



**STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**BEAUTIFICATION OFFICE**  
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**BILL LEE**  
GOVERNOR

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Beth Emmons, Director  
Community Relations Division  
  
Regional Community Relations Officers  
  
File

From: Mike McClanahan, Transportation Manager *MPM*  
Highway Beautification Office

Date: 5/22/24

Subject: Summary of Pollinator Habitat Program

Pollinator species, such as butterflies, bees, and humming birds are vital links in supporting Tennessee's abundant agriculture and play a key role in sustaining the diverse ecosystems found in Tennessee. In recent years, pollinator species are experiencing a drastic decline in numbers due to various threats like habitat loss, pesticide and herbicide use, and other stressors. To address these issues, TDOT's Highway Beautification Office formalized a Pollinator Habitat Program in 2017. Pretext for the initiative was written into the nation's 2016 federal transportation legislation, titled "Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act." This is commonly referenced as the *FAST Act*.

TDOT's Pollinator Habitat Program benefits the health and wellness of pollinator species through advancing projects and maintenance practices which: (1) educate the public, (2) raise internal maintenance practice so that roadsides and other Rights-of-Way are managed as pollinator habitats, and (3) yield tangible ecological benefits. Projects undertaken by the Pollinator Habitat Program are accomplished through collaboration with non-profits and other sister State agencies. These partners meet quarterly as the "Partners for Pollinators Working Group". The 4 state agencies which comprise of the working group are TDOT, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.

Tennesseans and the travelling public will notice colorful pollinator meadows and interpretive signage at planted areas across multiple Tennessee State Parks, Tennessee Welcome Centers and interstate interchanges. The program also produces educational materials for use by the general public, educators, and students. These materials include a free-to-download activity book, voice-of-animation

episodes featuring Polli, the Bee from Tennessee, pollinator bingo cards, and more. In 2023, the Pollinator Habitat Program launched a free mail order milkweed seed program called “Project Milkweed.” The program reoccurs each summer and 779,601 packets of milkweed seeds sent to Tennesseans in 2023.



**Pictured:** Coreopsis and other native plants bloom at a roadside meadow planted along the interchange at I-24, Mile Marker 1, in Montgomery County.

Additional Resources:

FAST Act Legislation	<a href="#">H.R.22 - 114th Congress (2015-2016): FAST Act   Congress.gov   Library of Congress</a>
TDOT Pollinator Habitat Program Website	<a href="#">Tennessee Pollinators Habitat Program   TDOT Pollinator Habitat Program (tnpollinators.org)</a>
Pollinator Habitat Program Contact	Mike McClanahan Transportation Manager <a href="mailto:Michael.McClanahan@tn.gov">Michael.McClanahan@tn.gov</a> (615) 741-0803