

Hwy 10 Hill Put on Backburner Again

Written by Debbie Gregory
Tuesday, May 14, 2013



Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam and Transportation Commissioner John Schroer recently released the three-year transportation plan and the Highway 10 South Hill project, involving a 1.7 mile stretch, is not included.

In May of 2011, State Senator Mae Beavers and Representative Terri Lynn Weaver announced that the Tennessee Department of Transportation's (TDOT) budget included funds to improve Highway 10, with the first phase of the project to improve the 1.7 mile stretch from Highway 52 going south on Highway 10, which is referred to as the dangerous Highway 10 hill. In August of that same year Governor Haslam stated while in Macon County, that visiting here would certainly help to get Highway 10 the priority it needed. And now folks, it seems once again this project has been put on the backburner.

I sat down with County Mayor Shelvy Linville in a one-on-one discussion last week and he is gravely upset over this promised construction being postponed and the repercussions it will have for the citizens of Macon County.

"I have actually worked on this project, fixing the Highway 10 hill, ever since I have been in office, and that's been over six year now," said Mayor Linville. " Two years ago, in May of 2011, I thought we had this project locked up. We were told they were in the process of doing all the engineering and I understand all that has been completed."

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The Mayor says he was then told the money was going to be put in the Governor's budget for purchase of right-of-way for 2013 and then the money would be put in the budget to start the construction on the hill in 2014. "Now what we are talking about is the top of the hill at Highway 52, 1.7 miles going south on Highway 10. Like I said, I thought we had this project locked up. However, on April 19th, I got a report, which was actually Governor Haslam and Commissioner John Schroer's three-year transportation plan for the State of Tennessee. Of course what that was, was construction projects that were going to be done across the state of Tennessee for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016. And looking at that report, the Highway 10 hill project is not in there. It had been taken out. In fact, there is no construction project in there for Macon County and what is really frustrating is all the road construction in the counties that surround us."

The mayor said he is happy for these other counties, but Clay, Jackson, Smith, Overton, Fentress, and Pickett Counties all have some kind of road construction going on and we don't have anything in Macon County as far as a road project under construction or planned in the next three years.

After receiving the report, Mayor Linville started making some phone calls and he wasn't able to reach anyone and no one return his calls. The Mayor then sat down and wrote the Commissioner a letter that same day, on April 19. He explained that he had reviewed the three-year transportation plan that had recently been released and that he noticed that this 1.7 mile stretch from Highway 52 going south on the Highway 10 hill wasn't in the plan.

"I also sent a copy of that letter to Gov. Bill Haslam, Senator Mae Beavers, Rep. Kelly Keisling, Rep. Terri Lynn Weaver, and Road Supervisor Audie Cook," the mayor said. "I only got one response from Rep. Weaver who called and said she had checked with TDOT and money was in there to purchase the right of way in 2013. I informed Weaver that I knew that, but the money wasn't there for any construction in the next three years."

Rep. Weaver was the only response the mayor received.

"I called Senator Jim Tracy, who is the Transportation Committee Chairman, on Tuesday, May 7, and talked to him about this situation. In fact, he actually returned my call," continued Mayor Linville. "He told me he would talk with Commissioner Schroer about the overlooked Macon County project and see what he could do to help us."

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On Wednesday, May 8, the mayor received a response from Tennessee Transportation Commissioner John Schroer.

According to Schroer, it seems the State Route 10 project wasn't added because of the national highway system enacting what he called MAP-21. "I'm not sure exactly what that is," said Linville, "but long story short is the federal government has reduced the funding, from what I understand, to the state, therefore they had to take out some projects that they were going to do across the State of Tennessee. Well, Highway 10 just happens to be one of them they took out."

Linville says that in every meeting he has been in with Commissioner Schroer and heard him talk in the past, his number one goal was always safety. But now all of a sudden, his number one goal seems to be high volume traffic. Taken from his letter to Mayor Linville, Commission Schroer said, "It is a department priority to allocate our funds throughout the state to ensure an equal distribution to all Tennesseans. State Route 10 is a commitment project and I assure you that as we prepare future budgets, funding for the construction phase of State Route 10 will be given ever consideration in relation to the needs on a state wide basis."

"Well, where is Macon County's part of that equal distribution," asked Linville. "We're not getting any. It's very frustrating and I told him in an E-mail that this was a very dangerous stretch of highway and I told him that it really bothered me to think how many more people will die before we get this road fixed. And I said I assure you, that it will surely happen. And it will, you can bank on that!"

"We have worked on this for years, and I have just almost come to the conclusion that we are not getting the representation that we need to be getting," said Mayor Linville. "You see projects going on in all these other counties and we can't even get the 1.7 miles of this hill fixed. And you know this comment on this Map-21 that Commissioner Schroer speaks of, talking about that they are concentrating now with the National Highway System funding provided to heavy volume traffic. Well, what about all the injury accidents and high volume deaths. That to me should be a higher priority than maybe just a road where you have a few more cars traveling. I'm not going to stop pursuing this and I have asked Senator Jim Tracy to try and arrange a meeting with Governor Haslam and Commissioner Schroer. I want to meet them face-to-face and I am going to ask them if there is another stretch of highway in the State of Tennessee that's had more accidents and more deaths than this hill on Highway 10 South. I want them to look me in the eye and tell me that redoing a road because it has a little bit more traffic is more important than fixing an area where there are a lot of critical injures and fatalities. I think it is

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time we do whatever needs to be done to assure we get some help and our representatives need to get behind us and help fix this road.”

We all know there has to be a problem with the asphalt on that hill because every time it rains you can almost count on their being an accident.

The mayor said that the only governor who has ever done anything for Macon County was Ned Ray McWherter. “I’m not talking politics here, I don’t care if you are a Democrat or Republican, this is a fact. We haven’t gotten anything in Macon County since McWherter left office. If you really think back on it, we didn’t get anything before he came into office. “It’s time other people realized that we need help and we need someone to open their eyes. We’re not asking for a great deal here, we are talking about phase one of Highway 10, that’s 1.7 miles just to rework and straighten, and hopefully prevent somebody else from getting killed in the future.”

“I’ve got a year and four months left in this office and I’m going to do everything I can during this period of time to see if we can’t do something to get the hill fixed,” concluded Mayor Linville.

For additional information call County Mayor Shelvy Linville at 666-2363.

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