

CORRIDOR K MYTHS

Myth 1. A new highway would eliminate truck traffic from the gorge.

The facts: The majority of trucking in the gorge serves local businesses which the proposed four-lane highway would bypass. Long distance trucking is presently and efficiently conducted on nearby interstates. Improving the existing route, U.S. 64, to better accommodate truck traffic is far more sensible than spending billions to build an unnecessary and environmentally destructive highway.

Myth 2. 84% of businesses responding to a 2007 “Green Plan Survey” conducted by Wilbur Smith Associates agreed that a road system connecting southeastern Tennessee and southwestern North Carolina would benefit their businesses.

The facts: Wilbur Smith Associates was retained by the Southeast Industrial Development Commission, a pro-build investment consortium. The businesses polled were not random, nor did they say how they would benefit. Why would a brand new highway be of more benefit than improving an existing highway? A new highway won't put more vehicles on the road, or more money in the pockets of those who travel them.

Myth 3. A new highway will bring economic prosperity.

The facts: That conclusion of the obsolete 1964 study by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has been invalidated by the subsequent building of a network of interstate highways which adequately serve the present recreational/tourism economy. The newest ARC study no longer recommends such an intrusive road, and recommends the expansion of the railroad infrastructure.

Interstate highways bring exit-ramp clusters of chain gas stations, fast-food restaurants and motels to attract overnight stopovers by travelers who would have previously patronized in-town businesses. Additionally, interstates lure residents away from local businesses to shop elsewhere.

Myth 4. The money has been federally allocated so it should be used.

The facts: The original ARC allocation is only partial, requiring the states to pay the balance. More sensible would be using the infrastructure monies authorized by Congress to improve and repair current roadways and bridges, a need punctuated by the continuous, dangerous and disabling rockslides on existing highways.

Myth 5. Our legislative representatives say they should follow the recommendations of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) regarding the importance of additional roads.

The facts: Then they should follow the latest ARC recommendations which no longer suggest such additional construction but, instead, recommend expanding the railroad infrastructure.

Myth 6. Widening the bad spots on US 64 will disturb the pyritic rock and release acid into the Ocoee River.

The facts: The general consensus of geologists who have been studying this specific region since the 1980s is that such acidic pollution is of minimal concern. The proposed construction of a new four-lane highway would be far more environmentally disastrous than correcting hazardous sections of the current roadway.