



Best Western of Murphy  
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Re: Comments on February 2010 Public meeting, Ocoee River Gorge Section,  
ADHS Corridor K (Relocated U.S. 64) in Polk County, TN

As a business which depends in large part on recreational activities in the region surrounding Murphy, NC, we applaud the current efforts to clean up the rock slide and, at the same time, make US 64 through the Ocoee Gorge safer for travelers. However, at the same time, we are already feeling the effects of that road closure on our 1<sup>st</sup> quarter revenues.

Though temporary road closures hurt our bottom line, destruction of natural resources that bring travelers to the region will hurt us even more and far more permanently.

The majority of people in this nation live close to or in cities, with the attending stress of traffic woes getting to work, too many people crowded in too little space, unceasing unnatural noise, no escape from the stab of headlights, streetlights, blue lights, traffic lights, and billboard lights. When the opportunity presents itself, millions of us take ourselves out of all of this by coming to the 'natural' areas of our country – the mountains, rivers, forests, and wildlife preserves that our forebears wisely put aside for posterity. These areas restore our inner selves and allow us to rejuvenate our spirits so that we can return stronger, saner, and better armed to face the stresses of our 'everyday' lives.

Rockslides occur on the biggest and best of roads – see I-40 in North Carolina and I-70 in Colorado. Mountains are made up of rocks. Roads going through mountains are bordered by those rocks. With certain weather conditions, rocks slide. Roads next to rocks are going to have rockslides which block them. These are simple facts and cannot be denied, nor can they be solved by building more roads through the mountains.

I attended the public meetings and was impressed by all the pretty maps and the work that has gone into producing them. I was not impressed at the lack of study as to the mitigation costs associated with each of the routes. The true cost of any route cannot be accurately assessed without at least an


estimation of its associated mitigation cost. That being said, I do feel that the great state of Tennessee would get a much bigger bang out of my dollar by doing major improvement work on the existing US 64 road, along with some shoulder work and widening of other local roads so as to provide a viable alternate route for the next slide closure. And, yes, though I live in North Carolina, I own and pay taxes on property in Tennessee.

I believe that studies would show that the current road can be made much safer by adding pullouts, widening narrow stretches, possibly adding a short tunnel in one area, and widening shoulders throughout the gorge – all without shutting the road completely down. I understand that there might be times that the road would have to be closed for short periods, however, I do feel that most of the work can be done while keeping one lane open and directing traffic (as is done on lots of roads lots of times).

Though the ARC will not pay for this type of construction under its current guidelines, I am sure that there are federal funds that will assist the state. However, since the state's 20% obligation for a new route would cost more than the improvements suggested above, the state would be saving money. Please make sure that these resources are not taken away from us, but rather protected as our region's very lifeblood.

Thank you for considering all options – including the one above.

Sincerely



Aurelia Stone, General Manager