

Building Tennessee's Tomorrow: Anticipating the State's Infrastructure Needs

July 2002 through June 2007

Acknowledgements

Tennessee Development District Staff

One of the TACIR's most resource intensive accomplishments each year is producing this annual report to the General Assembly. In addition to two full-time TACIR staff, the inventory requires the near full-time effort of at least one staff member in each of the state's nine development districts. Over the last three years, great strides have been made to improve the quality and coverage of the inventory, and the result is a unique and invaluable source of information for planning and policy making. But perhaps the most significant benefit has accrued to the development districts themselves and the local governments and utility districts they serve.

In these times of fiscal instability, every program must be reviewed to determine its value. It is essential to understand the benefits of each and every one. To that end, TACIR staff requested and received letters from each of the nine development districts explaining how they use the Public Infrastructure Needs Inventory to meet local needs. The letters, both individually and collectively, affirm the value of the inventory. It is clear from the following statements that the citizens of Tennessee benefit as well.

First Tennessee Development District

"From the beginning of the infrastructure survey process, First Tennessee Development District has appreciated being involved with interviewing our local governments and regional agencies to identify near and future needs. We have found that the leaders of our smaller communities especially benefit from the opportunity to do some forward thinking. The information also enables our staff to match needs with available funding sources."

—Susan Reid, Executive Director

East Tennessee Development District

"The surveys we conduct with local officials help us to identify needs in the region so that we can help communities identify potential resources. By updating the information on a yearly basis, the information becomes more useful through re-evaluation and reassessment. Also, in the majority of communities we survey, this activity is the only type of capital improvement planning that takes place."

—Terrence Bobrowski, Executive Director

Southeast Tennessee Development District

"In addition to the statewide benefits of knowing about the various needs, we utilize the process at the regional and local level to annually update our communities' needs, gain consensus on local priorities, and assist us in scheduling our efforts to seek funding opportunities from the federal programs which are used to assist in the implementation of projects across the region."

"The infrastructure survey is at the foundation of our regional planning effort and we support its continuance on behalf of both the state and local uses of the information."

—Joe. W. Guthrie, Executive Director

Upper Cumberland Development District

"The survey process has encouraged more long range planning from our more rural communities."

—Wendy Askins, Executive Director

Greater Nashville Regional Council

"The uniqueness of the report allows for local governments/schools to demonstrate firsthand the infrastructure needs that often times slips through the cracks and not always picked up through traditional funding measures, or even may lie outside the current funding parameters."

"The process requires all local governments to annually review and evaluate infrastructure needs on both a short-term and long-term basis. Many small, but growing communities are developing capital improvement budgets for the first time, allowing them to better plan and fund needed projects."

—Tonya Blades, Planner

South Central Tennessee Development District

“Without this survey, the infrastructure needs of local communities would not be learned from those who are most knowledgeable. Not only is the end product valuable in planning for future needs, but the process of communicating with local officials and community leaders also helps them to step back, analyze infrastructure needs, and set priorities for meeting those needs. Even though more needs are identified by this survey than limited public funds can meet, the planning facilitated by this project is even more important in order to serve our citizens, given limited governmental budgets.”

—*Joe Max Williams, Executive Director*

Northwest Tennessee Development District

“There is no other report that I am aware of that gives the citizens of Tennessee such a quick snap shot of what is currently being done throughout our state and what is being planned for the future. We also use it to assist us for our Economic Development Administration (EDA reporting). Many of the projects that end up obtaining federal funding from EDA or from Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) were originally discovered while working with the local governments through the TACIR reports.”

—*John Bucy, Executive Director*

Southwest Tennessee Development District

“Through the identification of the inventory our local communities and public officials are seriously looking at infrastructure needs and its potential impact on improving the quality of life of the citizens of their communities. The inventory has also had a profound effect on public officials recognizing the need to develop goals and strategies to address their needs. The ability to be proactive rather than reactive is a very important by-product of the inventory.”

—*Evelyn C. Robertson, Jr., Executive Director*

Memphis Area Association of Governments

“Not surprisingly, the survey documented the limited application of a formal capital improvement programming process by local governments. Although a process is not appropriate for all local governments, there are many that such a process should be a necessity and not an option. The survey should serve as a base for inducing local governments to undertake a formal process.”

—*John Sicola, Executive Director*

Based on the letters from which these comments were excerpted, the Public Infrastructure Needs Inventory is beneficial in the following specific ways:

Planning

- The annual inventory process updates local governments' needs and is a valuable planning resource for all stakeholders.
- It has led smaller cities and more rural areas to look more closely at needed infrastructure and the long-term benefits of doing so.
- Goals and strategies that have not been in place before are being formulated to achieve the ultimate completion of these statewide infrastructure needs.
- It serves as an evaluation tool to aid in informed decision-making when setting infrastructure investment priorities.
- The inventory has documented the limited application of formal capital improvement programming by local governments.
- The survey may induce those local governments that currently do not have a formal capital improvement plan in place to pursue one in the near future.

Funding

- The inventory assists development districts and representative governments in locating and obtaining funding for public infrastructure projects.
- Many development districts utilize information contained in the survey to update the annual *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* required for federal grant applications.
- It assists in the preparation of project lists deemed suitable for funding from the Economic Development Administration or from Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).
- It serves to prioritize projects based on need, not fundability.
- Many projects that are ultimately funded were discovered through the inventory.

Increasing Awareness and Communication

- Infrastructure needs identified in the TACIR report are made known to a wider audience.

- The inventory process has fostered better communication between the development districts and local public officials.
- The resulting report is utilized at the state, regional and local levels.
- It gives a voice to underserved areas including small cities and rural areas.
- Each annual report is a result of continuous improvement in all aspects of the inventory.
- The PINI is unique because of the comprehensive nature of the report.

TACIR staff wish to acknowledge the efforts of the development district staff responsible for the inventory:

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