

RTA seeks public input

*Transportation
agency desires
thoughts about
commuter rail*

From staff reports

With the Music City Star set to begin passenger service later this summer, the Regional Transportation Authority is gathering data on the commuting habits of residents along the rail's Lebanon-to-Nashville corridor.

Through information gleaned from an informal poll, RTA Marketing Coordinator Teresa McKissick said the authority hopes to "provide the best customer service possible" from day one.

The poll, she continued, will include a handful of questions regarding the location of commuters' workplaces and length of their respective workdays.

Commuters may take part in the poll by visiting the Music City Star's Web site at www.musiccitystar.org, or responses may be submitted via e-mail to rta@gnrc.org. McKissick added responses can also be mailed to RTA Marketing, 501 Union St., 6th floor, Nashville, TN, 37219.

"The RTA is excited to bring this transportation alternative to our region," she said. "We firmly believe the Music City Star will provide commuters with not only an alternative, but a better way to get to and from work. Passengers on the Music City Star can take care of business on their commute or simply relax and enjoy letting someone else do all the work."

Created by state statute in 1988 for the development of a regional transportation system for Middle Tennessee, the RTA is the lead agency behind the Music City Star Commuter Rail project - the first phase of which is a 32-mile track linking Lebanon and Nashville and slated to provide passenger service Monday through Friday.

The authority is widely known for developing one of the largest "rideshare programs" in the Southeastern United States with services assisting commuters with van-pooling, carpooling and "Relax and Ride" commuter bus service between Nashville and several outlying cities.



McKissick

RTA

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The RTA Board is comprised of city and county mayors from nine member counties, the commissioner of the Tennessee Department of

Transportation and six citizen members appointed by the governor.

On the Net:

Commuter Rail Poll:
<http://www.sitemason.com/form/hC6sUg>
Regional Transportation Authority: <http://www.rta-ride.org>

Plans are in place for Shelby Farms road

by Drew Harris
Assistant Editor

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After more than a year of discussing options and obtaining input from Shelby County citizens, the Shelby Farms Parkway Advisory Team has offered a plan for a Shelby Farms parkway that they believe addresses the concerns of all shareholders in the decision-making process.

The parkway will run north from Walnut Grove to Mullins Station Road through the west side of the park. Park advocates pushed for a western route for the parkway to minimize the area of the park divided by the road. The design calls for a four-lane parkway with a median in the middle. Pedestrian and bike paths will go under the road, giving access across the paved divide.

While the group reached a consensus on the size and shape of the parkway, its interchange at Walnut

See Park, 2A▶



The Cordova Beacon - Photo courtesy of Shelby County Public Works

The above illustration shows the interchange of an expanded Walnut Grove and the four-lane Shelby Farms parkway that the Shelby Farms Advisory Team approved for the project.

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Grove was a point of debate for the advisory team. In the end, a bridge design that elevates that the parkway over Walnut Grove for unimpeded traffic flow was recommended. Both Shelby County leaders and environmental advocates praise the recommended design, believing that it best serves traffic needs while pre-

serving the park's green space and integrity.

Shelby County Public Works Director Ted Fox called the advisory team's choice the "absolutely least invasive design" that would improve traffic and be an asset to the park.

"The key is that it is to complement and enhance the park, not to detract from it," Fox said. "The mayor formed the advisory team to build consensus for the best design — consensus from the development

community, the environmental community and the transportation community."

Fox also said the interchange would enhance the park, serving as a grand entrance for park users.

"The big thing is the entrance," Fox said. "What we were looking for is a grand entrance, a park entrance, so that when you come over the Wolf River, you know you will be in Shelby Farms."

County leaders and planners aren't the only ones who

believe the design will be the best fit for Shelby County citizens. Because local environmentalists and park advocates were included in the process, they also believe the design is an acceptable, if necessary, addition to the park.

"The design was a consensus of a very diverse stakeholder group," said Laura Adams, president of the Friends of Shelby Farms Park organization. "There were compromises that everyone made, but it produced the best

possible result that we could have asked for."

While in support of the project, Adams said the advisory team must have a continued role in the parkway engineering and architectural design, as well as in the construction phases. If the team is allowed to give input through completion, Adams believes it will best serve park users and motorists in the area.

"When we get in the design phase, the stakeholder groups need to be involved," Adams

said. "If it is built like we designed it, it will be an asset to the park."

Adams said she recently returned from a park conference in Chicago where a speaker cited evidence that just driving by a park can lower someone's blood pressure. If that is the case, the Shelby Farms parkway could be more than a much needed traffic route through a congested area of the county — it could be the shot in the arm the county needs.

ty for only \$38 for two years.

Sewer problems impact west Brentwood

State halts new connections until city, Metro correct flaws

By **BONNIE BURCH**
Staff Writer

BRENTWOOD — After finding deficiencies at the Brentwood pump station, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation has slapped a moratorium on new sewer connections in some areas of Brentwood and Metropolitan Nashville.

The move comes as part of an agreed order between the two municipalities, which have been sparring over responsibility for several overflow events at the station, which is owned by Brentwood but run by Metro.

The state's Water Quality Control Board issued the order last week.

No future connections to the pump station can be made until Metro and Brentwood fix problems in that area of west Brentwood. This would affect only potential new developments in what is known as the Little Harpeth River Water Basin, an area that stretches from the Indian Point and Foxboro subdivisions to the west.

Developments that already have been granted approval by Brentwood or that the city is legally committed to would be exempt from the order. Currently, city staff are compiling a list of such developments, City Manager Mike Walker said.

In Brentwood, many of the city's fastest-growing areas, such as the east side, don't use that pump station and so would be excluded from the moratorium.

"Most of the area that's seeing the most development — I'd say about 80

Sewer: State halts new connections in west Brentwood until flaws corrected

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percent — is east of (the moratorium's impact)," Walker said.

Eleven sewer lines drop down from Metro into the Brentwood station.

"Really (the moratorium) will not affect Metro Water Services substantially. It's really not a huge burden on us due to the small amount of land in that area that remains undeveloped," said Sonia Harvat, Metro Water Services public information officer.

Undeveloped tracts of property that will be affected by the moratorium include the 555-acre Cal Turner Jr. farm at the corner of Franklin and Concord roads as well as what's known as the Ravenswood farm just south of the Carriage Hills subdivision in the Wilson Pike area.

But so far, there are no immediate plans to develop any of this

land, Walker said.

In October 2004, the state's Division of Water Pollution Control said it would no longer approve new sewer connections and line extensions going into the overloaded Brentwood pump station off Old Hickory Boulevard behind Christ Presbyterian Church. But that moratorium was stayed while the city appealed, asking that TDEC bring Metro into the order. Brentwood wastewater also is treated in Nashville.

"Part of the appeal was that this was not a problem that Brentwood could fix on its own. There was just no way that Brentwood could do what TDEC wanted it to do without Metro. So this was a step in the right direction," Brentwood City Attorney Roger Horner said.

In order for the moratorium to be lifted, both Metro and Brentwood will have to come to a

workable solution to the overflow problems at the station, which happen during heavy rains. The two governmental entities also will have to hire an independent engineering consultant to develop a corrective action plan.

Even before the moratorium was enacted, Brentwood had made a commitment for a \$4 million sewer rehabilitation program over several years that includes flow monitoring, inspection and repair of broken or cracked lines within the city's borders. Another \$1.3 million has been earmarked for the pump station upgrades and improvements.

Metro also has plans to make improvements to its area of the sewer system, Harvat said.

"We will inspect those sewer lines and correct any deficiencies found. And once that is done, we do plan to petition to have that moratorium lifted," she said. ■

Darden hopes airport will stimulate industries

By NED B. HUNTER
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Henderson and Decatur county officials are hoping the opening of a new airport in Darden will spur industrial development and lower unemployment.

The Beech River Regional Airport opened Thursday with a 6,000-foot runway that makes the area more accessible to industry needing to fly cargo, commercial and charter aircraft into the region.

"One of the things the economic gurus are telling us is that a regional airport is one of the ways to attract industry to the area," said Jack Johnson, Lexington mayor. "Whichever town gets that industry, it will benefit the other."

Beech River airport replaces two other airfields. They are the Scott-Gibson airfield in Parsons, with a runway of about 4,000 feet and Franklin-Wilkins airfield in Lexington with a runway of about 5,000 feet.

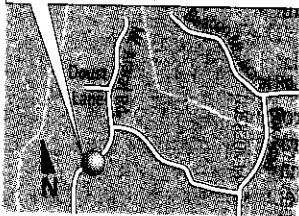
Under federal law, several types of planes could not use those airfields because of runway length restrictions, said Robert Woods, director of aeronautics for the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

"Depending on the category of airport, different airports must have different runway safety lengths," said Woods, a retired U.S. Air Force brigadier general. "They needed 300 feet of safety area, and they did not have that."

Industries such as Johnson Controls in Lexington, Kolpak in Parsons and TeamLindon, a Fisher Dynamics Co. in Linden are expected to use the new

Beech River Regional Airport

1600 Mt. Ararat Road, Darden
Henderson County



airport for charter and cargo planes, said Danny Azbill, executive director of the Beech River Regional Airport.

Woods said the two older airports' runways could not be extended because of economics and terrain.

"Both had a 50 to 60 foot drop at the end of the runways that would have had to be filled in," he said.

Beech River was built at a cost of nearly \$15 million, Woods said. That cost was divided nearly evenly between federal, state and local monies.

"(The state funds) did not come from the general tax fund, but from an aviation tax," he said.

The new airport is similar to McKellar-Sipes Regional Airport in Jackson. Each has a 6,000-foot north/south runway with a parallel taxiway. McKellar-Sipes, however, also has a 3,540-foot east/west runway, said Rodney Hendrix, executive director of the Jackson-Madison Airport Authority. Also, McKellar-Sipes has a control tower; Beech River does not.

Visit jacksonsun.com and share your thoughts.

— Ned Hunter, 425-9641

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BEWARE OF CROSS CONNECTIONS

A cross connection is a link which allows the potable (drinking) water supply to be connected to a line which contains a contaminant. People just automatically assume the water is safe but that could be a big mistake. Contamination occurs through cross connections where fluids other than water are sucked into the potable water supply due to a drop in line pressure. Unavoidable water line breakages, improper fire hydrant usage and fire fighting often result in pressure reversal, creating a back siphonage condition. Here is a true case of what can happen:

A California homeowner was using an aspirator, attached to a garden hose, to spray weed killer containing arsenic. While he was at the job, the water pressure reversed. He disconnected the hose and feeling thirsty, drank from the faucet at the house. Arsenic in the water line killed him.

An \$18 hose vacuum breaker, which screws on the outside connection, would have prevented this. Hoses should never be submerged but some farmers still fill tanks with pesticides using a hose submerged in the tank, which creates a physical connection between our drinking water and a deadly substance. Nearly all swimming pool owners are guilty of filling their pools by this method. Some other cross connections are supply lines connected to bottom fed tanks and supply lines going to boilers. The town of Maury City has passed an ordinance and policy for our customer's protection, prohibiting cross connections. We are now in the process of inspecting industries and businesses to determine what safety devices need to be installed.

The Maury City Water Department needs the full cooperation of industries, businesses and the entire community so that we don't have a disaster like the one above. It is in the best interest of all businesses to invest a modest amount of money on a protective device that could save them an expensive lawsuit or even more importantly, someone's life.

Zeb Hall
Cross Connection Official
Maury City Water Department
(731) 656-2119

June 2006



Tenn. General Assembly made some major strides

With nearly 3,300 pieces of legislation filed this session in the Senate and a correspondingly impressive number originating in the House, no one can reasonably complain that the members of the current Tennessee General Assembly failed to live up to the title of "lawmaker."

As the sheer volume suggests, there were more than a few clinkers in the mix, and activity sometimes masqueraded as accomplishment. But much that was valuable and useful got done. For that, Gov. Phil Bredesen and the state's lawmakers deserve credit.

It's ultimately impossible to suggest more than the sketchiest of fiscal facts about the spending priorities of a General Assembly that convened in January and finished work only last weekend. But clearly, one of the chief accomplishments of this session, both in terms of cost and of the number of state residents affected, was Gov. Bredesen's Cover Tennessee health-care plan aimed at helping low-income employees.

The Cover Tennessee plan calls for a \$150 monthly premium for basic health insurance shared equally among the state, individual workers and their employers. The voluntary plan is tightly focused on small employers with 25 or fewer employees and on employees with individual annual incomes of up to \$24,500 or \$50,000 for a family of four. While the plan has had its detractors on both sides of the aisle, it's a definite step forward in providing a basic level of health care for tens of thousands of hard-working Tennesseans who badly need it.

Overall, the final tally on the 2006-2007 state budget came to a whop-

ping \$26.1 billion. The mammoth spending plan includes \$232.8 million in new money for K-12 education, \$39 million in new funding for higher education, \$23.9 million for Cover Tennessee and \$26.8 million for job training and infrastructure development.

Especially welcome was the \$39 million in new money appropriated for higher education. While the amount still falls considerably short of what should have been committed to this chronically underfunded area, the extra funding will at least have the effect of moderating what would otherwise have been yet another double-digit increase in college tuition in the state.

This year's budget also restored \$24 million previously taken by the Bredesen administration in state-shared taxes and \$32.8 million taken from the highway fund. A healthy revenue surplus also allowed an increase in the state's Rainy Day Fund to \$496.9 million by June 30, 2007, bringing it to its statutory requirement.

Despite what Bredesen termed "some partisan hiccups" Democrats and Republicans, the House and the Senate and the governor's office seemed more agreeable than in recent years.

There was, in most debates, a commendable spirit of mutual respect even when differences appeared. Oddly enough, in an election year where vicious partisan sniping has been a condition of life, especially in Washington, D.C., Tennessee lawmakers have been remarkably collegial this session. Indeed, they were very nearly the model of bipartisanship and productivity. Hats off to Gov. Bredesen and our state lawmakers.