



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION
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June 26, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: *Somerville Beltway Project Team Members*

Honorable Rhea Taylor, County Mayor, Fayette County
Honorable Robert S. Morris, Mayor City of Somerville
Mr. Roger Allen, USACE, Memphis
Dr. Lee Barclay, USFWS
Mr. Brian Canada, TDEC
Mr. Robert Todd, TWRA
Ms Lisa Reaney, EPO, ED TDOT
Mr. Matt Richards, Ecology, ETO, ED TDOT
Mr. Jim Moore, Archaeology, ETO, ED TDOT
Mr. Gary Fottrell, Federal Highway Administration
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Mr. Joe Warren, Traffic TDOT
Mr. Brandon Darks, Planning TDOT
Ms Pamela Marshall, Community Relations
Mr. Charles Green, Right of Way TDOT
Mr. Larry Jordan, Design TDOT
Mr. Bill Hazlerig, Maintenance TDOT
Mr. Scotty Plunk, Construction TDOT
Ms Holley Barnett, History, ETO ED TDOT
Ms Amy Mawk, EPO, ED TDOT
Mr. Larry Majors, Project Manager TDOT
Mr. Derrick Tibbs, Community Relations

FROM: Joe Matlock,
Transportation Planner, Region IV
NEPA Documentation Office
ED TDOT

Subject: First Draft of the Purpose and Need Statement for the Environmental Assessment Concerning the State Route 15 Somerville Beltway, Somerville, Fayette County, Tennessee Department of Transportation – TDOT

Below please find a draft and working copy of the “first thoughts” on the purpose and need for inclusion in the EA. The guidelines are in red, comments are in black. The comments are by no means inclusive, complete or in the form they will appear in the EA. Please feel free to comment and add information both of general interest as well as in your subject matter field or request further explanation. As a help to the process I am also including a copy of the approved purpose and need for SR 18, which was used as a guide. I would appreciate having your comments back by July 15.

The following is a list of items, which may assist in the explanation of the need for the proposed action. It is by no means all-inclusive or applicable in every situation and is intended only as a guide.

(1) Project Status - Briefly describe the project history including actions taken to date, other agencies and governmental units Involved, actions pending, schedules, etc.

In 1994 this project was initiated at the request of city officials in Somerville who were concerned with the growing transportation problems along State Route 76 through town. They felt that improvements along the south to north traffic corridor were needed in order to mitigate the inadequate roadway geometrics and unsafe conditions created by the increasing traffic flow. Also a matter of concern is the number of trucks, which must traverse the Court Square where the turning radius is inadequate. Improving the existing route was determined to be unpractical due to the negative impact upon a large historical district south of the square in Somerville; increased the safety problems near Somerville Elementary School and for pedestrians around the square.

On April 12 1999, the board of mayor and aldermen of the town of Somerville passed a resolution, updating the town's major road plan to include the State Rout 15 highway by-pass and to include four access points to the by-pass by Somerville's city streets.

In May 2005 TDOT formed a project team consisting of Federal, State and Local government agencies to begin the process of environmental review. The team held a field review in June 2005 and a public informational meeting in August 2005.

(2) System Linkage - Is the proposed project a "connecting link?" How does it fit in the transportation system?

State Route 15 is being developed as a regional transportation corridor. The existing two lane facility is being reconstructed as a multilane highway based on a four lane cross section. The Somerville Beltway is a final connecting link between the newly reconstructed State Route 15 from Memphis in the west and from Somerville east to Whiteville.

The primary goals of this project are to provide a highway facility that; (1) Is compatible with existing and planned land use activities adjacent to or nearby the new roadway, (2) Is able to meet present and future traffic demands, (3) Provides local and regional motorists with improved connections to other major highways such as State Route 76, and (4) Improves regional mobility and highway safety by further diverting trips onto the bypass and reducing traffic congestion through Somerville.

(3) Capacity - Is the capacity of the present facility inadequate for the present traffic? Projected traffic? What capacity is needed? What is the level(s) of service for existing and proposed facilities?

Historical traffic data indicates a significant increase in the number of vehicles passing through Somerville. In 1964 estimated the traffic count was between 3690 and 3320 vehicles per day. In 2004 this had increased to 14, 970 and 8510.

The base year (2006) traffic volume is XXXX vehicles per day. The projected future (2026) traffic volume is projected to be XXXX vehicles per day. A X% truck count is included in each total. Anticipated traffic volumes entering and leaving the Somerville area are projected to be

the same with or without the proposed bypass. The forecasted increases in traffic volumes over the 20-year period further accentuate the necessity for a new facility.

The traffic flow condition of a highway is measured as a Level of Service (LOS) and is rated in descending order for A through F.

Level A - Primarily free flow operations

Level B - Reasonably free flow operations

Level C - Stable operation, approaching a range in which small increases in flow will cause substantial deterioration in services.

Level D - Borders on unstable flow

Level E - Extremely unstable operations

Level F - Forced or breakdown flow

The proposed project will operate at level of service "A" throughout its length.

The proposed project will be classified as a "XXXX" on the statewide classification system. This facility, as part of the State Route 15 improvement plan has regional and local significance. State Route 15 is a major carrier of commerce and persons from the western part of the state, eastward to the Chattanooga Tennessee area and points south.

(4) Transportation Demand - Including relationship to any statewide plan or adopted urban transportation plan together with an explanation of the project's traffic forecasts that are substantially different from those estimates from the 23 U.S.C. 134 (Section 134) planning process.

The proposed project is included in the Transportation Improvement Plan for the local government.

TDOT believes the proposed project has logical termini, independent utility, and does not restrict consideration of reasonable, foreseeable transportation improvements. Local governments and planning agencies have identified the proposed project as an important one for continued area development and have concurred in the scope of this project. The typical cross section of the proposed project calls for a paved shoulder, which will allow for pedestrian and bicycle usage.

(5) Legislation - Is there a Federal, State, or local governmental mandate for the action.

The City and County government has passed several resolutions in favor of this project. Both have participated in the environmental studies process by inclusion to and participation in the in the TDOT Project Development Team.

(6) Social Demands or Economic Development - New employment, schools, land use plans, recreation, etc, What projected economic development/land use changes indicate the need to improve or add to the highway capacity?

With the improvement of SR 15 the counties west of the Memphis urban area have register population growth. Adequate transportation is necessary accommodate this increased demand for government services.

(7) Modal Interrelationships - How will the proposed facility interface with and serve to complement airports, rail and port facilities, mass transit services, etc.?

(8) Safety - Is the proposed project necessary to correct an existing or potential safety hazard? Is the existing accident rate excessively high? Why? How will the proposed project improve it?

The increase in truck traffic trying to negotiate passing through the court house square area of downtown Somerville has rendered the area more dangerous for pedestrians.

(9) Roadway Deficiencies - Is the proposed project necessary to correct existing roadway deficiencies (e.g., substandard geometrics, load limits on structures, inadequate cross-section, or high maintenance costs)? How will the proposed project improve it?