STEVENS: It seems like there's redevelopment opportunities in that whole corridor and the capacities there on the roadway now.

SPECTATOR: If they build an interstate, there would be more development.

SPECTATOR: So what about at the 840 bypass?

MS. STEVENS: In Nashville? The north one or the south one that's been built?

SPECTATOR: The south one. That doesn't get used as much as they anticipated.

MS. STEVENS: Not yet. Not yet. TDOT recently put message boards on either end of that opportunity to turn off on I-40 to show the travel times so that you can tell how much minutes it will take.

SPECTATOR: When I saw that, I told myself, you know, they're going to fudge the numbers to try to get people to take the corridor.

You know, at certain times it's a good thing to do to take the --

MS. STEVENS: Yes.

SPECTATOR: But the issue is the drivers. So within this study, is there anything that you're looking at to like talk about meeting -- you know, to control drivers, so to speak?

Like, for instance, you build six lanes through Knoxville. Every single one of those lanes that go to six cars, they take -- each one of those drivers can take a lane themselves.

MS. STEVENS: Right.

SPECTATOR: That's an issue. How do you control that? It's almost impossible to control

that.

MS. STEVENS: You have to have 75, right?

SPECTATOR: Right. And you talked about, you know, the HOV lane. Okay. I mean, I know there's studies maybe behind that that support that.

In reality, I just personally don't see it working, and, like I said, I don't -- I have driven -- you know, I drove a truck for 10 years. And I don't know if anybody else drives a truck, but that's --

MS. STEVENS: Anybody else?

SPECTATOR: -- you know, over a million miles of driving. So you get to see a lot of things and not just in one region, you know, around the whole country.

So if we had, say, you know, Knoxville pass -- on the highway somewhere heading west -- and this is just -- I'm just throwing this out there, but if we had say the left lane was a no exit until the Watts Road lane, something like that where through traffic -- if they're not going to exit through Knoxville can just go right on through.

And if they need to exit, you know, Watts

Road or -- and you have these major big trucks at the weigh station there, and then I'm going to change the subject for a minute to the genius that put a weigh station on the top of a hill.

MS. STEVENS: I didn't do it.

SPECTATOR: I mean, give me a brake.

MS. STEVENS: Yeah, the land was cheaper, I'm sure.

SPECTATOR: That's ridiculous, and, again, it comes down to the driver because if you watch people in their own vehicles, I mean, they'll slow down from 70 to 60 going up that hill in their cars.

MS. STEVENS: Yes, because it's such a steep grade.

SPECTATOR: Because -- well, I have it in their cars, but they could slow down. There's nothing slowing them down. A car doesn't slow down going up a hill --

MS. STEVENS: Right.

SPECTATOR: -- period. So -- but, you know, I don't know if you have been in -- at different states they -- I guess they call them express lanes or they do have that -- it will be either a divided lane or, you know, totally two

separate lanes, but some median and something.

MS. STEVENS: Right.

SPECTATOR: But something like that needs to be done. And the metering, again, is -- because, you know, we have drivers who can't merge.

MS. STEVENS: Right.

SPECTATOR: But, again, it's too difficult to control people driving. It's not going to happen until we get the self-driving vehicles in there.

MS. STEVENS: Have you seen states that built the express lanes that had them -- that made them free or are all of those express lanes --

SPECTATOR: So, there's free. I mean, there's free --

MS. STEVENS: Do they cover --

SPECTATOR: I mean, I can think of one like in Ohio or Pennsylvania, somewhere that last I was on or remember, yeah, there's -- you know, when I first saw them the first time, they were like traveling in express lanes.

I really wasn't familiar with it, but, yeah, then you have your toll roads, of course, in different states.

MS. STEVENS: Right. Some states have a highbred that they call a hot lane. It's a high-occupancy vehicle lane, but even if you're not in like a high-occupancy vehicle, if you have just one driver, you pay to use the lane.

SPECTATOR: Right.

MS. STEVENS: And I know that's been discussed off and on.

SPECTATOR: Like what's down near in Atlanta?

MS. STEVENS: Yeah, yeah.

SPECTATOR: The issue of -- because you'll have people that will stay in the -- I'm talking about Knoxville or if you want to go to Nashville, the same difference. There's four lanes through most to Nashville --

MS. STEVENS: Right.

SPECTATOR: -- or leading into Nashville from this side, but, you know, you have a lot of drivers that stay in the far left lane or the lane next to it may be a mile or half a mile that they need to exit.

And in rush-hour traffic, that just slows everyone down and backs everyone up. So how -- I mean, do you have any ideas?

MS. STEVENS: What was your experience driving in states that restricts trucks to the right two lanes? As a truck driver, how did that work?

SPECTATOR: Well, I noticed they changed them. When they changed the speed limits here, they changed that.

MS. STEVENS: Yeah.

SPECTATOR: And, you know, when there's four lanes, it's fine, but when you get down to three lanes, you get -- where is it? We're heading east, and with 640 both down to three lanes, doesn't that --

MS. STEVENS: I think that's --

SPECTATOR: But, yeah, I mean, sometimes you need to allow folks to go into that left lane, and when they put a restriction up there, you know -- and then another thing -- I don't know if you are aware like a lot of trucks, especially the big carriers, you know, they know the top speed of that truck, and people don't understand that.

You know, they can only go 62 or 65 or people get upset, "Why are they taking so long to pass these up?" They can't do anything about it, and they can't sit -- again, there's going to be a

way to control the traffic more.

MS. STEVENS: So maybe a little bit would be education?

SPECTATOR: Well, again, no, because people --

Technically when there's three lanes, that far left lane is supposed to be for passing only, and technically when people are just driving in that left lane, they can be cited. They just don't do it.

SPECTATOR: There's just not enough personnel to enforce it, and then you have some states -- I think Tennessee says stay right except for passing, and some states word it differently. You know, left lane for passing only.

But, again, the enforcement of it is almost impossible. You have to have -- the personnel is not -- again, you're right. I mean, you know, like I say, if there's five cars on the interstate, they all need to be in the right lane.

MS. STEVENS: Right.

SPECTATOR: Now, rush hour is different, you know, but there's -- whatever studies that are being done, there's something that has to maybe be looked at as part of the express lane type things

through Knoxville or something like that or just experiment, right?

MS. STEVENS: Right.

SPECTATOR: We can do a study for five years, but, like you said, some things just quickly do it and see how it works, and if it doesn't work --

MS. STEVENS: Jeff, you want to volunteer for a test case for something?

SPECTATOR: Sure. I wasn't testing anything, you know, passing only in the left lane, but for some reason I got pulled over. I don't know why. I was passing him.

MS. STEVENS: You didn't have the governor --

SPECTATOR: -- a little too fast, yeah.

MS. STEVENS: The worse --

SPECTATOR: Yeah, that's what I was going to say.

SPECTATOR: And I don't know what we can do. Like when you think about self-driving vehicles, I mean, one of the main things that I think you would see is they're all going to go the same speed.

How do we get people to go the same

speed? You can't do it, but that's an issue, too, when you have people going slower than, you know, everyone else.

And they're, again, in the left lane or -- but I thought about this for years and years. There's no way to stop that.

MS. STEVENS: Well, we know we won't fix everything, but when I'm grocery store and somebody blocks the aisle, I'm not going to go anywhere in the aisle.

SPECTATOR: But isn't the question through here the driver? It don't matter what these studies results -- what they come up with, I don't know, cameras or whatever it is. You have to control those drivers.

MS. STEVENS: Do you think local traffic behaves differently than through traffic or are our people more likely to exhibit some of those behaviors that are causing trouble?

SPECTATOR: The local traffic? I mean, I don't -- I don't think so. I just think the local traffic is going to stay in the --

MS. STEVENS: The right lane.

SPECTATOR: -- left lanes. Well, no, I'm saying local traffic, they will stay in that left

lane until it's time to exit.

MS. STEVENS: Right, as long as they can.

SPECTATOR: Yeah, and the same thing on 640 going to 75 north, you watch that traffic in rush hour at the end of the -- you know, evening rush hour, a lot of the back-up is caused by drivers cutting others off to get into the right lane to exit. You know, what can you do?

You've got to put barriers on that right lane probably back to the western exit somewhere right there, and if they miss it, they miss it. They go and turn around somewhere else, but it eventually gets to that.

MS. STEVENS: Okay. We are taking some notes on this. This is good feedback. Other ideas? Questions? Complaints? Beefs?

MR. EBBERT: One thing, Jeanne, with what he was mentioning, is the federal highway says -- you know, federal highways come through, and they have these performance maintenances that we have to meet.

So what that -- and one of them is obviously safety. That's the biggest one we have. We have pavement management. We have a lot of other things that are required to do that.

So the TDOT team has teamed up with the highway -- the governor's highway safety counsel with like troopers. And then the legislature, I believe you-all get funds toward enhanced improvement, because we can make great roads, but we can't change the driver's pattern.

We can put the signs up. We can put like the -- you know, you'll know three miles ahead the left lane is closed. If they have do it -- and it's just like dealing with -- you know, our legislature passed laws about distracted driving, and the law needs to be enforced.

SPECTATOR: Driving a -- the State patrols up and down the highway. How many people do they catch?

MR. EBBERT: We caught a lot, but it's a campaign to do that, to educate people. So, like you said, it's tough.

One other thing I want to say is you're talking about the HOV lanes. Now, I know sometimes our HOV lanes are constructed with a different type of lane, more on the air quality side, and they become restricted for multiple vehicles.

And then we have to work closely with the

federal highway. It's like you said. It's all about driver education. So that's a hard part. We deal with that every day.

SPECTATOR: So we just have to force drivers to do what we want them to do as much as possible, but that study would take 50 years to figure that out.

MS. STEVENS: Drivers Ed. We don't see driver's ed as mandatory anymore.

MR. EBBERT: And that's one of those things where -- you know, there's only certain things we can do as far as even like cameras or electronics that aide them, and some people like those things.

I'm a fan of traffic signals and lights because they stop people from running the light, and that has changed behavior. Even if you just see the sign, that can have an effect on some, but it's tough on how these folks have to write the laws.

You know, I feel for you. So, but, yeah. And that's one thing we have to tackle, and that's -- we can figure out that statewide, countywide --

SPECTATOR: Yeah, I would say, you know,

we can't do this, but wouldn't it be great to shut 40 down to one lane and then open it up to two and tell people: If you follow the rules, we'll open it up again. And then if you're good, we'll go to the --

MR. EBBERT: Right.

SPECTATOR: So when we try to pass that in the legislature, we'll be back home looking for a job.

MS. STEVENS: And we're all going to show up and say "yes".

SPECTATOR: We can always try bigger steel bumpers on our cars to get them out of the way.

MS. STEVENS: Welcome. Thank you.

MR. EBBERT: Well, he had mentioned automated vehicles. TenSmart, I believe, is the organization, and TDOT has several other parts.

We're looking at the automated vehicles and to start with freight because some of the hard things to tackle in this -- I don't think we're going to study this. I don't think -- I don't know, but the freight, you know, the trucks, they have -- they put a lot of miles on them.

They're going to be replaced much faster

than my car than I may have in the next 20 years. You know, you may get four or five services on the over-the-road trucks, and when they update, they're going to update their vehicles on the new ones that they're buying or -- that's the big thing that we've been encouraging in the state of Tennessee and even to the point where we have automated vehicles for automated freight.

How are we going to do it? When are they going to come through? You can program them all to hang out in between Cookeville and Nashville and it all hit Nashville about, you know, ten o'clock at night and roll through, and everyone stays in the left-hand lane because you know that right now that's an HOV lane.

But if they stayed in the left-hand lane and all the freight, like you were saying, they're going through, everyone else is over here doing your battle and deal with that.

So one things that we have done -- and it's shown in some of our area here, the ramp -- you were talking about the merging. This region, I know it's kind of aggressive. Brian from our traffic division is here.

So those -- those pavement markings with

the shields on that asphalt, that came from his department.

MS. STEVENS: Way to go.

MR. EBBERT: Oh, yeah, and they're effective because you're driving, and you've got five or six lanes of people and a lot of stuff going on. You see that in the massive shield beside your car, right, because that's much less confusing than that.

And that's something that they have been working on, and there was something else that you mentioned about the speed limits. That's his group.

SPECTATOR: I don't drive a truck anymore, by the way, but let's let the trucks in the left lane again to a certain point, but one of the things -- are you involved with the weigh station and the free pass?

MR. EBBERT: We are working on a study right now, and I think we have some lane motion already in place here.

And we have another group that I have set up a meeting with region one that's going to come out and have a chat about installing more weigh and motion type --

SPECTATOR: We can't obviously move that weigh station, but the free pass, if you -- if the truck could be -- what do they call it? You know, you get a signal --

MR. EBBERT: Right.

SPECTATOR: If they could get that sooner, you know, stay -- they could maybe -- you know where the Watts Road is there? If you're not loading the truck, that can tell you just like a car, and as long as the truck could stay in the right lane for a quarter mile before the other --

MR. EBBERT: Absolutely. So, yeah, they are looking at some of that now. That weigh station up here on the 75/40 split, I think that's the heaviest one in the state or one of the heaviest ones in the state that we're aware of.

That's not from scale. That's a -- you know, (inaudible) county had a beautiful scale. They roll through like 40 miles an hour and keep going. They're currently studying that. On 75, we're looking for some of --

SPECTATOR: Even in the open sign. I mean, if they can put that open or closed sign further in the back, we all have --

MR. EBBERT: Are you hearing all that, Brian?

MS. STEVENS: We're listening closely. Maybe the weigh station could be moved. I mean, seriously if you balance the cost over 20 years of moving a weigh station versus the delay and the effect of the economy --

SPECTATOR: There's no place to put it, though. It has to be -- it's a good place at 75 and 40.

MS. STEVENS: It is.

SPECTATOR: So it would have to move east, and there's place to put it there.

MS. STEVENS: Yeah. Mr. Elmore, did you want to say something? Awhile ago -- you may have already forgotten what it was. I saw you perk up.

SPECTATOR: No. I actually got excited about a text.

MS. STEVENS: Oh, okay.

SPECTATOR: Schools are closed tomorrow.

MS. STEVENS: I wanted to follow up on something else that Troy said a minute ago when we were talking about signage and painting the shields on the pavement.

Are there areas that you-all encounter

every single day -- because I know there's some on my route -- that I know that these people don't realize that that line is solid, and it could be dotted.

And they could actually go ahead and get over, and maybe that sign needed to be earlier. Did you identify any of those that come to mind?

SPECTATOR: The one going from -- as you're going through town east -- going westbound to the --

MS. STEVENS: Yes.

SPECTATOR: It's already -- I'm not sure why --

MS. STEVENS: Okay. Some of that may get back to driver ed, too. People are trying to interpret what Brian was putting out there on the pavement, but, yeah, are there signs -- it seems like somebody mentioned earlier that people who aren't from town -- aren't from the area of town might not realize they needed to get over.

SPECTATOR: Well, he mentioned it, too. I talked earlier, too.

MS. STEVENS: But anything like that -- because those are cheap fixes. When I first moved to Nashville, TDOT leadership had

figured out that if they could reroute a lot of people that were using a certain section of I-75 by labeling it a different interstate, they got people to go the other way around the downtown loop, all they did was change the signs, and it completely shifted traffic. So we're looking for some of those quick wins.

SPECTATOR: Like the train, right? If we could do that with the roads and change the lanes --

MS. STEVENS: Yeah. Anything else, guys?

SPECTATOR: You were talking about the trucks in the left-hand lane. When you guys switched it, all of a sudden that morning -- I don't know how that happened. If you're coming up past -- so as you're going eastbound, like --

SPECTATOR: Bridgewater.

SPECTATOR: -- Bridgewater, yeah, you always kind of -- yeah, the left-hand lane, it's always kind of a stop there for no reason. That's started happening --

SPECTATOR: It's called a hill.

SPECTATOR: There's a restriction there, but it still --

SPECTATOR: Yeah.

SPECTATOR: I am talking coming from say 75 -- coming from Watts Road. It was restricted until somewhere like where you're talking about, Bridgewater, and then that's a restriction all the way because --

SPECTATOR: Yes.

MS. STEVENS: Thank you for identifying that. Anything you have seen in another state or another city that you thought was a good idea that might work here that you haven't had as much chance to comment?

Okay. Well, are you-all running out steam or do you want to pinpoint someone individually on one of these boards, please feel free.

And just as a reminder, as Troy said, if you would want like to give a formal statement to the court reporter, David would be happy to help you.

Please take one of those cards on your way out. That has the survey link. We distribute that everywhere. Thank you again for coming out and braving what looked like a lot of snow.

(End of presentation)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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I, David L. Kelly, LCR No. 628, a Licensed Court Reporter, in and for the State of Tennessee, do hereby certify that the above presentation was reported by me and that the foregoing 51 pages of the transcript is a true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability.

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