

The Honorable Senator Frank S. Niceley (sen.frank.niceley@capitol.tn.gov)
The Honorable Representative Dennis Powers (rep.dennis.powers@capitol.tn.gov)

“Your Name”

“Your Address”

As the 111th General Assembly gets underway with new leadership provided by Governor Bill Lee, and a new emphasis on rural Tennessee, I would ask for your support in quickly bringing needed transportation infrastructure to Union County.

Prioritization for improvements to State Routes 33 and 61 are currently being considered by the Tennessee Department of Transportation, both projects that were funded by the Tennessee Improve Act. These projects are vitally important for the safety and economic prosperity of the citizens of Union County.

Investments in rural traffic safety have been found to result in significant reductions in serious traffic crashes. According to Tennessee's Integrated Traffic Analysis Network (*TITAN*) Fatal Crash Locations, three fatal crashes occurred on SR 33 from the Knox County Line to Maynardville, and 81 accidents occurred on this same stretch of highway, 30 involving injury, from October 2015 to June 2018. According to TITAN, 86 accidents occurred on SR 61 East from Maynardville to the Grainger County Line, 20 involving injury, during this same period.

Union County has not participated in Tennessee's economic expansion. Union County is one of only 6 counties in the state of Tennessee to not have a jobs announcement under the 8 years of economic expansion fostered by policies of the Haslam Administration. Union County is one of the nation's most economically depressed rural counties with the 2018 Distressed Communities Index classifying Union County in the bottom 8.8% of all counties with 43.8% of adults not working, a poverty rate of 23.5 %, a negative 2 percent business growth and an overall distress score of 91.2.

The intent of the General Assembly, in TCA 54-5-102(b), was that all county seats should be connected by a four-lane highway to the nearest interstate highway by the best route available. Union County remains one of only six counties in the state to not have four-lane access to the nearest interstate highway, access that completion of the SR-33 project would provide.

With an economy based largely on small scale manufacturing, agriculture, natural resource extraction and tourism, the quality of Union County's transportation system plays a vital role in the county's economic growth and quality of life.

I ask for your support prioritizing much needed transportation spending for improvements to State Routes 33 and 61 in Union County.

Sincerely,

“Your Name”