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STRATEGIC PLAN

Mission

To preserve and protect the unique heritage and environment of the Southern Appalachians by promoting sustainable transportation practices.

Vision

The WaysSouth vision is a Southern Appalachian Region whose natural beauty, environment and heritage are recognized by all as its economic backbone and whose transportation infrastructure is designed to support, maintain and protect those attributes.

Geographic Area of Interest

We define the Southern Appalachian Region to include western North and South Carolina, Eastern Tennessee and the North Georgia Mountains. Major cities outside our defined area of interest having impact thereon include Atlanta, Augusta, Charlotte, Knoxville, Chattanooga and the ports of Savannah and Charleston.

Goals and Objectives

- § Advocate for government policies, planning and projects consistent with the stated WaysSouth vision of the Southern Appalachian Region.
- § Create and maintain working relationships with relevant federal, state, regional, local and tribal officials.
- § Develop and maintain a working understanding of transportation plans, laws, regulations and other requirements of pertinent federal, regional, state, tribal and local planning agencies that impact the stated geographic area of interest, and monitor for relevant potential changes to these requirements.
- § Develop a strong and dependable funding base that ensures that WaysSouth will have the necessary resources (staff and funds) to accomplish our mission and achieve our vision.
- § Build on the capacity of our Supporting Organization and volunteer base and use it to help educate and involve others.

Current Projects

- § **Interstate 3:** The Third Infantry Division Highway, or I-3, is a proposed Interstate-standard highway running from Savannah, GA, to Knoxville, TN. First proposed in 2004, the project received funding for a feasibility study in 2005. In 2010 the Federal Highway Administration finally initiated the yearlong effort, which was completed in June 2011. The final report is in executive review with the completion date to be determined.

WaysSouth, as a member of the study Expert Working Group, fully participated in its oversight. After initially determining that there is and has been no requirement articulated

for the road in any of the states involved, the study went on to identify 5 potential routes from Savannah to Knoxville. Four were eliminated as impractical and the fifth (running from Savannah to Knoxville by way of Augusta, Athens, just north of Dahlonega to Ellijay, Chatsworth and north along 411 to I-75) was costed at 4 levels from full interstate to a simple two lane highway to comply with the directions of the congressional language. No recommendation for further effort was made. The last step remaining is the delivery of the final report to Congress. **WaysSouth continues to monitor progress to assure that the results of the study remain unchanged**

The initial funding for the study was \$1.62m. Of that, \$421k has been spent. The balance remains in the US Treasury, restricted in use to this program only, unless redirected or rescinded by legislative action. **WaysSouth supports rescinding remaining funds to ensure complete project termination.**

- § **Corridor K:** Corridor K, running from Cleveland, TN, to Asheville, NC, is part of the Appalachian Highway Development System designed in the mid 1960s by the Appalachian Regional Commission as part of the federal program to rejuvenate and revitalize Appalachia. Although most of the highway is four lanes, two “incomplete” stretches remain. Proposals have been made to “upgrade” both of these segments with new highways running through some of the Appalachians’ most pristine undeveloped mountain country. Rugged terrain and difficult geology predict challenging engineering problems, great expense and destructive construction solutions. The economic justification is suspect. WaysSouth aims to persuade decision makers that a better solution for the local economies in Tennessee and North Carolina, as well as the environment, is to improve the existing two-lane highway system.
- § **US 76 Widening in Towns/Union Counties, Georgia:** This project would widen the last section of US 76 that is not four-lane between the cities of Ellijay and Hiawassee, GA. An area of particular concern is the three-lane stretch between Blairsville and Young Harris, which would be straightened and widened to four lanes with a 32 foot median. The current proposed design would result in damage to businesses and home sites and would cut a path through the heart of the City of Young Harris. WaysSouth is supporting the open discussion of alternatives and is encouraging a citizen referendum on the issue.
- § **U.S. Highway 441:** The Georgia Department of Transportation plans to widen U.S. 441 from the town of Clayton, GA, to the North Carolina state line. This project could have devastating impacts on the towns north of Clayton, Mountain City and Dillard – and on the beautiful valley through Rabun Gap. WaysSouth is monitoring the project to ensure that the interests of affected mountain communities are heard and that environmental, scenic, historic and cultural values are protected.
- § **Rail:** WaysSouth’s Rail Task Force prepared a white paper discussing the benefits of a robust rail transportation system. The goal is to monitor and support railway initiatives in alignment with our stated Vision for the Southern Appalachian Region.