

TDOT Commissioner at Groundbreaking

Written by Debbie Gregory
Tuesday, June 17, 2014



Many people have had horrific losses in their lives due to traffic accidents on the deadly Highway 10 South hill and this was reality for countless years. But thanks to Tennessee Department of Transportation Commissioner John Schroer and Macon County Mayor Shelvy Linville everyone gathered last Friday afternoon at the groundbreaking ceremony for the reconstruction project...the new reality.

The circumstances leading to the reconstruction project being finalized began in the spring of 2013 when Mayor Shelvy Linville received the TDOT three-year transportation plan. The Highway 10 South hill project, involving a 1.7 mile stretch, wasn't included. Three weeks later an article appeared on the front page of the Macon County Chronicle entitled "Highway 10 Hill on Backburner Again". This was the first in a series of front page articles that was printed in the Chronicle.

Shortly after the article appeared, a public meeting was set with Tennessee Department of Transportation's Deputy Commissioner and Chief Engineer Paul Degges to discuss Highway 10 in Macon County. He talked about the three phases of a TDOT project and the specifics of State Route 10.

Degges said that the Highway 10 Hill construction project hadn't been cancelled, shelved or anything else. He went on to say that TDOT tried to make sure they spread the money around and the problem was, that there is a whole lot more need out there than there is dollars.

However, Mayor Linville was relentless in his efforts to see the reconstruction started and he

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knew words were his most powerful tool and he continued to speak to anyone who would listen. The Mayor also began sending TDOT numerous accident reports occurring on the Highway 10 hill, involving serious injuries and fatalities.

The Mayor's persistence paid off and he received a letter from Commissioner John Schroer on Friday, June 14, 2013, stating that the department had been monitoring all the accident reports in that vicinity and working with the local Division Office of the Federal Highway Administration. Commissioner Schroer said that he was pleased to report that he had been able to identify funding under one of the safety programs to deliver the project.

Commissioner Schroer stated that he could certainly appreciate the mayor's position and that he shared Linville's goals in wanting to provide the safest roads possible for all Tennesseans, therefore he had directed his staff to accelerate the schedule.

The letting of bids for construction on the 1.7 mile stretch of highway, including the hill was Friday, May 23, 2014, and Twin K. Construction, Inc., was the low bidder at \$15,419,073.30.

At the groundbreaking ceremony Commissioner Schroer spoke of the expense involved with building roads and the fact that this phase alone would cost over 15 million dollars. He said that the accident data over the past two years made this particular stretch of highway eligible for funding through the Tennessee Department of Transportation's Safety Program. "Construction should begin within 30 to 45 days," the Commissioner said.

Mayor Shelvy Linville said on behalf of all the citizens of Macon County he thanked everyone for whatever part they played in getting this project moving, whether it was large or small. "I especially want to thank TDOT Commissioner John Schroer and Governor Haslam. I want to thank TDOT employees Jon Armstrong, ROW Agent; Steve Allen, Safety Program Director; David Layhew, Asst. Chief Engineer of Region 3 and Lorri Lange for all their help."

"I would also like to thank Debbie Gregory with the Macon County Chronicle," said Mayor Linville, "because she certainly helped me bring this much need project to the forefront with her coverage."

Mayor Linville said he made the statement over a year ago that he would not be satisfied until he saw orange barrels and bulldozers on that hill. "I believe I'm going to see that soon."

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“Hopefully, when this phase is completed, we will see an end to the fatalities on this hill and maybe phase 2 can begin on the Highway 10 Project in the not too distant future.”

Added City Mayor Richard Driver, “This was the day we have been waiting for and I would like to thank the Tennessee Department of Transportation and Commissioner John Schroer. I would also like to praise the efforts of County Mayor Shelvy Linville for his hard work in getting this project to this point. We all owe him a big thank you.”

How sad it has been in Macon County through the years to see so many people seriously injured or killed on the Highway 10 South hill and we are indeed thankful to the Tennessee Department of Transportation and Commissioner John Schroer for officially moving ahead with the reconstruction project.