



March 8, 2010

TDOT, Project Comments
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 700
James K. Polk Building
Nashville, TN 37243-0332

Re: Corridor K along the Ocoee Gorge

To whom it may concern:

The Wilderness Society (TWS) is a national organization founded in 1935 to protect our public lands from excessive development and to permanently protect certain public lands as wilderness. We have several hundred thousand members nationally, with thousands in eastern Tennessee. TWS does not support alternative routes that will harm public lands and particularly the federally designated Big Frog and Little Frog Wilderness areas. We do support Option 2A with upgrades, but do not support the blasting of a new tunnel to accompany these upgrades. We also support upgrades to the existing secondary roads.

The impacts of a new four lane outside of the existing corridor would be profoundly negative upon wildlife, fisheries, cultural resources, and numerous outdoor recreational activities on adjacent public lands. Furthermore, such a large outlay of public funds in a time when we are short on tax dollars, and when other public programs are being drastically cut, is fiscally irresponsible. This project ignores the future, which will only be one of rising energy costs, climate change, and the need for transportation alternatives that do not include business as usual scenarios such as the ones proposed here.

We urge the Tennessee Department of Transportation to address the future and to choose the only option that makes any sense: upgrading the existing corridor to improve traffic flow and safety.

Sincerely,

Brent Martin
Southern Appalachian Director
The Wilderness Society
P.O. Box 177
Franklin, NC 28744