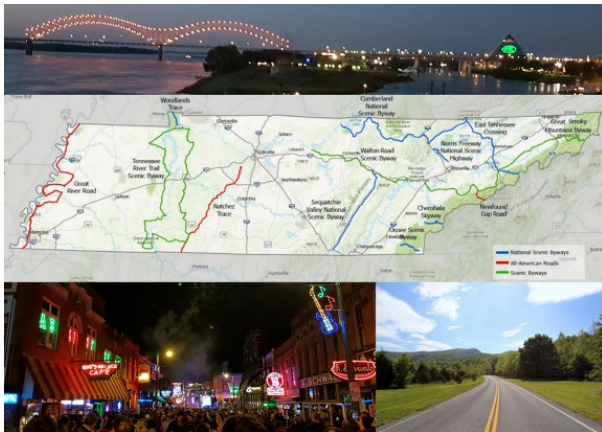




Research Summary

Towards Sustainable Tourism Transportation Systems and Services in Tennessee



WHAT WAS THE RESEARCH NEED?

Tennessee has a growing tourism industry, that contributes significantly to the state's economy, but also faces a growing transportation issue that needs to be addressed; congestion in major cities and tourist routes is a growing concern. This research study undertook a detailed analysis of these aspects of the transportation system in Tennessee to provide TDOT with policy level recommendations that would improve current transportation services available to tourists.

Project Number:
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September 2020 to
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WHAT WERE THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES?

The overarching goal of the research project is to develop planning and policy guidelines for sustainable transportation systems and services in promoting the tourism industry in Tennessee. The specific objectives of the project are:

1. Undertake a comprehensive review of the literature on transportation planning adopted by other states in the US and elsewhere.
2. Identify the current state of transportation systems and services available to tourists, their deficiencies, and potential measures for their improvement.
3. Identify key destinations and corridors across the state that are primarily used by tourists or long-distance travelers.
4. Develop policies and guidelines for a sustainable transportation system capable of promoting the tourism industry.

WHAT WAS THE RESEARCH APPROACH?

The methodological approach undertaken by the research team can be summarized as follows.

1. Survey of state DOTs and State Tourism Offices to understand state specific tourism related travel demand modeling practices, tourism data sources, data analysis methods, tourism inclusive project selection practices, consideration of sustainable transportation for tourism, and the collaboration between diverse tourism stakeholders.
2. Analysis of tourism trip characteristics, which is fundamental to long-distance passenger travel demand models, using online survey of travelers.
3. Analysis of current and forecasted tourist travel patterns using the national long-distance travel demand model and scenario analysis.
4. Survey of local tourism agencies on the present state of tourism transportation system and services in their jurisdiction, current deficiencies, and preferred improvements.
5. Make policy level recommendations based on findings.

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

The key findings based on this study are concluded as follows:

- There is better inter-agency collaboration in states with higher tourism impact.
- Scenarios that encourage use of alternate transportation modes such as transit and air travel are expected to considerably reduce the use of cars.
- Local agencies opine that dedicated funding would better current state of transportation systems and services.
- A better collaboration between agencies at the state, regional and local level is needed to improve tourism inclusive project planning and improve related transportation services.

IMPLEMENTATION AT TDOT

The following recommendations are made to the agency:

- TDOT and tourism agencies should collaborate more and share their projects and findings to identify future needs and current trends.
- The private sector can play a key role in tourism-related transportation planning. The primary areas for private sector collaboration with TDOT and tourism agencies are private sector funding, marketing, data collection, and dissemination of tourism information.
- Tourism agencies at local and regional level should be provided more opportunities to participate in the transportation planning process. This can be achieved by providing additional funds and grant to agencies to improve tourism transportation services.
- A more detailed analysis of current state of transportation infrastructure in popular tourist areas and routes is warranted, particularly for Nashville, Gatlinburg, and Pigeon Forge.
- Most out-of-state tourists visting destinations in Tennessee are from nearby states. Major routes that serve tourists traveling from bordering states should be given preference in terms of timely repair and maintenance.

MORE INFORMATION

Find the final report here: https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/long-range-planning/research/final-reports/res2021-final-reports/RES2021-02_Final_Report_Approved.pdf.