

BEFORE THE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE BODY

FOR UNION COUNTY, TENNESSEE

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY AND PAVING THE WAY FOR ECONOMIC PROSPERITY IN UNION
COUNTY**

WHEREAS, traffic history has shown a steady increase in average annual daily traffic count with an average of over 12,000 cars daily traveling SR 33 from the Knox County Line to Maynardville and almost 4,000 daily on SR 61 East from Maynardville to the Grainger County Line inclusive of the Walker Ford connector near the SR 33 intersection, and

WHEREAS, the construction of Paulette Elementary School on SR 33 from the Knox County Line to Maynardville has created an additional hazard for commuters, parents and children, and

WHEREAS, according to Tennessee's Integrated Traffic Analysis Network (TITAN) Fatal Crash Locations, three fatal crashes have occurred in the last 15 months on SR 33 from the Knox County Line to Maynardville, and

WHEREAS, according to TITAN, 81 accidents have occurred on this same stretch of highway, 30 involving injury, from 10 October 2015 to present, and

WHEREAS, according to TITAN, 86 accidents have occurred on SR 61 East from Maynardville to the Grainger County Line, 20 involving injury, from 10 October 2015 to present, and

WHEREAS, according to the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) 11 fatalities occurred on SR 33 from Maynardville to Tazewell, most in Union County, in 2003 and 2004, and

WHEREAS, the TDOT 2014 Strategic Highway Safety Plan found rural collectors and local roads such as SR 33 and SR 61 accounted for nearly the same number of fatal crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled as all urban classifications combined, and

WHEREAS, according to TRIP, a National Transportation Research Group, the fatality rate on Tennessee's non-interstate rural roads in 2015 was more than two and a half times greater than on all other roads in the state, and

WHEREAS, investments in rural traffic safety have been found to result in significant reductions in serious traffic crashes, and

WHEREAS, according to TDOT's Long Range Transportation Plan Update 15 September 2015 right-of-way acquisition is completed for SR 33 from the Knox County Line to SR 144 , and

WHEREAS, construction typically begins with-in 18 months of right-of-way acquisition yet SR 33 from the Knox County Line is currently on the TDOT Notable Unfunded Transportation Infrastructure Project List, and

WHEREAS, the intent of TCA § 54- 5-102 is for all county seats to be connected by a four-lane highway to the nearest interstate highway by the best route available and the Commissioner of Transportation is receiving financial aid for their construction, and

WHEREAS, in 2008 the East Tennessee North Rural Planning Organization provided the list of primary justifications and issues for improving SR 33, at Attachment 1 to this Resolution, in Transportation Planning Report PIN # 110339.00, and

WHEREAS, the region's industries and commercial businesses require adequate transportation facilities to operate at their potential with SR 33 and SR 61 serving as a major link to the economic hub of Knoxville and the converging interstate system in Knox County, and

WHEREAS, SR 33 and SR 61 provide the most direct link for Union and Claiborne County residents to travel to jobs in the Knoxville area, and

WHEREAS, the 30th Annual Survey of Corporate Executives conducted in 2016 found highway accessibility ranked the number two site selection factor behind only the availability of skilled labor, and

WHEREAS, an enhanced regional transportation system to attract new commercial and industrial employers would be expected to provide new jobs, and

WHEREAS, an adequate transportation system is directly correlated to economic viability and vitality and to meet future transportation demands the improvement of the SR 33 and SR 61 corridor is fundamental to expand the local economic base to support the state's economy, and

WHEREAS, Tennessee has invested significantly in industrial/economic development resulting in record economic growth posting an 8.7 percent gain in the number of new business filings in 2017, compared to the first three months of 2016, marking the 22nd consecutive quarter of growth, and

WHEREAS, Union County is one of the nation's most economically depressed rural counties with the 2017 Distressed Communities Index classifying Union County in the bottom 6.7 % of all counties with 45.9 % of adults not working, a poverty rate of 25.3 %, a negative 7.5 percent business growth and an overall distress score of 93.3, and

WHEREAS, 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, and

WHEREAS, Union County is one of only three counties in the state of Tennessee where the school system and county government are the number one and two employers, and

WHEREAS, Union County has only 13% of residents who both work and live in the same city compared to the Tennessee average of 57% of people who both work and live in the same city, and

WHEREAS, the mean travel time to work is 34.1 minutes and 1.51% of the workforce in Union County have "super commutes" in excess of 90 minutes, and

WHEREAS, according to the Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research, Union County is experiencing population decline that began in 2011, a marked reversal of the 30% population growth rate observed from 1990 to 2000, and without intervention the population decline is expected to extend beyond 2040, and

WHEREAS, Union County is experiencing out-migration, mainly among 20 – 29 year olds, and

WHEREAS, Union County's negative population growth and out-migration brings with it severe negative economic consequences including fewer workers available to businesses, fewer customers to buy their goods and services, and a shrinking tax base all resulting in a severe impact on the finances of government, and

WHEREAS, out-year funding for the SR 33 and SR 61 improvements were included in the Tennessee IMPROVE Act, Improving Manufacturing, Public Roads, and Opportunities for a Vibrant Economy, and the State of Tennessee's Project 95 initiative seeks to elevate the 19 Tennessee counties currently designated as distressed to sustainable levels of economic growth, and

WHEREAS, in the first year of the IMPROVE Act's implementation, 288 – 30 percent – of the 962 projects designated in the legislation are underway and TDOT anticipates project bids to increase by about \$100 million later in 2018, and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Department of Transportation budget for fiscal year 2019 revealed that there is uncertainty surrounding the 47 percent of the department's budget that comes from federal funding which puts the 962 projects listed in the IMPROVE Act in jeopardy and SR 33 and SR 61 projects were not included in the 2019-21 TDOT Multimodal Program, and

WHEREAS, an efficient, safe and well-maintained transportation system provides economic and social benefits by affording individuals access to employment, housing, healthcare, education, goods and services, recreation, entertainment, family, and social activities, and

WHEREAS, it also provides businesses access to suppliers, markets and employees, all critical to a business' level of productivity and ability to expand, and

WHEREAS, reduced accessibility and mobility - as a result of traffic congestion, a lack of adequate capacity, or deteriorated roads, highways, bridges and transit facilities - diminishes a region's quality of life by reducing economic productivity and limiting opportunities for economic, health or social transactions and activities, and

WHEREAS, with an economy based largely on manufacturing, agriculture, natural resource extraction and tourism, the quality of Union Counties transportation system plays a vital role in the county and state's economic growth and quality of life, and

WHEREAS, the need for economic intervention in Union County is a priority for Tennessee as economic expansion and job growth outside the county is exacerbating the dire economic conditions in the county and without support from the Governor, the Commissioners' of Transportation and Economic and Community Development, and Union Counties elected state representatives it could now be up to 14 years before these projects are completed, and

WHEREAS, the Union County Commission recognizes that the single most important investment in Union County to bring jobs and prosperity to the county is an adequate transportation system as it directly correlates to economic viability and vitality and the improvement of the SR 33 and SR 61 corridor is fundamental to Union Counties economic future, and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Union County Legislative body meeting in regular session at Maynardville, Tennessee, on this 11th Day of June, 2018, has adopted this resolution to ask the Governor and the Commissioners' of Transportation and Economic and Community Development to reassess the project priority of the SR 33 and SR 61 improvements given the extreme fundamental need both for public safety and economic prosperity for citizens of Union County, and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Union County Clerk provide this resolution with a cover letter from the Union County Mayor to the Governor, the Commissioner of Transportation, the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, District 8 State Senator Frank Niceley, District 35 Representative Jerry Sexton, and District 36 Representative Dennis Powers, and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Union County Clerk include a standard agenda item on the May and November Union County Commission Agenda and send a letter of invitation two months prior to the meetings to the District 35 and District 36 Representatives asking they brief the Union County Commission and its citizens on the status of the SR 33 and SR 61 improvements, and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption by the governing body upon final reading, the public welfare requiring it.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED IN OPEN MEETING AT MAYNARDVILLE, this _____

Motion to approve by: _____ ; Seconded by: _____

Those voting in the affirmative: _____

Those voting no: _____

Those passing: _____

Chairman

County Mayor

Pam Ailor, County Clerk

Transportation Planning Report PIN # 110339.00 dated April 4, 2008

The East Tennessee North Rural Planning Organization (RPO) comprised of Union, Claiborne, Grainger, Campbell, Scott, and Morgan Counties designated State Route 33 as the prime corridor for study within their six county district.

A adequate transportation system is directly correlated to economic viability and vitality. Therefore, to meet future transportation demands, and expand the economic base to support the state's economy, the improvement of the State Route 33 corridor is fundamental.

An improved transportation corridor that benefits the community with as few disruptions as possible is essential in providing for public safety, future regional growth and quality of life.

In the selection of State Route 33, the RPO employed the following evaluation criteria:

Congestion, Access, and Mobility; Safety and Security; Economic Opportunity; Public and Community Support; Environmental Impact; and Funding. Within these criteria the RPO provided the following list of primary justifications and issues for improving the route:

- Traffic counts: more than 30,000/day, with the highest concentrations from Hwy 144 to Maynardville city limits. (This section is just outside the study's' project limits).
- The smallest community in the county produces more than 2100 AADT.
- Heavily traveled route between the communities in Union County.
- Heavily traveled route servicing SE Kentucky and SW Virginia.
- Heavily traveled by industrial vehicles and trucks, which exacerbates congestion.
- Majority of crashes, including fatalities, in Union County occur on this route; 11 in 2003 and 2004, and already at least one in 2006.
- Community member's note obstructed views that contribute to crashes, as well as dips in the road and heavy traffic.
- Trucks carrying hazardous material have overturned along the narrow, hilly road, contaminating wells, which necessitated that Maynardville UD spend \$2 million for public utilities.
- In its present condition, bike/ped facilities would be impossible.
- Ambulances routinely carry patients from Union County, other TN counties, and KY counties to major hospitals in Knoxville.
- SR 33 is a major corridor for several counties in East Tennessee, as well as counties in SE Kentucky and SW Virginia.
- SR 33 leads directly to county seats of Maynardville in Union County and Tazewell in Claiborne County, which is integral for economic development.
- Improvements to the route will make the area much more attractive to new business and industry, because there will be greater access to hospitals, schools, and other commercial centers.
- Improvements to the route will make the area much more attractive to existing business and industry seeking to expand.

- Improvements would complement existing infrastructure such as water and sewer lines.
- Improvements to the route would increase the area's infrastructure that's necessary for a strong labor force.
- College students heavily travel the route to Lincoln Memorial Univ, UTK, Pellissippi State, and other smaller institutions.
- Improvements would make the interstates more accessible to industry.
- The county is growing at almost double the state average, which necessitates infrastructure improvements.
- Improvements are necessary for access to new upscale residential developments such as Hickory Pointe, North Shores, and Sunset Bay.
- Improvements would stimulate other such development.
- Per capita income should increase with better access to employment.
- Improvements to SR 33 would provide a stimulus to the tourism industry in Union and surrounding counties.
- Improvements would be a positive factor in tourism development in the region.
- Improvements would complement other tourism initiatives ongoing in Union and surrounding counties.
- Improvements to the route are critical to implement the county's five-year strategic plan, created by Union County elected officials, University of TN, and TVA.
- Improvements to the route are consistent with the Nine Counties-One Vision initiative, which addresses many issues related to Knox County and eight surrounding counties in East TN.
- Project endorsed by local officials and stakeholders in the strategic plan.
- Project endorsed by the Chamber of Commerce, Business and Professional Association, and Joint Economic and Community Development Board (JECDB).
- Local consensus that improvements to SR 33 would facilitate economic growth.
- Air quality should improve with congestion relief.
- Cultural sites would be more easily accessible.
- TDOT oversight will ensure minimal environmental issues.
- Local governments are committed to fulfilling their financial obligations assuming funds can be obtained.
- Local governments are committed to working together to obtain funding if necessary.
- A new four-lane bridge over Norris Lake on SR 33 is critical because the existing bridge is only two lanes with no shoulder.
- The current bridge over the Norris Lake contributes to many crashes.
- The Norris Lake Bridge is heavily traveled by those in Union County, Claiborne County, SE Kentucky, and SW Virginia.
- Replacing the Norris Lake Bridge would provide continuity of the route and traffic flow.
- Replacing the Norris Lake Bridge would facilitate easier movement of goods and freight.
- The current Norris Lake Bridge restricts truck and larger vehicle access.