



Claiborne County Courthouse

County Spotlight: *Claiborne*

Population: **29,862**

County Seat: **Tazewell**

Did you know?

Claiborne County is named for William C.C. Claiborne, Tennessee's first congressional representative.

The Abraham Lincoln Museum located on the campus of Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate houses one of the most diverse Lincoln and Civil War collections in the country.

*For more information, visit:
www.tnencyclopedia.net
www.lmunet.edu

CONNECTED TENNESSEE SEEKS TO EXPAND BROADBAND ACROSS THE STATE

The non-profit organization Connected Tennessee has one simple mission: to put technology in the hands of the people, regardless of income or geographic location. In today's world, technology creates a better business environment, more effective community and economic development, improved healthcare, enhanced education and more efficient government. Connected Tennessee accelerates the growth of broadband technology in order to improve the quality of life for people and ensure that Tennessee remains the place of choice to live, work and raise a family.

In 2007, when Connected Tennessee embarked upon Governor Bredesen and the State of Tennessee's *Trail to Innovation*, there was a widening divide in our state between those who had access to broadband and related technology and those who did not, especially in Tennessee's rural communities. Over the past two years, Connected Tennessee has set out to reverse this trend and change the technological landscape of the state – and has been met with much success.

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to create jobs, jumpstart growth and transform our economy to compete in the 21st century. The compromise package contains \$7.2 billion dedicated for broadband, also known as the Broadband Data Improvement Act. In the Broadband Data Improvement Act, Congress stipulates that continued progress in deployment and adoption are vital to America's future, that better federal data on broadband will help this progress and that the federal government should assist in state efforts to create public-private partnerships.

The Broadband Data Improvement Act lays out several criteria that must be met in order to achieve the goal of ubiquitous broadband throughout the State of Tennessee. Due in part to the work of Connected Tennessee, the State of Tennessee is already "Ahead of the Curve" in achieving these worthy goals, thanks to collaborative broadband mapping, local research, grassroots technology planning in every county and computer connectivity programs.

Broadband Stimulus

ARRA appropriated \$7.2 billion for broadband and directed the Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) to expand broadband access to unserved and underserved communities across the U.S., increase jobs, spur investments in technology and infrastructure and provide long-term economic benefits. Specifically, the act created RUS Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) and the NTIA Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). For details on the programs and grant details, visit the broadband funding portal at www.broadbandusa.gov.

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The State of Tennessee submitted three grant applications with the goals of expanding broadband to those unserved and underserved across Tennessee. The applications focus on all aspects and goals discussed through the BIP and BTOP programs. Below is a brief description of each application:

- **Tennessee Broadband Infrastructure for Citizens Unserved & Underserved:** Tennessee’s turnkey solution-tower access and middle-mile connectivity to wireless providers offers affordable service to residents of a 10,000-mile rural area. With a last-mile partner, we will expand access to 150,000 households, 180 public libraries and nearby businesses. Together with two projects driving demand, we will bring broadband’s economic benefits to distressed rural communities.
- **Tennessee Computer Centers and Public Libraries for Broadband Access & Education:** Public libraries are major sources of free Internet access. Along with substantial BTOP access and adoption efforts, the Tennessee State Library proposes to expand community coalitions, awareness, and broadband training to target vulnerable and economically distressed populations. Adding hours, broadband technology and equipment will add capacity to rural libraries to bridge this Digital Divide.
- **Tennessee Campaign for Community Broadband Awareness & Adoption:** In tandem with large BTOP projects for build-out and for broadband education at rural public libraries, Tennessee Economic & Community Development, working with Connected Tennessee, will advance the technology visions of local communities with a statewide marketing campaign, online resource center, and training to help many more citizens step across the Digital Divide and toward sustainable jobs.

Research obtained from local technology planning that each county has been working through has served as the foundation for the grant applications. If these grants are successful, each county will benefit from the efforts of the above projects directly. These include having more access for infrastructure for broadband build-out and public safety towers, having more availability of technology for residents and the development of new county government websites, among many others.

Finally, if your county or local provider is interested in applying for a round two grant, the time to start planning is RIGHT NOW. There is foundation work that needs to be completed before the application is due. If interested in learning more, please contact Connected Tennessee at 615-242-9508 or info@connectedtn.org, or visit www.connectedtn.org.

Release of Driver License Numbers to Insurance Companies

The Office of Open Records Counsel issued Opinion 09-14 on November 3, 2009, concerning the release of automobile accident reports to insurance companies. The purpose of the opinion is to clarify an opinion issued earlier this year which stated that driver identification numbers or driver license numbers are confidential information and must be redacted from vehicle accident or incident reports before releasing them to the public. The new opinion clarifies that there is an exception to the confidentiality requirement for certain uses, including disclosure for use by any insurer or its agents in connection with claims investigation, antifraud activities, rating, or underwriting.

Accordingly, driver identification numbers or driver license numbers are NOT to be redacted when providing motor vehicle accident reports to insurance companies for claims processing. The full text of the opinion is available here:

<http://www.state.tn.us/comptroller/openrecords/>

NACo Survey Reveals Extent of Budget Crisis

The nation's midsize and smaller counties are experiencing the full effects of the down economy and are struggling to cope with declining revenues as are larger counties and states, according to a new survey by the National Association of Counties (NACo).

Nearly half of the counties responding to the survey (47 percent) said that their anticipated budget shortfall was worse than expected and 4 out of 5 respondents (82 percent) said the shortfalls will continue into their next fiscal year. Further, the survey showed that counties are taking any and all actions to cope with sharply declining revenues – from travel restrictions and delaying purchases to more drastic actions such as cutting services, increasing taxes, furloughs and layoffs.

One hundred thirty eight counties from 34 states responded to the survey in late October sent randomly to 1,500 counties across the country. The sample group was made up primarily of midsize to smaller counties by population, and included the Tennessee counties Campbell, Gibson, and Scott.

The survey noted that the leading sources of revenue shortfalls are property taxes (52 percent), state or federal aid (50 percent) and sales taxes (46 percent).

The NACo study also aimed to determine how counties are being affected by the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act which was signed into law by President Obama in February.

About two-thirds of the responding counties (61 percent) said they expect to receive funding as a result of the Recovery Act. However, most counties said they have received less than half of the expected funds so far. The majority of anticipated funds are through the new Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program, the Community Development Block Grant Program, and various transportation programs.

“The Recovery Act funds are slowly making their way to counties and will no doubt help fill some budget deficits and keep some programs afloat,” said NACo Executive Director Larry Naake. “Our grave concern is what happens to state and county budgets when the federal economic stimulus dollars end next year?”

To view the full NACo study, click [here](#).

Mark Your Calendars!

COCTP Renewal Conference dates are as follows:

December 3-4, Franklin

March 9-10, Knoxville

March 30-31, Jackson



Renewal conferences are reserved for Certified Public Administrators. Only recertification credit will be awarded for attendance. Contact the CTAS Training Department for more information.

Stimulus Funds for Energy Efficiency & Conservation Block Grants

In October, Governor Phil Bredesen and Commissioner Matt Kisber of the Department of Economic and Community Development announced that \$9.3 million in federal stimulus funds will be available to small- and medium-sized cities and counties through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG). The competitive grants are available to assist local governments in conserving energy and reducing fossil fuel emissions.

Areas of funding that will be given priority include: developing an overall energy efficiency and conservation strategy; retrofitting existing buildings with cost effective energy efficient measures; implementing renewable energy technologies on government buildings; and replacing traffic signals and street lighting with energy efficient lighting technologies.

The 17 largest cities and 10 largest counties in Tennessee may apply directly to the U.S. Department of Energy for EECBG funds. All other cities and counties may apply through the state of Tennessee by 5 p.m. CST on December 31, 2009.

Applications and more information are available at <http://tnced.gov/recovery/eecbg.html>. The maximum grant amount will be \$100,000 and partial funding may be awarded.

Applications will be scored based on the local government's strategy, feasibility, readiness to proceed, impact, partnerships and the ability to extend funding impact beyond a one-time use.

For more information, visit <http://tnced.gov/recovery/eecbg.html>. For questions regarding the application process please email ecd.energypolicy@tn.gov

TFACA Upcoming Training

The Tennessee Fire and Codes Academy (TFACA) will offer a new series of classes entitled "Introduction to 2009 International Residential Code." This course provides inspectors with the knowledge and skills to inspect residential buildings for compliance with the 2009 Codes. Topics include building planning and construction; energy or contact conservation; and inspection and enforcement methods. Tuition for this course is free as class fees are covered by a grant through the State Fire Marshal's office. The remaining classes will be held in Jackson, Chattanooga and Nashville. For more detailed information, visit TFACA's website, <http://tn.gov/commerce/sfm/tfaca/index.shtml> or contact Kay Hale at 800-747-8868 or Kay.Hale@tn.gov.

Have comments or suggestions for this newsletter?
Contact Claire Marsalis at claire.marsalis@tennessee.edu.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Dec. 1	Business Tax Seminar, Franklin
Dec. 2-3	Sheriff's Association Meeting, Nashville
Dec. 3-4	COCTP Annual Renewal Conference, Franklin
Dec. 8	Business Tax Seminar, Jackson
Dec. 10	Business Tax Seminar, Knoxville

*For more detailed event information, [click here](#).

Organization Provides Web Resource on Water Quality

The Cumberland River Compact was formed in 1997 by a group of people concerned with the way the Cumberland River could and should be protected. Since that time, the organization has continued to enhance the water quality of the Cumberland River and its tributaries through education and by promoting cooperation among citizens, businesses, and agencies in Kentucky and Tennessee.

A large part of that promotion is done via the Internet. Video presentations, quizzes, photos, research studies, reports and publications are just a part of the abundance of resources concerning water quality that can be found by navigating the Compact's website. To learn more, visit www.cumberlandrivercompact.org.

County Officials E-News is a monthly newsletter provided by the University of Tennessee County Technical Assistance Service in an effort to promote better county government through direct assistance to county officials and their associations.

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