



## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

*700 James K. Polk Building  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-3049  
(615) 741-2848  
Tennessee.gov/tdot*

**Gerald F. Nicely, Commissioner**

Transportation is so basic that many of us overlook its importance in our daily lives. Practically everything used in our homes, offices or schools across Tennessee requires a large and complex transportation network. We keep Tennessee moving by utilizing new technology to improve efficiency of the system and through maintenance and construction of our transportation network. Having sensitivity to our environment and our communities as we build our transportation system is an important priority of the Department of Transportation.

Today, Tennessee's highway system stretches over 87,000 miles, enough to circle the world more than three times. Of that figure, 14,162 miles are on the state-maintained highway system, totally maintained by the state and representing 16 percent of the total highway miles within our state. These 14,000 miles, however, carry approximately 75 percent of the traffic. Included in the state highway system are 1,104 miles of interstate highways. Although the interstate system makes up just over one percent of the total highway mileage, it carries approximately a quarter of all the traffic in Tennessee. Over the last 20 years, vehicle miles traveled have increased a hundred percent while just 6.5% of lane miles have been added to the system. Other transportation modes in Tennessee include:

- 20 short line railroads operating on 810 miles of rail in Tennessee and 6 major rail lines
- 77 public-use airports and 6 commercial airports
- 115 heliports
- 25 transit systems (bus, van and light rail) serving 95 counties
- 1,062 miles of navigable waterways
- 150 miles of greenways, sidewalks and trails
- 5 regional bicycle routes totaling 690 miles

In 2004, the Department of Transportation embarked on an important endeavor, to create a Long-Range Transportation Plan for Tennessee including all modes of transportation. By bringing into the process its many public partners, the department has created a tool that can be used for many years in planning for the state's transportation system.

### Mission and Values

The mission of the Department of Transportation is to plan, implement, maintain, and manage an integrated transportation system for the movement of people and products, with emphasis on quality, safety, efficiency, and the environment. Our values are to achieve the public's trust and confidence by practicing the four basic values of communication, accountability, consistency and integrity.

## History

In 1915 the first state government authority to oversee transportation services began with the creation of the State Highway Commission. At that time the state system included less than 5,000 miles of road. The Commission was restructured and became the Department of Highways and Public Works in 1923 and by an act of the General Assembly in 1972 became the Department of Transportation incorporating all modes of transportation.

## Services

The Tennessee Department of Transportation has 4,600 employees and operates on an annual budget of over \$1.8 billion. There are three bureaus under which much of the agency is organized: the Administration Bureau, the Engineering and Operations Bureau, and the Environment and Planning Bureau. In addition to the three bureaus, there are five staff divisions also reporting to the Commissioner: Aeronautics, Civil Rights, Internal Audit, Legal, and the Community Relations Division.

Major duties of the department are to:

- Plan, implement, maintain, and manage Tennessee's transportation system.
- Administer funding and provide technical assistance in the planning and construction of state and federal aid road programs for cities and counties.
- Provide accurate and timely information to motorists, agency partners and the public.
- Construct and maintain 19 rest area facilities.
- Administer program for control of outdoor advertising adjacent to interstate and state highways.
- Administer special permits for movement of overdimensional vehicles.
- Prepare and distribute city, county, and state road maps, aeronautical charts, and airport directories.
- Promote behavioral safety on highways with federal funding provided for public awareness and education programs.
- Provide management, technical and financial assistance, and supervision to public, private, and nonprofit public transportation agencies in the state.
- Administer funding and assistance in location, design, construction, and maintenance of Tennessee's 83 public airports.
- Support improvements in Tennessee's railroads and rail service.
- Inspect over 19,000 Tennessee bridges, 83 public airports, and all of Tennessee's railroads.
- Maintain state park roads.
- License intrastate commuters and operate Reelfoot Airpark along with several ferry operations.
- Respond to initiatives of the Tennessee Aeronautics Commission.
- Provide aerial photography and mapping services to all state agencies.
- Provide aircraft for executive transportation and industrial recruiting.
- Administer highway beautification programs, including "Adopt-A-Highway" and the state wildflower program.
- Provide grants to all Tennessee counties for litter abatement and litter prevention education.
- Provide cycling trails that connect or go through state parks and natural areas.

## Funding

Funding to support the services provided by the Department of Transportation comes almost totally from “user fees” collected by the state and federal government. These include vehicle registration fees, gasoline and diesel fuel taxes, airline ticket taxes, and other fees and taxes paid by individuals as well as private companies that use the transportation system.

Since 1989, Tennessee’s transportation-related fuel taxes have been 20 cents per gallon on gasoline and 17 cents per gallon on diesel fuel. An additional 1.4 cents is collected for the inspection of volatile fuels, including diesel and gasoline.

The gasoline tax is currently distributed on the following basis:

- Cities and Counties 7.9 cents
- State General Fund .7 cent
- TDOT 12.8 cents

## Related Boards and Commissions

### Tennessee Aeronautics Commission

Suite 700, James K. Polk Building  
505 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0349  
(615) 741-4838

### Commissioner Gerald F. Nicely

Tennessee Department of Transportation

**Gerald F. Nicely** became Commissioner of Transportation for Tennessee in January 2003. Nicely joined TDOT after more than 30 years of local government experience and a track record of successfully forging public-private partnerships that helped transform Nashville. Nicely served as Executive Director of Nashville’s Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency from 1979-2002. Under his leadership, MDHA spearheaded a wide range of development and housing initiatives and was viewed as one of the best-run local agencies in the country. He served a two-year term as president of the Public Housing Authorities Directors Association. During Nicely’s tenure, MDHA helped revitalize downtown Nashville through a series of partnerships that led to development of projects including the Nashville Convention Center, Riverfront Park, the BellSouth Tower, the Coliseum (home to the NFL Tennessee Titans), the Gaylord Entertainment Center, the Frist Center for the Visual Arts and Nashville’s new state-of-the-art Main Library. Nicely grew up in Oak Ridge and is a graduate of Oak Ridge High School. He holds both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in economics from the University of Tennessee. He is a U.S. Army veteran. His priorities as Commissioner of TDOT have been to improve the department’s credibility with the general public, strengthen its partnerships with local governments, insure that the department is in compliance with all environmental laws and regulations, streamline the agency’s contracting process, and develop a new Long-Range Transportation Plan for Tennessee. Nicely is married to Donna Nicely, director of the Nashville Public Library system, and has two grown daughters and two grandsons.

