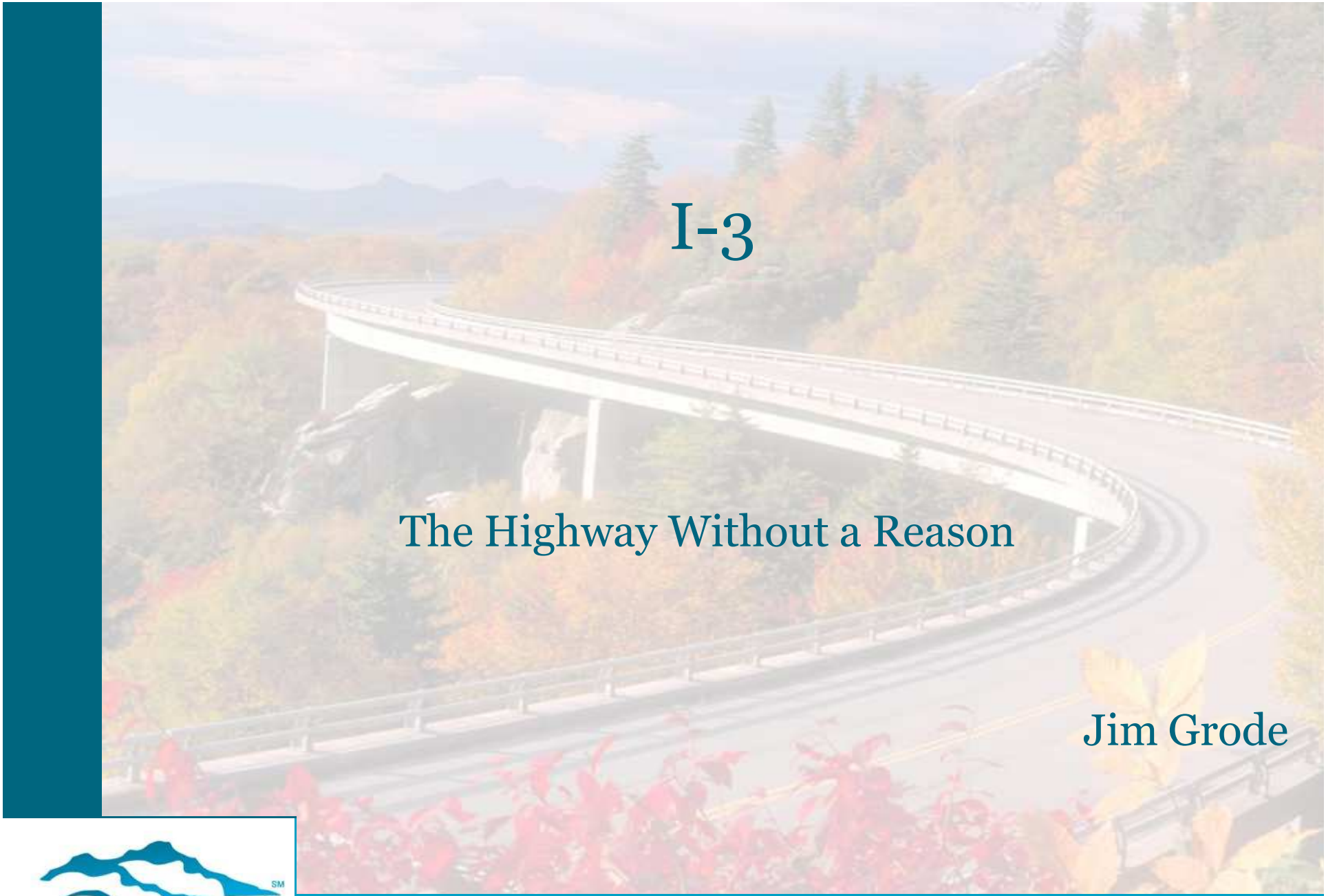

# I-3

## The Highway Without a Reason

Jim Grode

WAYSSOUTH

Responsible Transportation in Appalachia

# About WaysSouth

- Started in 2005 as the Stop I-3 Coalition
- WaysSouth mission:

  to preserve and protect the unique heritage and environment of the southern Appalachians by promoting sustainable transportation practices.
- Projects:
  - Stop I-3
  - Corridor K
  - Rail
  - US 441
  - US 76/SR 515 Widening
  - Transportation Planning and Policy

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# History of I-3

- Initial champion then-Rep. Max Burns of Georgia's 12th District
- Officially known as the Third Infantry Division Highway
- First legislative proposal in 2004

# History of I-3

- 2005 Transportation Authorization Act
  - Required the Federal Highway Administration to:

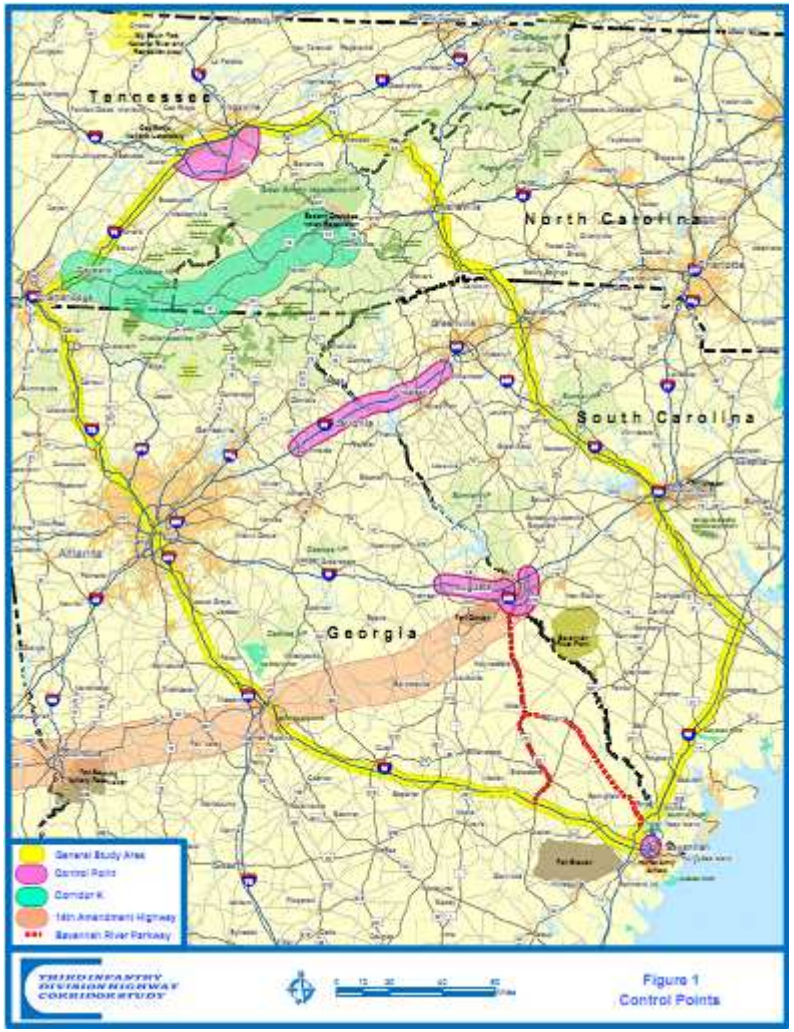
    carry out a study and submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that describes the steps and estimated funding necessary to designate and construct a route for the 3rd Infantry Division Highway, extending from Savannah, Georgia, to Knoxville, Tennessee, by way of Augusta, Georgia (formerly the Savannah River Parkway in the State of Georgia)
  - Included three earmarks of funding for I-3, totaling $1.32 million

# Status of Study

- Began in June 2010
- Study being conducted by contractor, Wilbur Smith and Associates
- Expert Working Group
  - Federal Transportation and Environmental Agencies
  - State and Local Transportation and Planning Agencies
  - WaysSouth

# Status of Study

- Activities to date
  - Defined study area and "control points"

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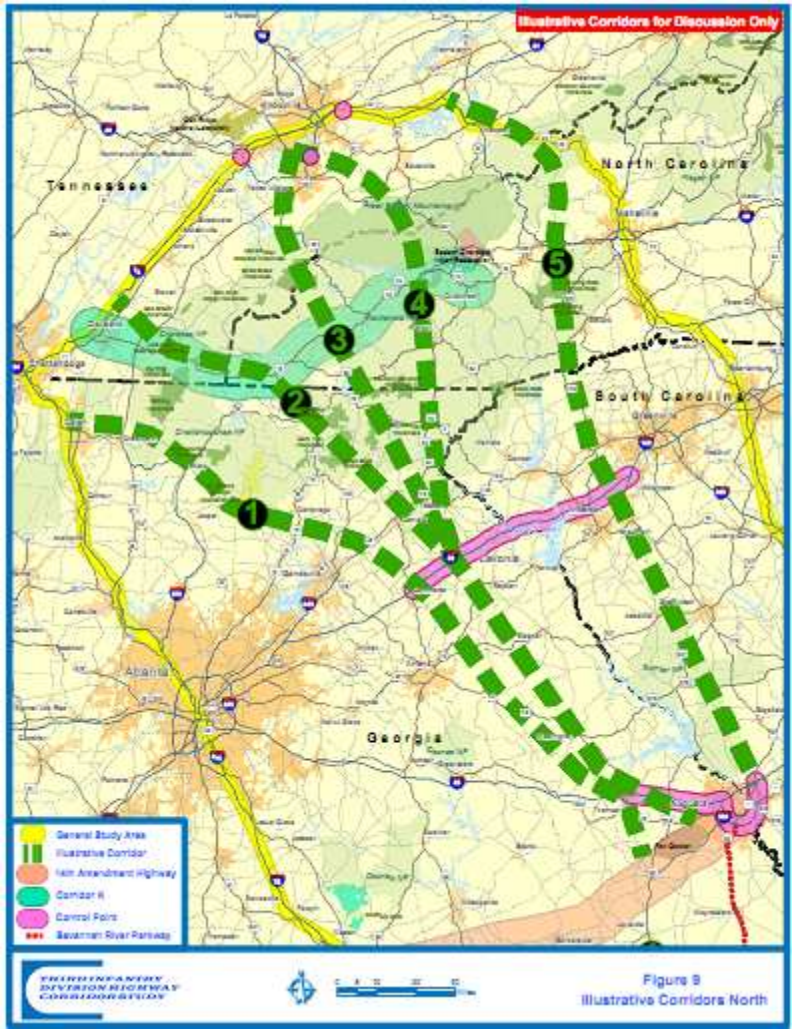
# Status of Study

- Activities to date
  - Defined study area and "control points"
  - Prepared "Illustrative Corridors" and identified "fatal flaws"

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# Status of Study

- Activities to date
  - Defined study area and "control points"
  - Prepared "Illustrative Corridors" and identified "fatal flaws"
  - Identified Study Alternatives and design levels

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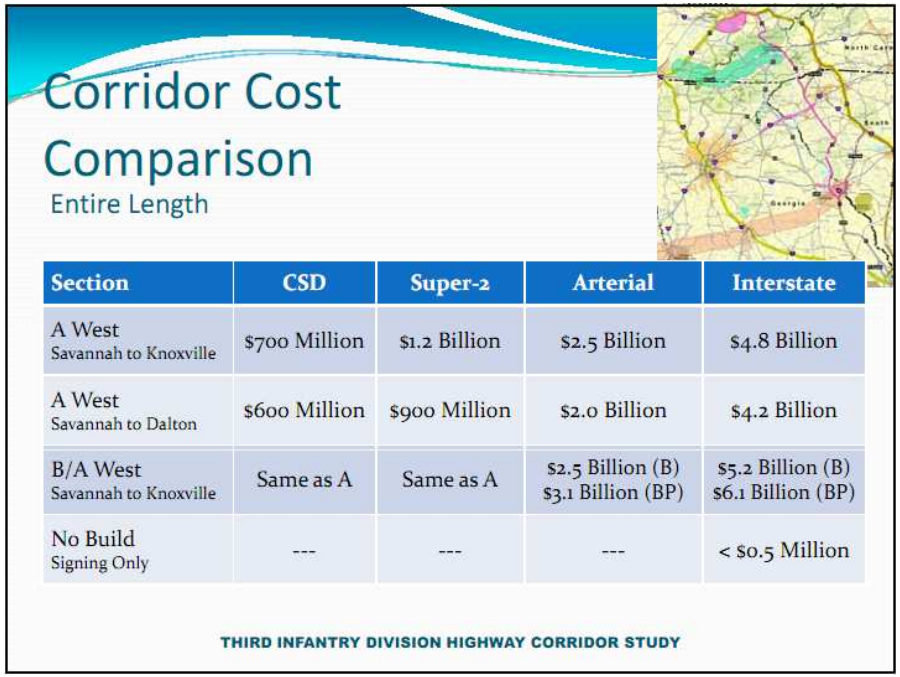
# Status of Study

- Activities to date
  - Defined study area and "control points"
  - Prepared "Illustrative Corridors" and identified "fatal flaws"
  - Identified Study Alternatives and design levels
  - Prepared Cost Analysis



## Corridor Cost Comparison

Entire Length

| Section | CSD | Super-2 | Arterial | Interstate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A West<br>Savannah to Knoxville | $700 Million | $1.2 Billion | $2.5 Billion | $4.8 Billion |
| A West<br>Savannah to Dalton | $600 Million | $900 Million | $2.0 Billion | $4.2 Billion |
| B/A West<br>Savannah to Knoxville | Same as A | Same as A | $2.5 Billion (B)<br>$3.1 Billion (BP) | $5.2 Billion (B)<br>$6.1 Billion (BP) |
| No Build<br>Signing Only | --- | --- | --- | < $0.5 Million |

THIRD INFANTRY DIVISION HIGHWAY CORRIDOR STUDY

# Scope of Study

- Current phase addresses the “steps and estimated funding necessary” to construct I-3
- Does not address the “purpose and need” for I-3
- Will result in report to Congress
- Will not recommend any road be built

# Initial Study Alternatives

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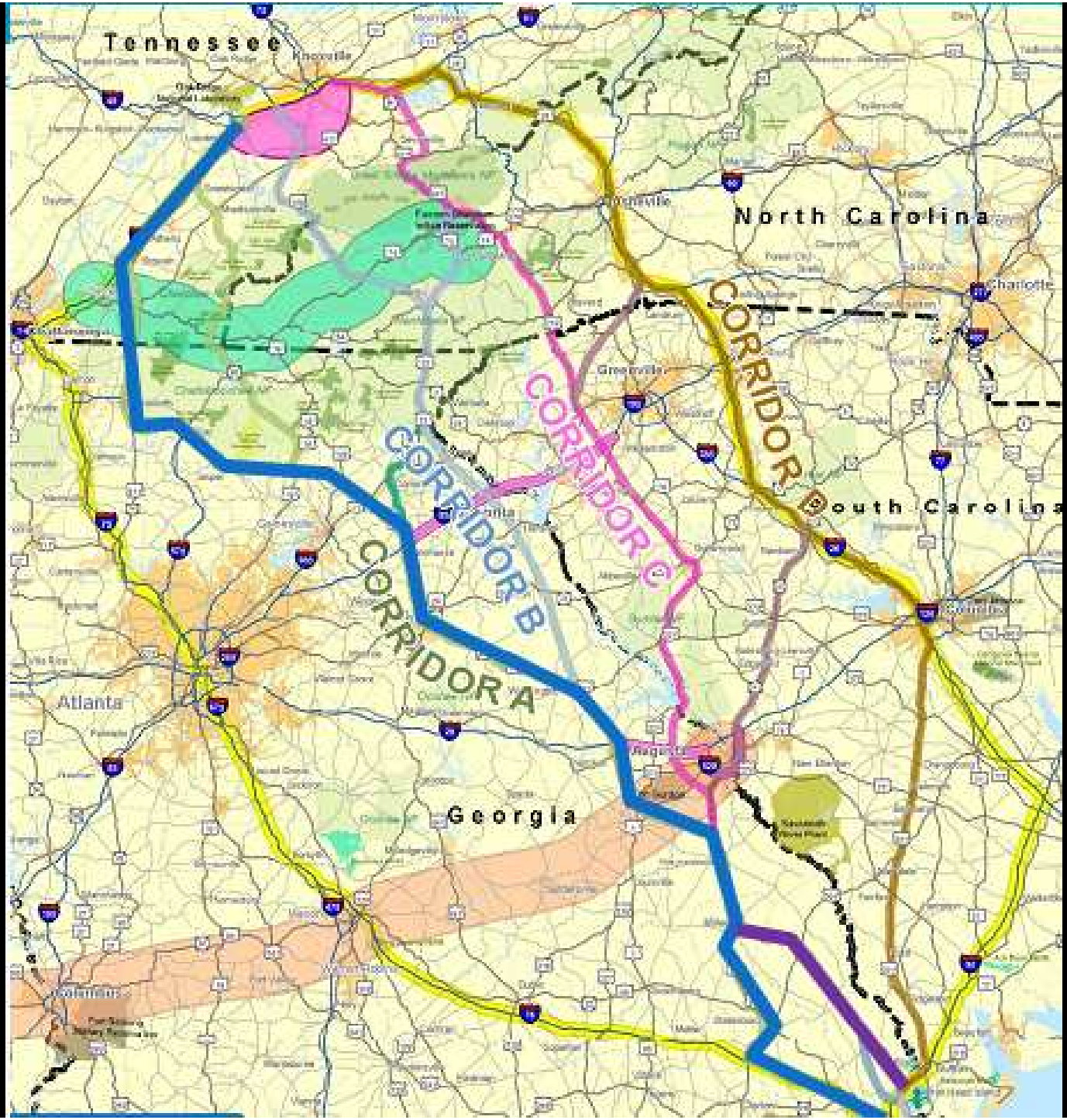
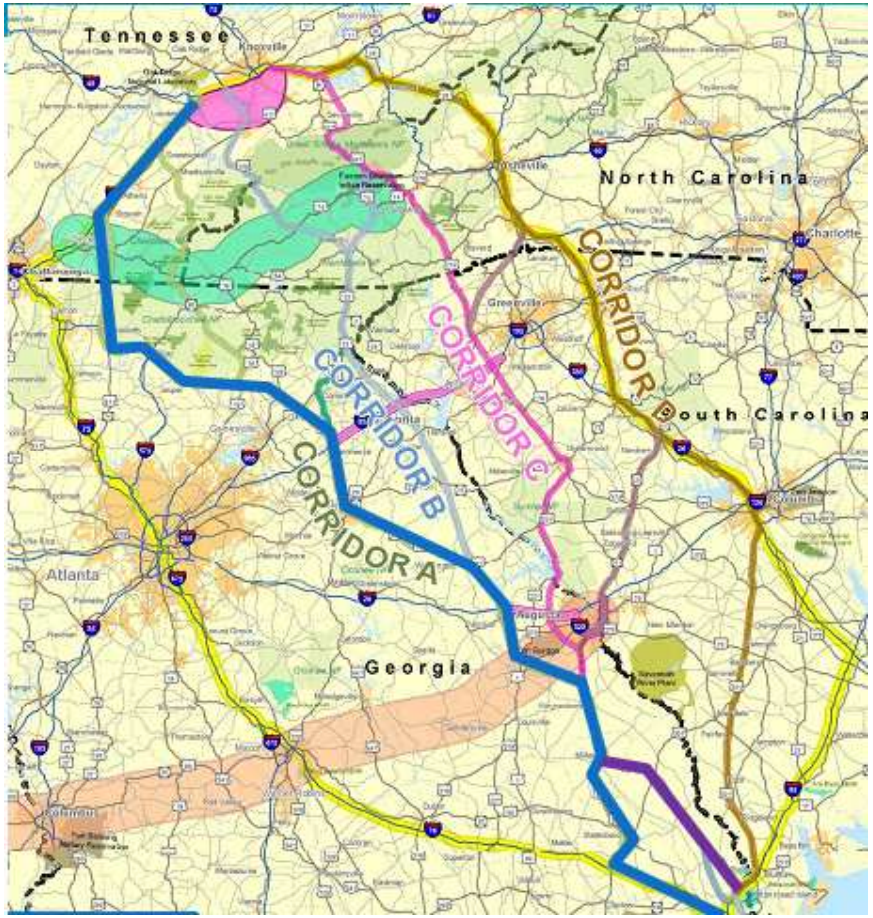

Tennessee
North Carolina
South Carolina
Georgia
Atlanta
CORRIDOR A
CORRIDOR B
CORRIDOR B
CORRIDOR C
CORRIDOR D

# Routes Considered

- Eliminated
  - Corridor B in the north: mountainous terrain, impacts to National Park and Forests
  - Corridor C: mountainous terrain, impacts to National Park and Forests
  - Corridor D: misses control points

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# Routes Remaining Under Consideration

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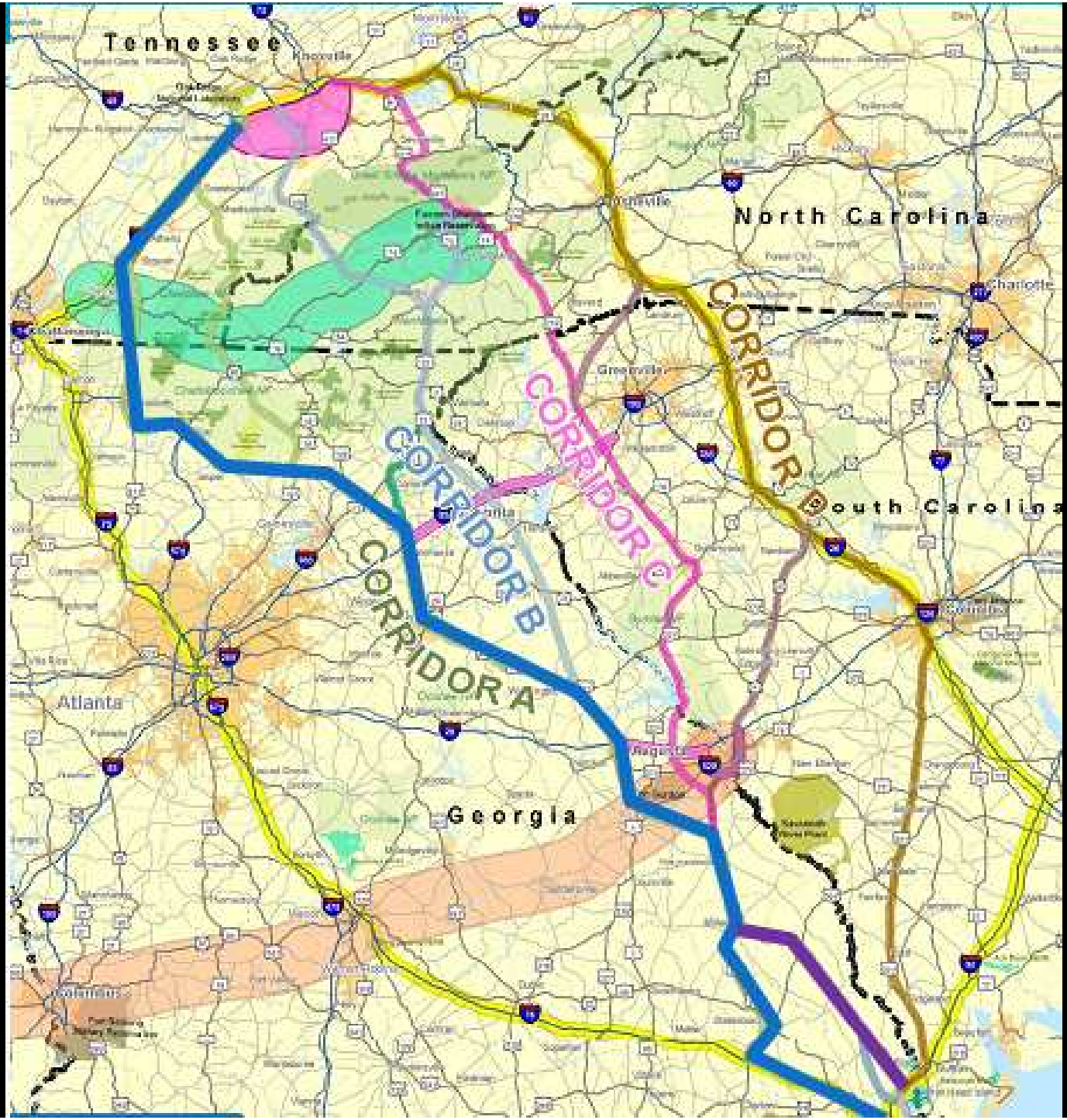
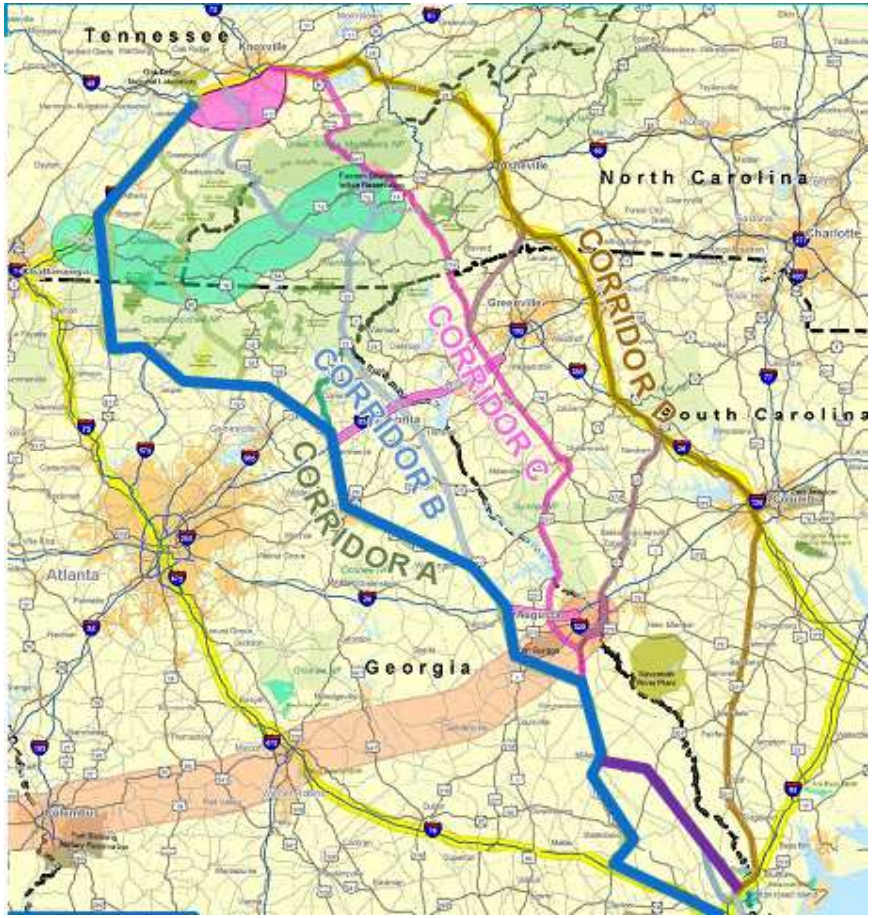

Tennessee
North Carolina
South Carolina
Georgia
Atlanta
CORRIDOR A
CORRIDOR B
CORRIDOR B
CORRIDOR C
CORRIDOR D

# Routes Considered

- Corridor A
  - 415 miles
  - Mix of new location (106 miles) and existing roads (309 miles)
- Corridor B South
  - 73 miles on existing road
  - 329 miles on Corridor A

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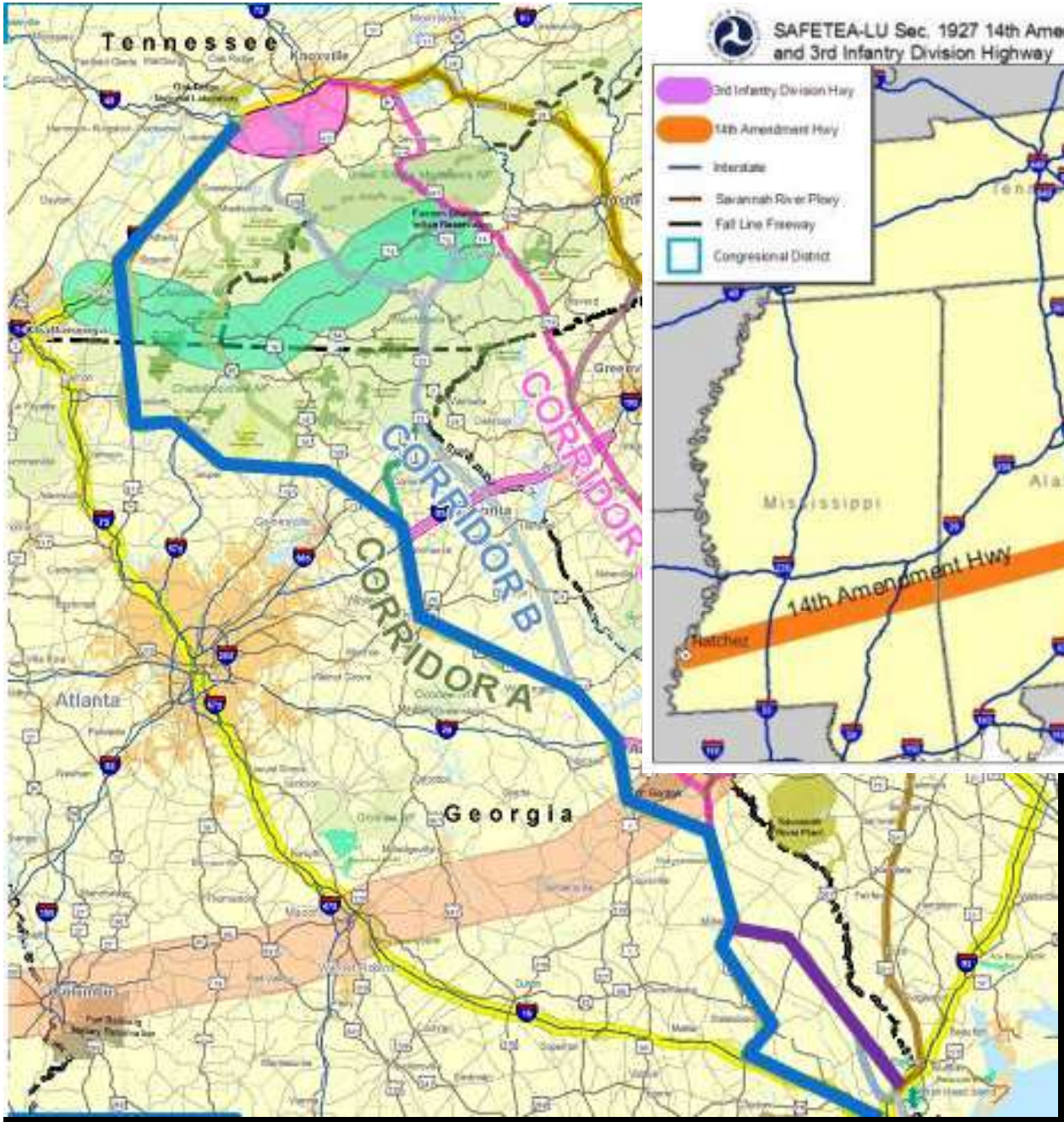
Tennessee
Knoxville
Atlanta
Georgia
CORRIDOR A
CORRIDOR B
CORRIDOR

SAFETEA-LU Sec. 1927 14th Amendment Highway
and 3rd Infantry Division Highway
3rd Infantry Division Hwy
14th Amendment Hwy
Interstate
Savannah River Pkwy
Fall Line Freeway
Congressional District
3rd Infantry Division Hwy
14th Amendment Hwy
District 9
District 12
Augusta
Macon
Columbus
Montgomery
Natchez
Mississippi
Alabama
South Carolina
Office of Intermodal & Border Planning

# Design Levels Considered

- Interstate

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- Interstate
- Four-Lane Arterial

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# Design Levels Considered

- Interstate
- Four-Lane Arterial
- “Super-2”

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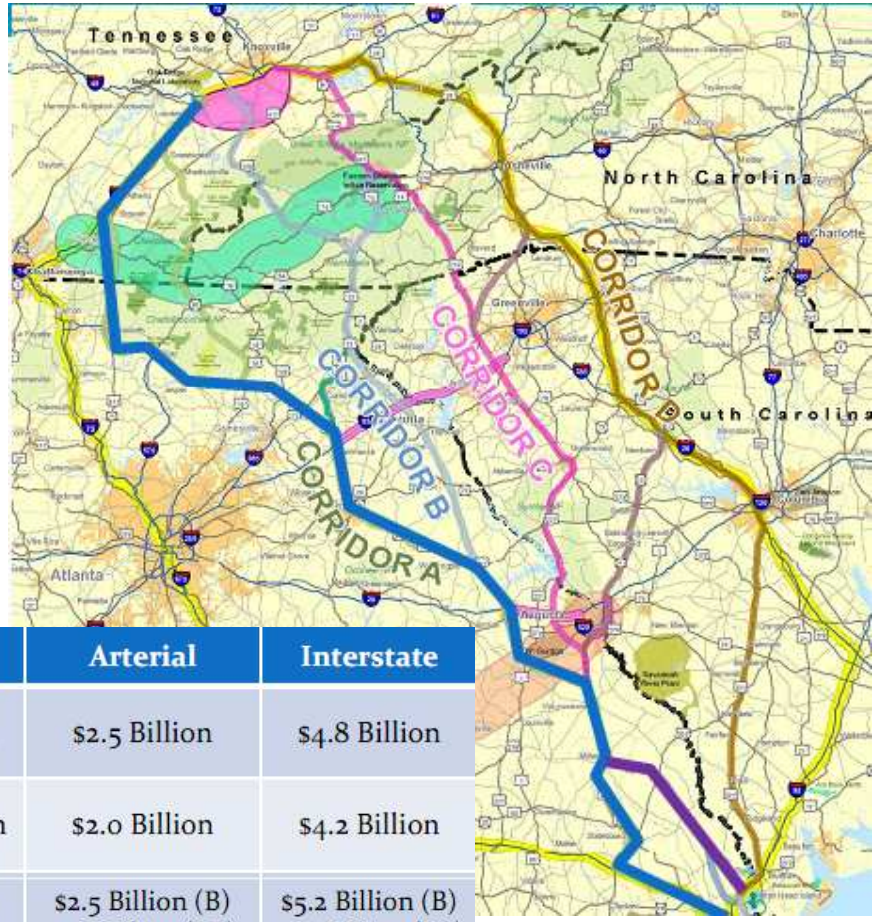
# Design Levels Considered

- Interstate
- Four-Lane Arterial
- “Super-2”
- “Context Sensitive Design”: Minimum improvements necessary to have continuous 2-lane highway along corridor

# Cost Estimates

- Very high level estimates based on average per-mile costs
- Corridor A: $700 Million to $4.8 Billion
- Corridor A with spur to Dalton: $560 Million to $4.2 Billion
- Corridor B (“South”) to Millen and Corridor A to Knoxville: $700 Million to $6.1 Billion

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# Comparison to Available Funding

- Georgia Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
  - All money available for transportation for the years 2011-2014
  - Total funds $6.9 Billion
  - Funds for new construction and widening $1.8 Billion

# No-Build Option

- Signage along an existing route to honor the Third Infantry Division
- Cost estimated at less than $500,000

# What Next?

- Contractor will submit a final report pulling together all this information to FHWA
- FHWA will submit report to Congress as required in the legislation
- Expected to be completed in June

# What Next?

- FHWA may do additional "optional sub-studies" on items such as the purpose and need, economic and environmental impacts, and so on
- Remaining money
  - Total contract price for study was $431,000, including a 20% required state match that Georgia provided
  - Nearly $1 million of the original Federal earmark remains unspent
  - Cannot be used for any other purposes unless specified in new legislation

# Negative Aspects of I-3

# No Need

# No Transportation Need

- No traffic studies suggesting a need for expanded facilities
- Minimal or no reduction in mileage and travel time from Savannah to Knoxville
  - I-3 would be 402 or 415 miles from Savannah to the outskirts of Knoxville
  - Currently, from Downtown Savannah to Downtown Knoxville via I-95 to I-26 to I-40 is 416

# No Freight Need

- Port of Savannah
  - Most of the freight generated by the port goes north/south on I-95 or east/west on I-16
  - Rail is better for the container traffic generated by the port
  - Efficient and existing rail routes to Atlanta and Knoxville for container freight

# No Economic Need

- Exorbitant Costs
- Little or No Benefit
  - Rural highways provide few or no economic benefits outside the major metropolitan areas they link. Terance Rephann & Andrew Isserman, *New Highways As Economic Development Tools: An Evaluation Using Quasi-Experimental Matching Methods* (1994).
  - An FHWA study confirmed this and found that in Georgia specifically, I-16 had little economic effect. Martin Weiss, FHWA, *Economic Effects of Selected Rural Interstates at the County Level* (Feb. 2005) (http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/econdev/summary.htm).
  - Contrary to proponents' claims, roads do not pay for themselves. U.S. PIRG, *Do Roads Pay for Themselves? Setting the Record Straight on Transportation Funding* (Jan. 2011).

# Negative Economic Effects

- An interstate would actually degrade the economy of the Southern Appalachians
- It would jeopardize recreational resources that businesses depend on

# Negative Economic Effects

- An interstate would actually degrade the economy of the Southern Appalachians
- It would harm the tourism economy

# Cultural Impacts

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# From This ...

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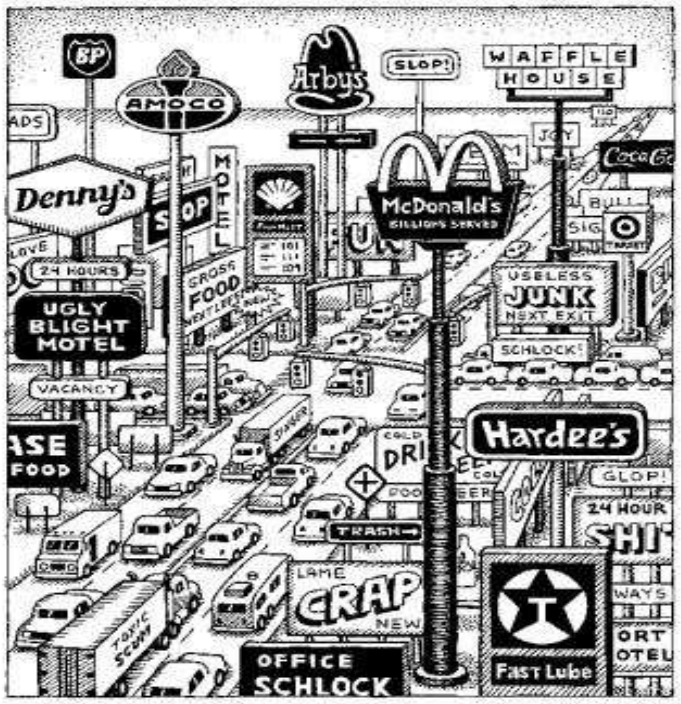
# To This



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# Environmental Impacts

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# Water Quality

- Keeping water clean near a highway is next to impossible

# Water Quality

Accompanying development also harms water quality

# Plant and Wildlife Impacts

Highways threaten native and endangered species

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# Plant and Wildlife Impacts

Highways Interrupt Feeding and Migration Routes

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# Degradation of Air Quality

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# Positive Aspects of I-3

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# Positive Aspects of I-3

- Would provide some road-building jobs
- Anything else?

# What You Can Do

# What You Can Do

- Submit comments to the FHWA at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/section_1927/3rd_infantry_highway/feedback.cfm (spaces are underscores) or by email to stefan.natzke@dot.gov
- Write or speak to State and Federal legislators about why this project should not go forward
- Write to your members of Congress asking them to rescind the rest of the money earmarked for the I-3 study
  - A sample letter will be online at http://www.wayssouth.org/campaigns/stop-i-3/resources/sample-letter-re-funding-rescission/ shortly

# I-3 Is Only a Symptom

How Do We Cure the Disease?

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# How Do We Cure the Disease?

- Our auto-only culture is the problem
- Unless we address this, projects like I-3 will continue to happen

# The Auto-Only Culture Is Unsustainable

- Gas Prices Will Rise
- Driving Will Be Unaffordable
- New Roads Are Unaffordable

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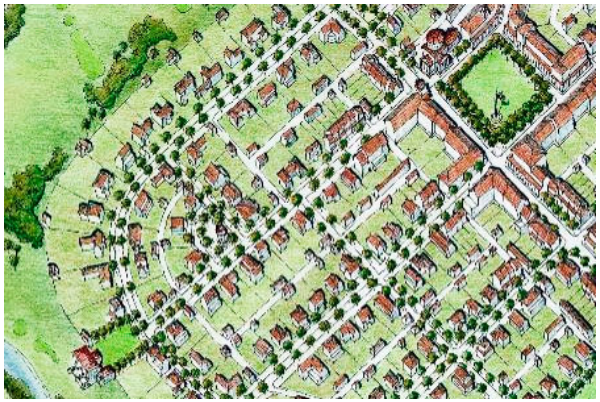
# Changing the Auto-Only Culture

- Walkable, bikeable, well-connected communities
- Viable transit systems



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# Changing the Auto-Only Culture

- Robust rail networks for both passengers and freight
- Vibrant localized economies

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# During the Transition

- Fix what we have
- Don't add to the problem with new roads
- Demand exploration of other alternatives

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# Questions?

www.wayssouth.org

Jim Grode

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