



**CELEBRATING**

**4**



**YEARS**



# 2024 LITTER GRANT ANNUAL REPORT

Tennessee Department of Transportation | Programs Report



## Executive Summary

This public report describes statewide achievements and operations of the Tennessee Department of Transportation's (TDOT) litter abatement and litter prevention education programs, during calendar year 2023. TDOT's programming is funded through dedicated revenue from Tennessee's Soft Drink and Malt Beverage industries, and demonstrates longstanding commitments to beautification, litter prevention and community recycling programs across the state. This annual report is required by law (namely, TCA § 67-4-402 and TCA § 57-5-201) to be updated and issued by March 31<sup>st</sup>.

# **CONTENTS**

## **5 VISION**

Litter is a substantial issue for Tennessee, but all Tennesseans can play a part in reducing litter, changing behavior, and educating fellow Tennesseans. Highlighted in this section is the Vision for a litter-free Tennessee, how the public can report litter, and how all individuals can prevent litter.

## **10 TAKING ACTION**

TDOT's litter prevention programming involves both cleaning up the state and educating the public about the harmful impacts of litter. This is done through widespread statewide efforts and constant engagement with local partners. This section highlights TDOT's comprehensive and innovative litter prevention programs, including TDOT's Litter Grant, the Litter Hotline, Keep Tennessee Beautiful, Adopt-A-Highway, and the Nobody Trashes Tennessee litter prevention campaign.

## **26 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

The presence of litter impacts communities and individuals in a variety of ways. This section highlights how TDOT's litter prevention programming is combatting litter through a focus on commemorating 40 years of Litter Grants and updating Tennessee-specific research.

## **31 REFERENCES**

Information highlighted in this section includes program revenues, the 2023 Litter Grant funding distribution by county, and other program performance measures and information.



**Figure 1.** Gloves are piled on a signup table, in preparation for cleanup in Davidson County in September 2023.

# VISION

## ***A Vision for a Litter-Free Tennessee***

Reducing litter is critical to keeping roadways safe, promoting healthy and vibrant communities, and maintaining the natural scenic beauty of Tennessee. Through funding made possible by Tennessee's Soft Drink and Malt Beverage industries, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) provides comprehensive litter prevention programs and much-needed services that deeply impact Tennesseans daily. TDOT's program partners investigate crime, maintain equipment, restore habitats, expand recycling, teach students and much more by participating in these programs.

A common theme throughout the programs listed in this report is educating the public on appropriate litter behavior, the harmful effects of litter, and supporting local partnerships for litter pickup operations. TDOT's programs are nationally acclaimed, having won multiple awards from Keep America Beautiful, the Public Relations Society of America, and others. The programs are innovative, yet proven, strategies for how best to amplify the efforts of local governments, non-profits, community groups and volunteers. TDOT is invested in preventing, abating, and picking up litter throughout Tennessee. Annually, the department spends more than \$23.2 million on the programs found in this report and right-of-way litter pickup contracts.

*TDOT spends more than \$23.2 million annually to clean up litter and educate the public.*

Tennessee is a state abundant with scenic landscapes, and rugged natural beauty. Tennesseans are proud of their state, and disheartened by the presence of litter on roadsides, in waterways, and in their communities. The comprehensive litter prevention education and abatement offerings outlined in this report are award winning and nationally recognized as best practices. Each of the programs highlighted are ways in which TDOT partners with local governments, community groups, businesses, and non-profits in order to be good stewards, and bring about positive change, for our great state.





## Reporting Litter

Tennesseans have two options to report individuals that litter and pieces of roadside litter statewide. TDOT maintains a pair of toll-free hotlines, which serve to educate litterbugs and better direct Operations staff to problem areas that need attention.

**Litter Hotline:** If you witness an act of littering, report the act via the Litter Hotline. File a complaint over the phone, at 1-877-8-LITTER, or file an electronic complaint via the Litter Hotline page on the TDOT website; at <https://www.tn.gov/tdot/LitterHotline>. 1,386 acts of littering were reported throughout 2023. More on the Litter Hotline is mentioned throughout this report.

**833-TDOT-FIX:** This initiative was launched in June 2022 and includes various roadway and roadside maintenance requests, from replacing signage to overgrown vegetation. A report of litter along a State Highway can be made through the 833-TDOT-FIX phone number, or a TDOT Maintenance Request online form on the TDOT website. Throughout 2023, slightly over 19,000 requests for maintenance were filed statewide. This included almost 2,500 complaints of litter in or along State Highways throughout Tennessee. Litter comprised 13% all complaints and ranked as the fourth most requested maintenance activity behind potholes, lane inspections, and special requests.

	Report an act of littering. Vehicle information required.	Call 1-877-8-LITTER (877-854-8837), or search "Litter Hotline" online at <a href="https://www.tn.gov/tdot/LitterHotline">https://www.tn.gov/tdot/LitterHotline</a> .
	Report roadside litter. Route information and debris description required.	Call 833-TDOT-FIX (833-836-8349), or search "Maintenance Request Form" online at <a href="https://www.tn.gov/tdot">https://www.tn.gov/tdot</a> .

## ***All Tennesseans Can Prevent Litter***

All Tennesseans play a role in litter prevention. Below are impactful ways TDOT is supporting efforts in Tennessee to make a difference:

***Join Adopt-A-Highway:*** The no-cost volunteer program is an easy way for individuals, families, and groups to help keep roadways and waterways litter-free, while receiving a recognition panel for their efforts. TDOT provides participants with all necessary supplies for their quarterly cleanups. More information about the Adopt-A-Highway program can be found throughout this report.

***Use the Litter Hotline:*** The Litter Hotline gives concerned citizens a way to report littering acts they witness. A convenient telephone hotline number and/or online form gathers information about the incident and allows TDOT to notify litter bugs that their act was illegal, and greatly harms our state.

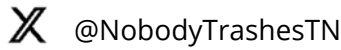
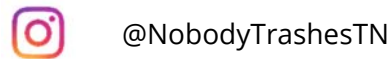
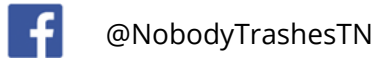
### ***Connect with the Nobody Trashes***

***Tennessee Campaign:*** The Nobody Trashes Tennessee website at [NobodyTrashesTennessee.com](http://NobodyTrashesTennessee.com) offers comprehensive resources for joining the movement to end littering. An event calendar connects individuals and groups to local community cleanups, and helpful content offers tips and resources for individuals, educators, and organizations wanting to get involved. Campaign PSAs, toolkits, and statewide litter research are also provided online. Tennesseans are also encouraged to engage with the campaign through social media channels and to sign-up for a monthly newsletter that contains relevant and timely information for those interested in litter prevention.

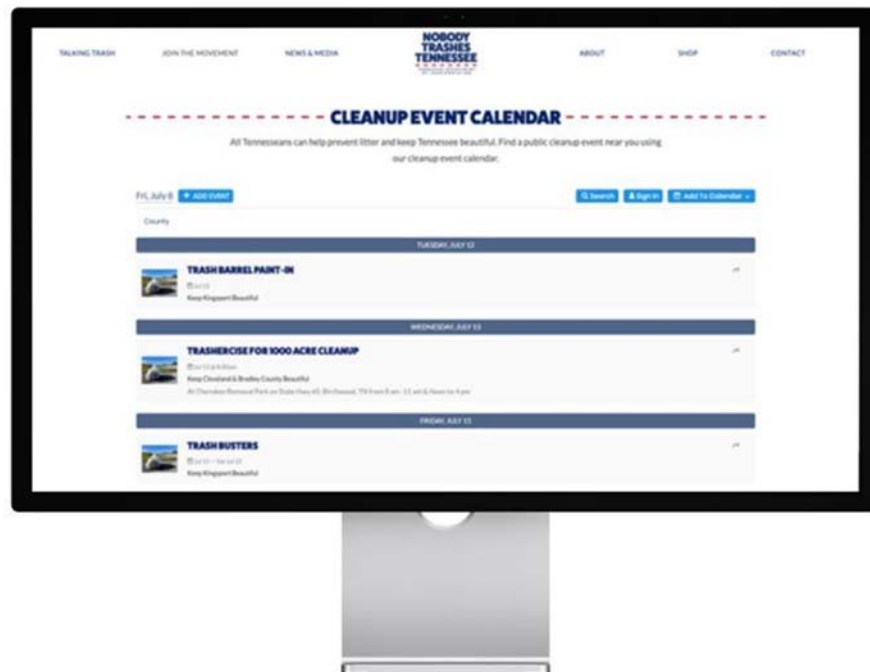


**Figure 2.** A digital advertisement calling for volunteers to participate in "No Trash November" cleanups in October 2023.

Join the Nobody Trashes Tennessee campaign on the following social media platforms:



**Cleanup Individually or Join a Nearby Event:** The greatest impact Tennesseans can have is taking action and picking up litter. TDOT highlights many opportunities to volunteer for pick-up events near their homes or with a group through local cleanup organizations. Anyone can visit <https://nobodytrashestennessee.com/events> or use the QR code below to find information about upcoming cleanup events.



**Figures 3-4.** An “Events Calendar” of upcoming statewide cleanups on the Nobody Trashes Tennessee website is above, while a QR code for the Events page is listed to the right.







**Figure 5.** Volunteers complete a cleanup with the Tennessee Delta Authority in Shelby County, along the Great River Road National Scenic Byway.

# TAKING ACTION

## ***TDOT Litter Grant***

2023 marked 40 years of TDOT's Litter Grant Program. Since 1983, TDOT has joined forces with all 95 county governments by offering Litter Grants which subsidizes local pickup operations and enhance litter prevention education resources across Tennessee. Annually, \$5.5 million is allocated to Litter Grants statewide, a total which has remained the same since 2017. The amount each county receives is based on a formula accounting for population and road miles. The current series of Litter Grant contracts includes \$3,786,689 for local litter pickup operations, and \$1,713,302 for litter prevention education. Litter Grant contracts require that between 20% and 35% of each county's total funding be budgeted for litter prevention education efforts. Counties are required to tackle litter prevention education in three of five designated categories: students, public, media, business, and government.



**Figures 7-8.** The Morgan County Litter Grant work crew collects litter, including waste tires and other bulk items, during cleanups in March (left) and May 2023 (right). Photos courtesy of Morgan County, TN – Litter Program.

The fact that 85% of the funds in this category were spent in 2023 means that citizens across Tennessee gained valuable knowledge about how litter negatively impacts the quality of life, safety, economic development, and environment in their community and across the state.

In addition to funding, the positive impact of TDOT's Litter Grants is amplified through local government partners who invest additional resources and the citizens who contribute tens of thousands of volunteer hours to promote these efforts. Litter Grants are extremely efficient, as they save communities and the State of Tennessee millions of dollars. The 2023 statewide average cost of a Litter Grant pickup was just \$10.87 per mile. Contracted litter pickup routinely costs TDOT in excess of \$500 a mile and increasing.

*The 2023 statewide average cost of a Litter Grant pickup was just \$10.87 per mile.*

Litter Grants are a familiar program in most Tennessee communities. Roadside signs with creative litter prevention messaging, students routinely earn volunteer hours through spring cleanup events, and local newspapers frequently run ads for litter art contests.

Describing Litter Grant's impact in her community, Ms. Dianne Chapman, Rutherford County Litter Grant Coordinator, noted:

*"TDOT's Litter Grant provides a tremendous resource and benefit to the Rutherford County community and its citizens. The grant has allowed our crews to beautify 2,264.8 miles of roadsides and collect 161,670 pounds of litter. TDOT's Litter Grant also helped us to educate and increase litter awareness. This grant is a necessity for public health and safety, the environment, and the economy of Rutherford County."*

Ms. Margie Smith, Stewart County Litter Grant Coordinator summarized her community's experience with the Litter Grant as:

*"We are very fortunate to work with TDOT and their Litter Grant Program. I have been with two different offices at Stewart County and have an affiliation to the Litter Grant Program that goes back 22 years. Throughout this time, two constants have been the wonderful residents of Stewart County who go above and beyond to reduce the amount of litter on our roads and highways, and the helpful staff at TDOT's Highway Beautification Office."*



*For 2023, we are experimenting with a new approach to 'Keep Stewart County Litter Free'. We are partnering with local non-profits to supply the labor for our regular pickups. The response to these partnerships has been amazing, as the county has benefited from cleaner roads and highway, and the non-profits have been able to receive funding for projects which additionally assists our residents. The Litter Grant Program has become a double blessing. It is with sincere appreciation that we extend our most heartfelt thanks for TDOT's support throughout the years to make out local program so successful!"*

Litter Grant programs deliver solid, efficient service for Tennessee. Throughout the 40-year history (1983-2023) of TDOT's Litter Grant programs, county governments have removed an average of 11,198 tons of litter each year. This equates to the removal of more than 446,727 tons of litter from Tennessee roadsides and communities. Annualized pounds and tonnage collected is displayed in the References Section.

In 2023, recycled items accounted for 29.9% of the total tonnage collected statewide. This means a large volume of waste was not only picked up but was diverted from landfills and invested into local recycling programs. For the past several years, county governments have increased the cleanup of illegal dumpsites. 4,559 illegal dumpsites were cleaned up in 2023, an increase of 1,079 over the previous term. Litter Grantees have trended to pick up more illegal dumpsites annually over the past several recent years.

## ***Litter Hotline***

Tennesseans care about preserving the scenic beauty of their communities. TCA § 54-1-401 authorizes TDOT to establish a system for citizens to report acts of littering from motor vehicles.

When citizens notify TDOT of a littering incident, a letter is mailed to the registered owner of the vehicle along with a Nobody Trashes Tennessee car trash bag or portable ashtray and other litter prevention information.

The letter gently reprimands offenders by discouraging litter behavior and informing them that littering is against the law and punishable by a fine.



Figure 9. Program logo for the Litter Hotline.

The entire program is anonymous. Records are not kept regarding individuals who make the report or those receiving a letter. The Citizens Litter Prevention Hotline is an educational tool to remind those who engage in littering that their actions are hurtful to the state and to their community.

TDOT maintains the toll-free hotline at 1-877-8-LITTER or (877-854-8837), as well as an online form ([www.tn.gov/tdot/LitterHotline](http://www.tn.gov/tdot/LitterHotline)) for residents to report acts of littering. Information necessary to report a littering incident includes:

- License plate number (Tennessee plates only)
- Type and make of the vehicle
- Day and time the incident occurred
- Location where the incident occurred
- Type of item tossed or blown from the vehicle

1,386 reports of littering were filed to the Litter Hotline in 2023.

### ***Keep Tennessee Beautiful***

Keep Tennessee Beautiful (KTnB) is an adjunct service of the University of Memphis and provides expertise in litter prevention education, litter law enforcement, community enhancement through beautification, and volunteer recruitment and management. TDOT spends more than \$23.2 million each year on litter pickup and prevention education activities. In order to reduce those costs over time, Tennesseans must recognize the negative impacts on the environment, health, safety, economic prosperity, and natural scenic beauty of Tennessee, and the financial costs associated with litter. Keep America Beautiful's (KAB) national program model is a way for the public to quantify and rectify those costs.



Figure 10. Program logo for Keep Tennessee Beautiful.

*In 2023, KTnB was awarded \$1,639,315. This allowed for grants to local law enforcement and support of local affiliate initiatives.*



In 2023, \$1,639,315 was awarded to KTnB to serve as the statewide affiliate for Keep America Beautiful, administer its own programming, and assist local-level KAB affiliates in 34 Tennessee communities. This grant funding allowed KTnB staff to administer a new series of competitive grants to local law enforcement agencies and to financially support local affiliate litter prevention and beautification initiatives.

The KTnB Advisory Council was established under Governor McWherter’s Executive Order #18 in September 1989. The Council is comprised of 14 citizen appointees and ex-officio members from Tennessee State Departments. Appointed by the Governor, citizen members serve rotating terms and follow their by-laws for the betterment of Tennessee as an attractive, safe, and healthy place to live and visit. Through policy advisement, the Council sets direction for KTnB and all local-level affiliates.

<b>West Tennessee Affiliates</b>	<b>Middle Tennessee Affiliates</b>	<b>East Tennessee Affiliates</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep Bartlett Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep McNairy Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Chester County Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Paris/Henry County Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Tipton County Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Lakeland Beautiful</li> <li>• Memphis City Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Jackson Beautiful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep Putnam County Beautiful Clean Commission</li> <li>• Keep Williamson Beautiful</li> <li>• Metro Beautification &amp; Environment Commission</li> <li>• Keep Maury Beautiful</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Statewide</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep Knoxville Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Greene County Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Sevier Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Soddy-Daisy Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Kingsport Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Morristown-Hamblen Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Carter County Beautiful</li> <li>• Scenic Cities Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Monroe County Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Jefferson Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Union County Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Jonesborough Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Bristol Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Cleveland &amp; Bradley County Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Anderson County Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Blount County Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Cocke County Beautiful</li> <li>• Keep Roane Litter Free</li> </ul>

**Figure 10.** List of Keep America Beautiful affiliate organizations in Tennessee.

Highlights of KTnB Activities during 2023 include:

- *Great American Cleanup Kickoff:* In March 2023, KTnB hosted the annual Great American Cleanup Kickoff event in Paris Landing State Park, Tennessee. Governor Bill Lee proclaimed March 2023 as “Keep Tennessee Beautiful Month.” At the event, special recognition and award was given to “Love Where You Live” recipient Diann McGuire, of Keep Paris/ Henry County Beautiful. The other award “Leader Against Litter” was given to Councilwoman Rhonda Logan of Memphis City Beautiful. The event serves as a recognition of the hard work citizens from across the state put forth in litter cleanup/prevention, as well as a rally to continue and improve upon that effort.
- *Great American Cleanup:* Following the kickoff event, Keep Tennessee Beautiful rallied communities statewide to host and participate in Great American Cleanups during the months of March, April, and May. In 2023, Great American Cleanups in Tennessee communities netted 445,344 pounds of litter collected, 69,879 pounds of which were recycled. All told, the cleanup events involved 8,286 volunteers who volunteered 23,2367 hours in litter collection and the planting of 650,123 trees and flowering plants in their communities. 205 Tennessee communities hosted and participated in Great American Cleanup events.



**Figure 11.** A volunteer student group stretches ahead of a “Trashercise” Great American Cleanup event in Chester County in April 2023.

- *“Trashercise Across Tennessee”*: Trashercise was the theme of Great American Cleanups in 2023 and is an opportunity to get fit and give back by collecting trash individually or hosting a small cleanup in a community. Participants were encouraged to log pounds of trash collected, as well as volunteer time through a virtual race app. A goal of hosting an event in all 95 counties was set. The success of past local Trashercise events in Leiper’s Fork, Tennessee inspired KTnB to carry the theme statewide. KTnB provided trash bags, safety vests, hand sanitizer, gloves, and t-shirts to volunteers and those hosting a local Trashercise events. In 2023, there were 27 Trashercise events held across Tennessee.
- *2023 Keep TN Beautiful State Conference*: KTnB hosted its biennial conference in Chattanooga in September 2023, gathering affiliates, local Litter Grant coordinators, program partners, and the public. 2023 also marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Keep Tennessee Beautiful, so the conference served as an extra special anniversary celebration as well as an educational opportunity. The conference consisted of two days full of educational sessions, informative speakers, networking opportunities, and recognition of accomplishments for participants and partners of the Keep Tennessee Beautiful network. KAB President and CEO Jenny Lawson were also in attendance. The conference concluded with the Awards of Excellence luncheon, where exemplary



**Figure 12.** Group photo of award recipients at the TDOT/KTnB Biennial Conference in Hamilton County in September 2023.

participants/partners of the Keep Tennessee Beautiful network were recognized for their accomplishments in impactful leadership or innovative programming. A total of \$55,000 in cash prizes were dispersed to award recipients.

- *Litter Law Enforcement Grants:* In cooperation with TDOT, KTnB offered a 2022-2023 round of grants to Tennessee municipal police departments. The goal of the grant was to bring about behavior change and increase public awareness of Tennessee's statewide litter problem. By focusing on the enforcement of the state litter laws, a clear message to the public is sent that addressing litter and blight is a major issue of concern and a priority for local law enforcement. The presence of litter is hazardous and harmful to road safety, wildlife, property values, the tourism industry, and so much more. In year two of the program, 10 police departments received litter law trainings from Keep Tennessee Beautiful. Two arrests were made for crimes discovered on a stop for littering, 16 written citations were given, 346 warning citations given for uncovered loads, 256.75 patrol hours worked by officers dedicated to litter prevention, 5 cameras provided to be placed at illegal dump sites, over 4,400 people engaged by law enforcement, 1,942 tarps and cords provided for covered load awareness, and 620 pounds of trash collected.
- *State Agency Partnership Recognition:* At its annual conference, KAB recognized KTnB for its KTnB State Agency Partnerships with TDOT, the Tennessee Department of Tourism Development (TDTD), and Tennessee State Parks.
- *Cigarette Litter Prevention Grant:* In 2023, KTnB was awarded a \$20,000 Cigarette Litter Prevention Grant from KAB. The award amount furnished 160 cigarette litter stands and 600 cigarette litter car/boat ashtrays. Through a partnership, the TDTD 102 receptacles were placed at Tennessee Welcome Centers statewide. A special highlight of this program is that the cigarette butts collected are shipped for free to an organization called *Terracycle*, which recycles the contents of the cigarette butts. The program has already recorded nearly 14 pounds of cigarette butts recycled in less than a year of operation.
- *America Recycles Day:* KTnB hosted a sneaker drive during November 2023 in partnership with Sneaker Impact and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Memphis. Sneaker Impact placed sneaker recycling bins at designated Boys & Girls Club locations throughout Memphis. During the month, 143 pairs of sneakers were donated and repurposed.

- *“Can You Dig This”*: KTnB’s signature planting project is a way to beautify communities by planting native species and flowers, as well as improving recycling efforts by repurposing waste tires into flowerpots. In 2023 “Can You Dig This” events were held in conjunction with affiliates from across Tennessee. These events resulted in the planting of 53 native species of trees and flowers, and the recycling of 14 waste tires.



**Figure 13.** Volunteers plant flowers in repurposed containers made from waste tires at a “Can You Dig This” Event in Shelby County in October 2023.

- *State-Level Affiliates Program*: In 2019, KTnB began a pilot program for a new level of affiliation. This was inspired by Governor Lee’s Executive Order #1 in 2019, to better assist economically distressed counties in Tennessee. The State-Level Affiliate Program is a sister program to becoming a full Keep America Beautiful affiliate through KTnB, with a lesser financial and administrative commitment. This lesser commitment makes affiliation more attainable where funding and staffing can be an obstacle and increases the reach of Keep Tennessee Beautiful. In 2023, Keep Tennessee Beautiful added new State Level Affiliates, solidifying the program beyond a pilot, and bringing the total number of localities participating to 9. These State-Level affiliate communities include Wayne County, Lewis County, City of Loudon, Unicoi County, Town of Collierville, Dyer County, Lauderdale County, City of Goodlettsville, and Franklin County.

### ***Adopt-A-Highway***

In addition to partnerships and grants, TDOT administers the Adopt-A-Highway program so that all Tennesseans can do their part in combating litter in their communities. The free, all-volunteer program has been around since 1989, and is an excellent way for individuals, families, or groups of all sizes to give back.



**Figure 14.** Logo for TDOT’s Adopt-A-Highway program.



Adopt-A-Highway is completely free for those who commit to cleaning up a TDOT-approved 2-mile stretch of roadside each quarter. Volunteers must be at least 12 years of age. All volunteers must sign a waiver, at which point they are given plastic bags, caution signs and safety vests by the nearest TDOT district office. Participants in the program are rewarded with a free roadside recognition panel displaying the Adopt-A-Highway volunteers contribute a great deal to TDOT and to their communities.



**Figures 15-17.** Adopt-A-Highway volunteers pose with their group's roadside recognition panel during cleanups in Montgomery County (top left), Wilson County (bottom left), and Sumner County (right)

Ms. Lywenda Black is the District Coordinator for Macon, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale & Wilson counties in middle Tennessee. Ms. Black explains her enthusiasm for working with Adopt-A-Highway volunteers by saying:

*"I've been the Adopt-A-Highway coordinator for this part of Tennessee for 12 years. I really enjoy working with people who take pride in the place they live and who want to see the roadways clean. Adopt-A-Highway is great program because it is a way for some of our citizens to give back to the community. I'm always excited to work with our volunteers"*



## ***Nobody Trashes Tennessee***

Launched in June 2017, Nobody Trashes Tennessee is Tennessee's official statewide litter prevention campaign. Nobody Trashes Tennessee aims to raise awareness of litter behavior and encourage Tennesseans to be part of the solution to end littering. The campaign is rooted in Tennessee-specific litter research conducted in 2016 and updated in October 2022. More on research can be found in the next section of this report.



**Figure 19.** Logo for TDOT's Nobody Trashes Tennessee litter prevention campaign.

In 2023, the Nobody Trashes Tennessee campaign garnered 330 independent pieces of media coverage from local, statewide, and national outlets, resulting in more than 6.92 million coverage views. The campaign had nearly 185,000 engagements on social media and drove nearly 187,000 visitors to the campaign website. These metrics helped Nobody Trashes Tennessee build brand awareness and public consciousness around litter behavior. Aided awareness of the campaign continues to grow year over year, with 26 percent of Tennesseans having seen or heard of the campaign (up from 13% in 2022). The campaign also included the release of a new 30 second public service announcement which received extremely positive feedback when tested in focus groups, with respondents saying the video presented the litter problem in a unique and creative way and grabbed the attention of viewers.

### **Additional 2023 Nobody Trashes Tennessee campaign highlights include:**

- *Website Additions:* New landing pages and content were added to the Nobody Trashes Tennessee website. This includes the Educational Resources landing page, which provides youth of all ages with resources to learn about littering and waste reduction, and empowering them to become stewards of the environment, ensuring a cleaner, more sustainable future. A feature to save the Litter Hotline number directly to your phone was also added to facilitate the ease of access to report litterbugs.

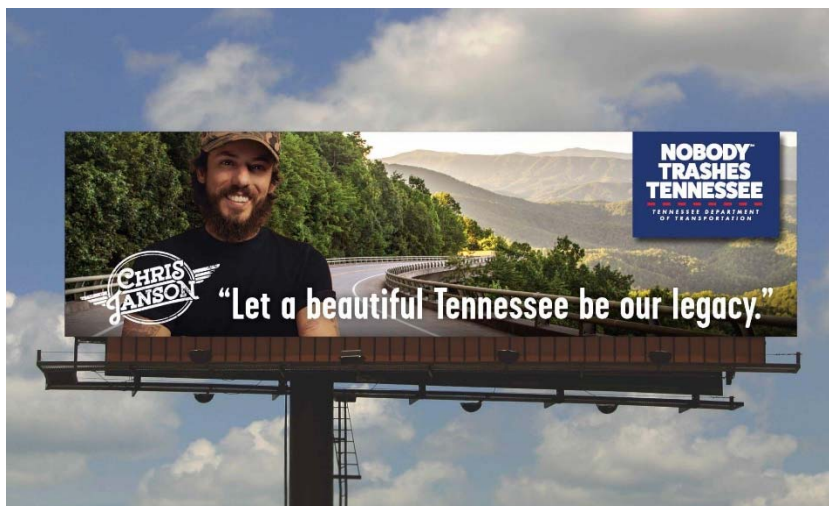


- *Sports Partnerships:* The campaign partnered with several colleges and sports teams across the state including University of Memphis, University of Tennessee,



**Figure 20.** Bus shelter at Middle Tennessee State University in Rutherford County. Campaign artwork includes a QR code for students to sign up to get involved with the Nobody Trashes Tennessee campaign.

Knoxville, Middle Tennessee State University, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Vanderbilt University, Tennessee State University, Nashville Sounds, Memphis Grizzlies, Memphis Redbirds, Nashville Soccer Club and the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association. Through these partnerships the campaign aims to promote a litter-free environment to institutions that have influential reach, diverse audiences, and resources that can amplify the campaign's message and foster a sense of collective responsibility.



**Figure 21.** Conceptual artwork for a billboard promoting the Nobody Trashes Tennessee message featuring celebrity partner Chris Janson.

- *Celebrity Partnership:* In February, Nobody Trashes Tennessee announced a partnership with country music star and conservation enthusiast, Chris Janson. As part of the partnership, Janson educated Tennesseans about the health and safety impacts of litter on our roadways and

waterways through public service announcements, outdoor advertising, and social media channels.

- *Scouts Patch Program:* In October, the campaign announced a partnership with the Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee. This partnership offered multiple ways to earn a Nobody Trashes Tennessee patch including participating in a community cleanup or by completing litter prevention educational resources. This patch program was the most successful patch program launch the council has ever participated in. Within the first two months, 1,000 patches were distributed. The other two Girl Scouts councils across the state are joining the program in 2024 followed by six Boy Scouts councils.



**Figure 22.** Image of the Nobody Trashes Tennessee patch, available through the Scouts Patch Program.



**Figure 23.** An infographic of results from the third annual “No Trash November” mini campaign in 2023.

- *No Trash November:* In November, the third annual No Trash November initiative removed more than 86,000 pounds of litter from Tennessee roadsides. The month-long initiative removed litter from roadsides during a time of year when outdoor activities and mowing typically wanes. Litter cleanups during this time of year also promote cleaner communities for upcoming holiday celebrations, visiting families, and others who visit our beautiful state. No Trash November kicked off with cleanups at Tennessee State University and Vanderbilt University. Keep Tennessee Beautiful affiliates, TDOT Grantees, dozens of Adopt-A-Highway volunteers, youth groups, and



neighborhood groups across Tennessee followed with their own community cleanups. A November 29 cleanup with the University of Tennessee, Knoxville helped to wrap up the initiative.

Nobody Trashes Tennessee, as with all of TDOT's litter prevention programming, is serviced by a statewide network of local partners, grantees, and volunteers, who amplify the campaign's efforts and reach. The campaign would not be a success without these continuing partnerships.



**Figures 24-25.** Memphis City Beautiful volunteers from Shelby County (left) and The Cleanup Kids volunteers from Hamilton County (right) participated in “No Trash November” cleanup events.



**Figure 26.** Styrofoam and plastic bottles appear on a shoreline ahead of a cleanup of Nickajack Lake in Hamilton County in April 2023.

# Program Highlights

## Celebrating 40 Years of Litter Grants

The enabling legislation which funds TDOT's Litter Grant Program is made possible by Tennessee's Soft Drink and Malt Beverage industries and was officially signed into law by Governor Lamar R. Alexander in 1981. After an initial revenue collection period, it was decided TDOT needed to partner with county government to implement a new litter prevention and education program at the local level. The first TDOT Litter Grant contracts were written to county governments to begin July 1, 1983.

This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Litter Grant Program, which directly impacts thousands of Tennesseans each year and continues to improve communities in all 95 Tennessee counties.

TDOT Commissioner Butch Eley marked the anniversary by noting:

*"TDOT's Litter Grant Program funding model ensures a comprehensive and collaborative approach to litter prevention. TDOT receives funding from private industry, and grants to local governments, and involves non-profits to organize litter cleanup programs based on each communities' specific needs. TDOT's Litter Grant Program is making a real difference in keeping Tennessee safe and beautiful and we are thrilled to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the program!"*

In marking the 40-year anniversary, TDOT announced a new logo. The logo is used in internal presentations and various grant training resources and forms. TDOT staff also travelled to Weakley County in December 2023 to honor Weakley County's Litter Grant Coordinator, Ms. Landa Harris. According to program records, Ms. Harris is the longest serving Litter Grant Coordinator, and the only Tennessean to serve her community as Litter Grant Coordinator for all 40 years of the TDOT Litter Grant Program. TDOT and KTnB staff issued a West Tennessee



Figures 27-28. Logos developed for TDOT's Litter Grant Program, announced in July 2023.



media advisory noting Ms. Harris' remarkable work anniversary and held a congratulatory luncheon with Ms. Harris' coworkers and Weakley County officials at the Weakley County Highway Department in Ms. Harris' honor.

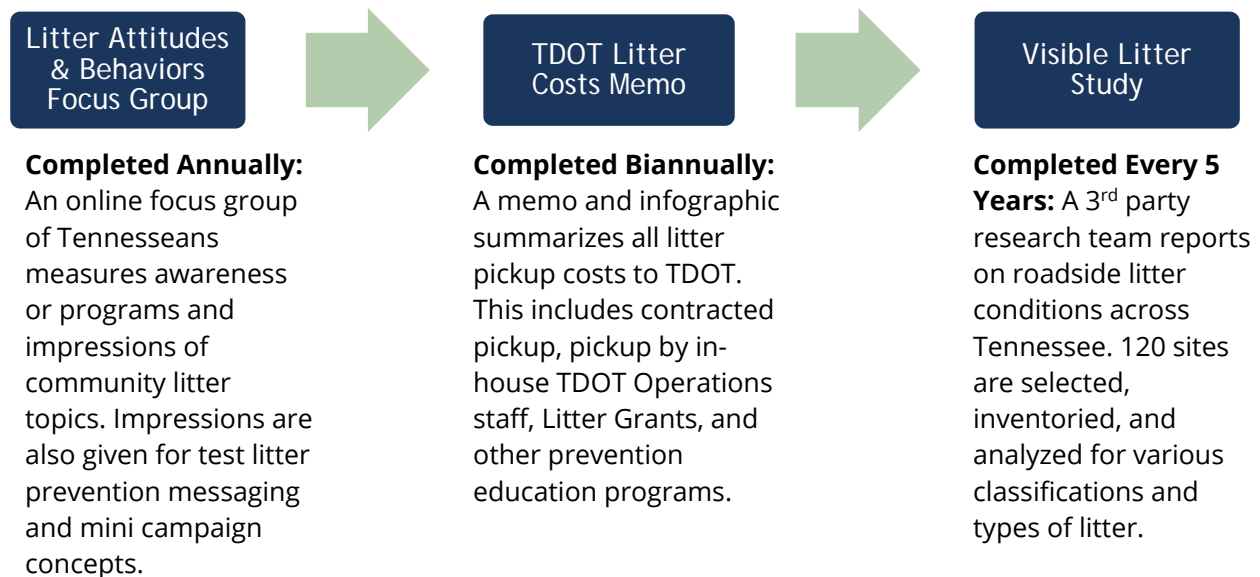


**Figures 29-30.** TDOT and KTnB staff gather at the Weakley County Highway Department in December 2023 to honor Ms. Landa Harris on her 40 years of service at Weakley County's Litter Grant Coordinator.

### ***Updating Tennessee-Specific Research***

TDOT's litter prevention programming, including the public messaging that constitutes the Nobody Trashes Tennessee campaign, is rooted in Tennessee-specific litter research. To better ensure that messaging is striking the correct tone, and that programming is addressing the correct needs, TDOT routinely updates its litter research products. These included conducting a Litter Attitudes and Behaviors Focus Group, TDOT Litter Costs Memo, and a Visible Litter Study. The figure below provides a brief description of these research products.





**Figure 31.** A progression of how Tennessee-specific litter research is developed and updated.

TDOT publishes the full, detailed reports of these litter research products on the Nobody Trashes Tennessee website, at <https://nobodytrashestennessee.com/our-litter-research/>. Tennessee-specific findings and emerging trends from the research products include:

- Litter on Tennessee roadways has reduced by 12% since 2016.
- There are more than 88 million pieces of litter on the state's roadways at any given time.
- Most littered items on Tennessee roadways are plastic at 37% and paper at 22%.
- Many littered items from paper and plastics are from multi-layer film plastics or lightweight materials.
- 46.1% of litter is classified as intentional litter, meaning it's thrown right out of vehicle windows.
- Top 5 types of intentional litter are juice and soft drink containers, cigarette packs/lighters/matches, takeout food packaging, plastic bags and snack food packaging.

- 53.9% is considered unintentional litter, which includes vehicle debris and trash flying out of uncovered pickup truck beds.
- Top 5 types of unintentional litter are paper, plastic, glass, home food packaging, and tires.
- Juice and soft drink items have increased 14.2% between 2016 and 2022.

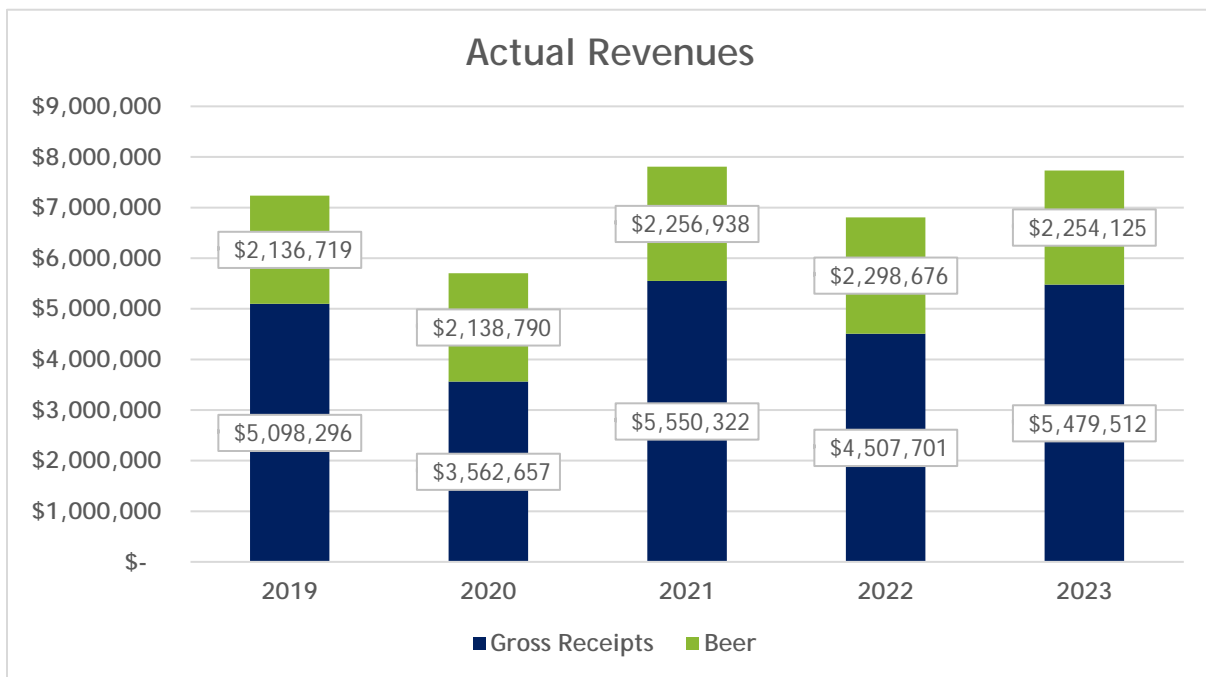


**Figure 31.** Volunteers from the Columbia Firefighters Association during a cleanup in Maury County November 2023.

# References

## Program Revenues

In 1981, the Soft Drink and Malt Beverage Industries took a comprehensive, proactive approach to prevent their bottles and other trash from becoming litter along Tennessee roadways. As good corporate citizens, the industry lobbied to establish a tax on their products to help fund litter prevention throughout Tennessee. The tax revenues, from the gross receipts of soft drink sales and the production of a barrel of beer are codified in TCA § 67-4-402 and TCA § 57-5-201 respectively and have provided TDOT with a dependable revenue source which has steadily grown over time. For Fiscal Year 2022-2023, TDOT received a total of \$7,733,637.11, which is broken down in Table 1 below.



**Table 1.** Actual Gross Receipts and Beer tax revenues received by TDOT for the last 5 fiscal years (FY19-23).

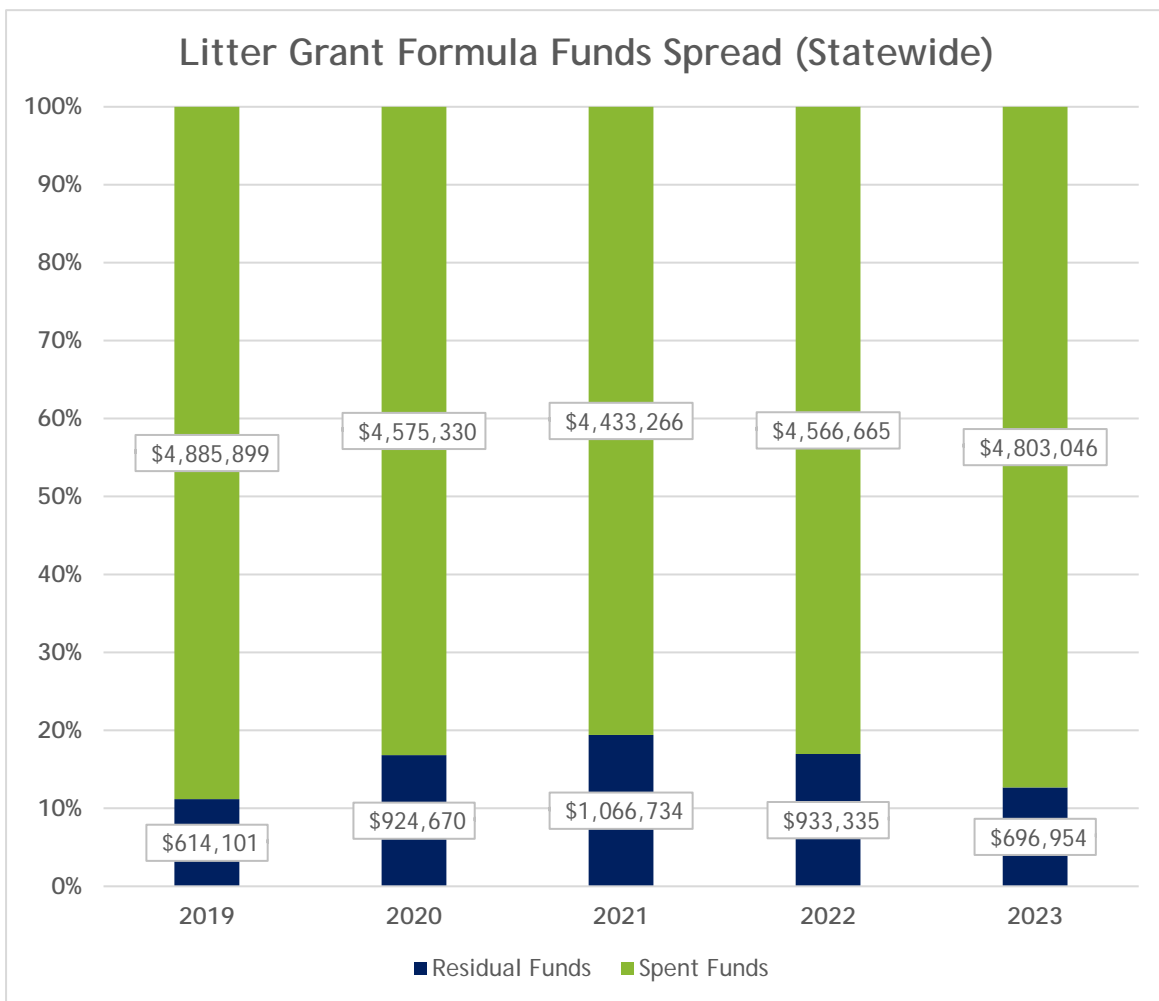
Revenues that come to TDOT are dedicated for the specific purpose of litter prevention, abatement, and education. Unspent revenues are returned to a fund separate from the Highway Trust Fund and used to enable projects such as the Nobody Trashes Tennessee



campaign and Special Litter Grants, which are offered every few years. The laws also allow TDOT discretion on how to best use the revenues to clean up and prevent litter, and matters related to litter. In recent years, this has meant expanded support for waterway cleanups and support for local recycling programs. Over time, additional programs have been added (Keep Tennessee Beautiful, Litter Hotline, Nobody Trashes Tennessee, and Adopt-A-Highway) which have all been supported by these revenues.

### Litter Grant Spending

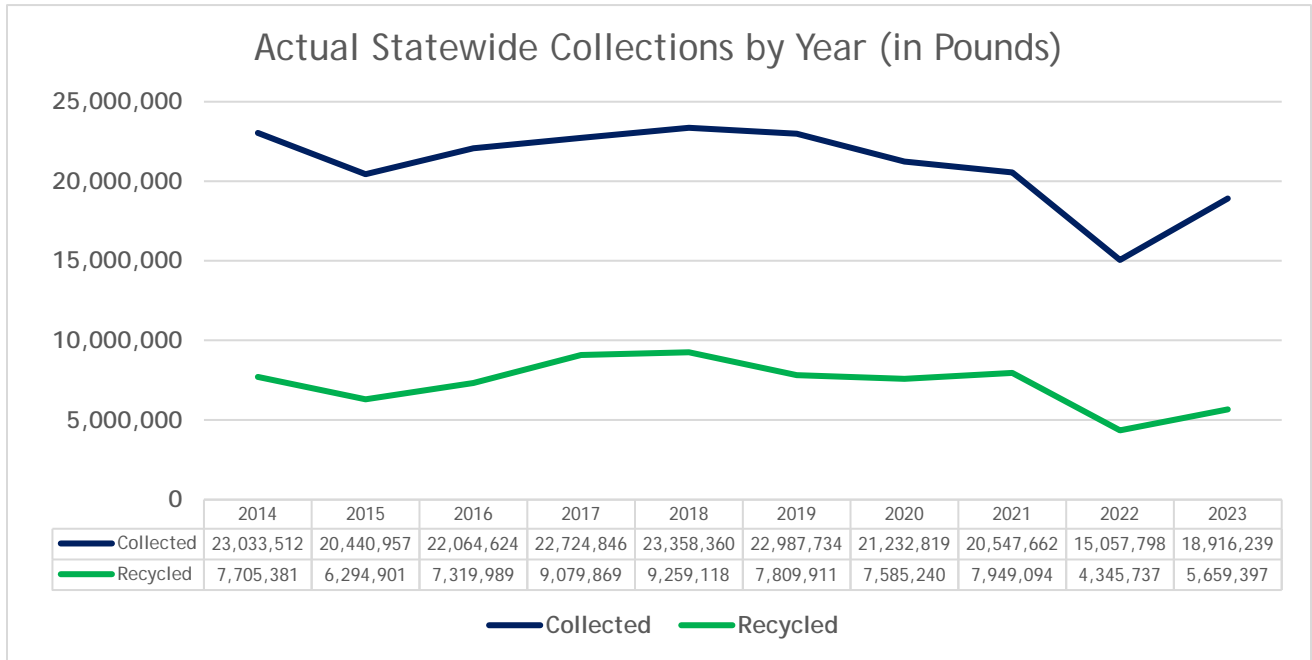
Each year, there are counties participating in the Litter Grant Program that do not spend their full formula allocation. The chart below shows the statewide amounts spent and left as residual funds on litter grant contracts over the past five fiscal years. Since Litter Grant Program funding is designated, these residual funds are collected and utilized on special litter projects.



**Table 2.** Residual and spend Litter Grant funds totaled across all 95 counties in Tennessee for the last 5 fiscal years (FY19-23).

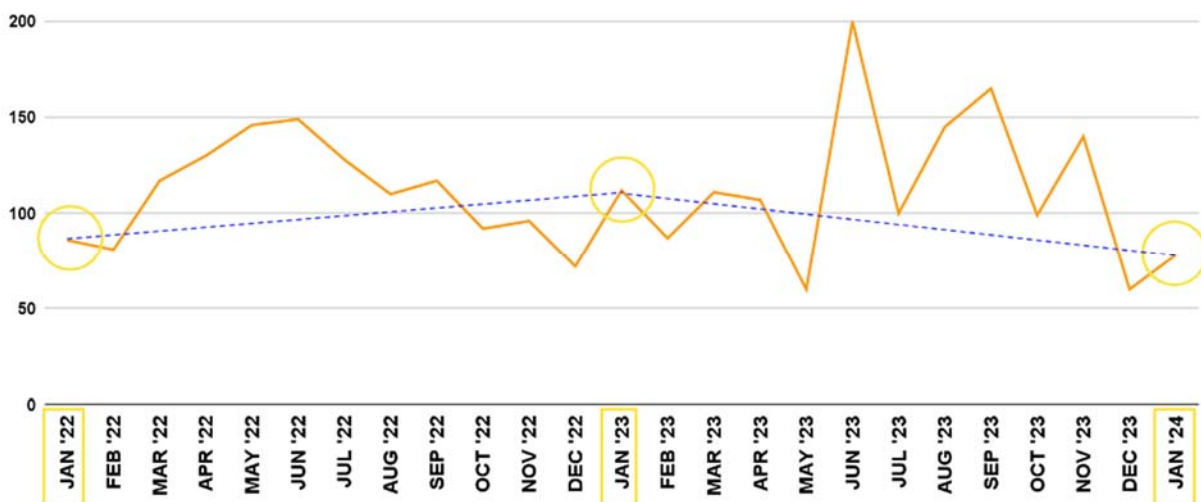
As a note, the cost of funding local litter pickup and prevention education programs continues to rise as commodities and personnel costs increase. This is becoming a burden to some counties, as TDOT has not raised the statewide distribution of \$5.5 million since 2017.

### Litter Grant Tonnage



**Table 3.** Roadside litter tonnage collected and recycled as part of the TDOT Litter Grant Program for the past 10 fiscal years (FY14-23).

### Litter Hotline Reports



**Table 4.** Litter Hotline reports filed for the previous 2 years, by month, between January 2022 and January 2024.

## Litter Grant Funding Distribution by County

For the Fiscal Year 2023-2024, below is a list of total funds granted to Tennessee county governments for litter pickup, abatement, and prevention education. 71.1% of all actual revenues for 2023 were granted to county litter pickup and prevention education programs.

Anderson	\$ 52,100	Hamilton	\$ 127,500	Morgan	\$ 44,200
Bedford	\$ 51,900	Hancock	\$ 44,200	Obion	\$ 48,800
Benton	\$ 44,200	Hardeman	\$ 45,700	Overton	\$ 44,600
Bledsoe	\$ 44,200	Hardin	\$ 48,200	Perry	\$ 44,200
Blount	\$ 74,000	Hawkins	\$ 55,500	Pickett	\$ 44,200
Bradley	\$ 65,400	Haywood	\$ 44,200	Polk	\$ 44,200
Campbell	\$ 47,700	Henderson	\$ 48,800	Putnam	\$ 59,300
Cannon	\$ 44,200	Henry	\$ 51,400	Rhea	\$ 44,200
Carroll	\$ 48,800	Hickman	\$ 48,900	Roane	\$ 51,800
Carter	\$ 49,700	Houston	\$ 44,200	Robertson	\$ 56,600
Cheatham	\$ 44,200	Humphreys	\$ 44,200	Rutherford	\$ 124,100
Chester	\$ 44,200	Jackson	\$ 44,200	Scott	\$ 44,200
Claiborne	\$ 48,500	Jefferson	\$ 52,700	Sequatchie	\$ 44,200
Clay	\$ 44,200	Johnson	\$ 44,200	Sevier	\$ 69,600
Cocke	\$ 48,800	Knox	\$ 171,400	Shelby	\$ 251,100
Coffee	\$ 52,600	Lake	\$ 44,200	Smith	\$ 44,200
Crockett	\$ 44,200	Lauderdale	\$ 44,200	Stewart	\$ 44,200
Cumberland	\$ 63,000	Lawrence	\$ 58,500	Sullivan	\$ 81,300
Davidson	\$ 188,600	Lewis	\$ 44,200	Sumner	\$ 87,800
Decatur	\$ 44,200	Lincoln	\$ 52,100	Tipton	\$ 52,200
DeKalb	\$ 44,200	Loudon	\$ 49,200	Trousdale	\$ 44,200
Dickson	\$ 54,400	Macon	\$ 44,200	Unicoi	\$ 44,200
Dyer	\$ 47,300	Madison	\$ 63,200	Union	\$ 44,200
Fayette	\$ 51,600	Marion	\$ 44,200	Van Buren	\$ 44,200
Fentress	\$ 44,200	Marshall	\$ 45,100	Warren	\$ 49,900
Franklin	\$ 50,300	Mauzy	\$ 67,700	Washington	\$ 72,100
Gibson	\$ 57,500	McMinn	\$ 55,100	Wayne	\$ 45,500
Giles	\$ 52,200	McNairy	\$ 47,400	Weakley	\$ 52,800
Grainger	\$ 44,200	Meigs	\$ 44,200	White	\$ 44,200
Greene	\$ 67,400	Monroe	\$ 53,200	Williamson	\$ 98,300
Grundy	\$ 44,200	Montgomery	\$ 91,300	Wilson	\$ 78,000
Hamblen	\$ 47,700	Moore	\$ 44,200	<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$ 5,500,000</b>

Table 5. TDOT Litter Grant funding amounts for each Tennessee county during the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

# Nobody Trashes Tennessee Campaign Performance



## FY-2023 CAMPAIGN PERFORMANCE

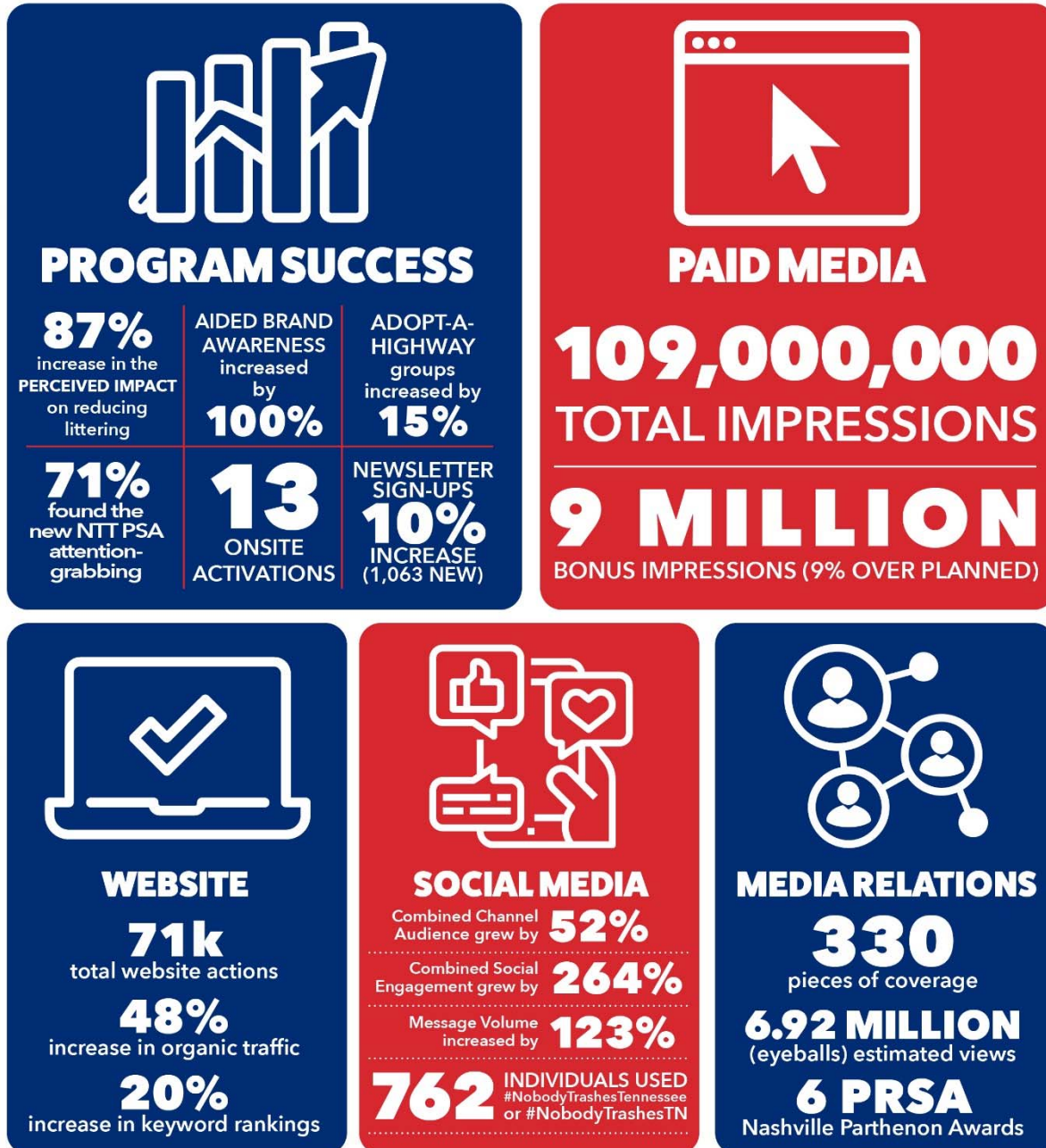


Table 6. Infographic displaying key 2023 performance metrics for the Nobody Trashes Tennessee campaign.



## 2023 TDOT/KTnB Award Recipients

The following list of individuals and programs were recognized for leadership, innovation, and impact in beautifying Tennessee communities in 2023. Love Where You Live and Leader Against Litter recipients were honored at the Great American Cleanup kickoff event in Henry County in March 2023. All other awardees were recognized at the TDOT/Keep Tennessee Beautiful Biennial Conference in Chattanooga in September 2023.

<p><b>Love Where You Live</b></p> <p>Ms. Diann McGuire, Director Keep Paris/Henry County Beautiful</p>	<p><b>Leader Against Litter</b></p> <p>Ms. Rhonda Logan, Council Member City of Memphis</p>
<p><b>Public Education Award – First Place</b></p> <p>Memphis City Beautiful Slam Dunk Litter League</p>	<p><b>Public Education Award – Second Place</b></p> <p>Keep Chester County Beautiful Youth Partnerships</p>
<p><b>Public Education Award – Third Place</b></p> <p>Keep Soddy Daisy Beautiful Arbor Day Program</p>	<p><b>Public Participation – Great American Cleanup</b></p> <p>Metro Beautification &amp; Env. Commission</p>
<p><b>Public Participation – Adopt-A-Highway</b></p> <p>Colonial Chemical</p>	<p><b>Public Participation – Water Cleanups</b></p> <p>Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful</p>
<p><b>Edith Heller Lifetime Achievement</b></p> <p>Mr. Frank “Bucky” Edmondson, Director Division of Natural Resources, TVA</p>	<p><b>Judge L. E. Potter Law Enforcement Award</b></p> <p>Mr. Glennis Monday, Environmental Officer Campbell County Sheriff’s Office</p>
<p><b>Shawn Bible Community Leader Award</b></p> <p>Ms. Cereice Morris Bath Springs, TN</p>	<p><b>M. L. Kennedy Outstanding Coordinator</b></p> <p>Ms. Kathleen Gibi, Director Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful</p>
<p><b>TDOT Litter Grant Program</b></p> <p>Chester County Litter Grant Program</p>	<p><b>TDOT Litter Grant Program</b></p> <p>Monroe County Litter Grant Program</p>
<p><b>KTnB National Affiliate – First Place</b></p> <p>Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful</p>	<p><b>KTnB National Affiliate – Second Place</b></p> <p>Memphis City Beautiful</p>
<p><b>KTnB National Affiliate – Third Place</b></p> <p>Keep Sevier County Beautiful</p>	<p><b>KTnB State Affiliate – First Place</b></p> <p>Keeping the Valley Beautiful</p>
<p><b>KTnB State Affiliate – Second Place</b></p> <p>Keep Wayne County Beautiful</p>	

## Contact Information

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Vacant			

### TDOT Litter Outreach Programs

TDOT Maintenance Request	(833) TDOT-FIX or (833) 836-8349		
Litter Hotline	(1-877)-8-LITTER or (1-877) 854-8837		tn.gov/TDOT/LitterHotline
Nobody Trashes Tennessee	(615) 741-2877		NobodyTrashesTennessee.com
Adopt-A-Highway	(615) 253-1977		tn.gov/TDOT/AdoptAHighway
Litter Grant Program	(615) 741-0803		tn.gov/TDOT/LitterGrant

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**NOBODY TRASHES  
TENNESSEE<sup>SM</sup>**

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TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

**Tennessee Department of Transportation**

**Highway Beautification Office**

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**505 Deaderick Street**

**Nashville, TN 37243**

**Phone: 615-741-2877 • Fax: 615-532-5995**

**Litter Hotline: 1-877-8-LITTER**

<https://www.tn.gov/tdot/LitterGrant>