



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
LOCAL PROGRAMS & COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS DIVISION
HIGHWAY BEAUTIFICATION
SUITE 400, JAMES K. POLK BUILDING
505 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-1402
(615) 741-2877

BUTCH ELEY
DEPUTY GOVERNOR &
COMMISSIONER OF TRANSPORTATION

BILL LEE
GOVERNOR

MEMORANDUM

To: Alex Denis, Assistant Bureau Chief
Public Affairs & Community Relations

Jay Klein, Director
Legislative Division

File

From: Michael McClanahan, Transportation Manager
Highway Beautification Office

Date: 5 November 2024

Subject: Litter Abatement & Prevention Program Summary & Activity Expenses

Roadside litter is a tremendous issue for Tennessee. Increased litter can adversely impact a community's economic development, tourism, environmental quality, and public safety. TDOT's cost of providing statewide litter pickup and prevention education in FY2024 totals \$35,089,035.82, a more an \$11.8 million, or 34%, increase from October 2022. This is attributed primarily to the rising cost of contracted pickup (\$5.5 million), a first-time calculation for the cost of in-house bulk items pickup conducted by TDOT Maintenance Operations staff (\$6 million), increased grant expenses (\$90,000), and paid media expenses for the Nobody Trashes Tennessee campaign (\$275,000).

Amid the rise in litter-related expenses, TDOT continues to reduce litter on roadways, innovate programming, build partnerships, and deliver a high level of service. As part of a December 2022 Visible Litter Study a research team identified 88 million litter items were on Tennessee roadsides at any given time. This number is staggering but represents a 12% decrease from a similar study conducted in June 2016. The study also noted drastic declines in the number of littered items along Interstates, US Highways, and State Highways. TDOT is invested in roadside litter cleanup and in changing litter behavior throughout Tennessee.

Figure 1, on the next page, is a schedule of TDOT's litter related activities and expenses.

Program	Activity	Amount (Sept. 2024)	Previous (Oct. 2022)	% Change
Contracted Pickup	Interstates & State Highways	\$ 14,663,149.00	\$ 9,537,525.00	35%
	Trustee Labor	\$ 122,703.00	\$ 77,207.00	37%
	Dept. of General Services	\$ 277,415.00	\$ 199,310.18	28%
	County	\$ 1,460,495.00	\$ 1,202,027.14	18%
	Municipal	\$ 339,689.00	\$ 338,846.28	
In-House Pickup	TDOT Operations Spot Pickup	\$ 614,144.00	\$ 1,144,208.00	-86%
	TDOT Operations Bulk Items Pickup	\$ 6,615,179.00		
Grants & Education	Litter Grant	\$ 5,500,000.00	\$ 5,500,000.00	
	Keep Tennessee Beautiful	\$ 1,636,261.82	\$ 1,639,315.35	
	Clean Memphis	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 300,000.00	-50%
	Tennessee Environmental Council	\$ 90,000.00		
	Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 180,000.00	10%
Special Litter Programs	Adopt-A-Highway	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 35,000.00	
	Litter Hotline	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	
	Nobody Trashes Tennessee	\$ 3,275,000.00	\$ 3,000,000.00	8%
Total		\$ 35,089,035.82	\$ 23,213,438.95	34%

Figure 1: Litter Activity & Expense Schedule

Program Revenues:

In 1981, the Soft Drink and Malt Beverage Industries took a comprehensive, proactive approach to preventing their containers and blight from becoming eyesores along Tennessee roadways. As good corporate citizens, the industries lobbied to establish a tax on their products to help fund litter prevention in Tennessee. These taxes are contained within TCA § 67-4-402 and TCA § 57-5-201. The law gives TDOT discretion on how best to use the funds to clean up and prevent litter, and matters related to litter, such as recycling, runoff, and stormwater. In 1983, these funds were used to establish TDOT’s Litter Grant Program, which supports a variety of local programs and activities which also help to reduce litter on Tennessee roads.

This law demonstrates the broad benefits of public-private partnership with both parties working toward a common statewide goal of a cleaner, greener Tennessee. Actual tax revenue reported to the Tennessee Department of Revenue for FY2024 totaled \$7,733,637.11.

Bottle Tax (Soft Drink)	\$9,987,300.53
Malt Beverage Tax	\$2,145,864.31
Total	\$12,133,165.84

Activities Summary:

Contracted Pickup:

- Interstate & State Highways (\$14,663,149.00) – TDOT expense for litter control on Interstates and State Highways resulting from the annual bid letting process.

- Trustee Labor (\$122,703.00) – Expense associated with litter control conducted by jail labor on State Highways.
- Department of General Services (\$277,415.00) – TDOT expense for litter control on Interstates and State Highways resulting from procurement methods led by the Department of General Services.
- County Maintenance (\$1,460,495.00) – TDOT’s statewide expense for litter control, using maintenance contracts with county governments.
- Municipal Maintenance (\$339,689.00) – TDOT’s statewide expense for litter control, using maintenance contracts with municipal governments.

In-House Pickup:

- TDOT Operations Spot Pickup (\$614,144.00) – TDOT Maintenance Operations staff conduct spot-cleanups on areas where litter is present, or areas which have received complaints from the public. This expense is derived from daily work reports of regional and district – level staff, and accounts for staff hourly rate and benefits, equipment and mobilization costs, and waste disposal fees.
- TDOT Operations Bulk Items Pickup (\$6,615,179.00) – TDOT Maintenance Operations staff conduct spot-cleanups on areas where litter is present, or areas which have received complaints from the public. This expense is derived from daily work reports of regional and district – level staff, and accounts for staff hourly rate and benefits, equipment and mobilization costs, and waste disposal fees.

Grants & Education:

- Litter Grant (\$5,500,000.00) – TDOT annually awards grant funds to all 95 Tennessee county governments to subsidize local litter pickup operations and prevention education.
- Keep Tennessee Beautiful (\$1,636,261.82) – TDOT awards a 3-year contract to the University of Memphis to house and support this adjunct service, which connects a network of Tennessee affiliates to Keep America Beautiful programming and grant opportunities. The service delivers on the Governor’s priorities to provide education to the public about the adverse community impacts and growing costs of litter. In FY24, the service partnered with the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police to offer litter and covered load law enforcement grants to municipal police departments.
- Clean Memphis (\$200,000.00) – TDOT awarded a 2-year contract to conduct neighborhood-based cleanups in the City of Memphis and surrounding Shelby County. The group is also piloting a 4-part community classroom about the circular economy, water reduction/diversion, stormwater, and litter abatement. Lessons from the pilot program are to be shared with TDOT for replication in other communities, after the conclusion of the grant.
- Tennessee Environmental Council (\$90,000.00) – TDOT awarded a 2-year contract to conduct a series of 15 “Recycling Roundup” events in underserved communities throughout Tennessee. These events provide residents with free access to solid waste services, help

to curb illegal dumping, and provide a venue for the public to properly dispose of household hazardous waste items. Most items gathered are recycled or have a beneficial end-use.

- Keep the Tennessee River Beautiful (\$200,000.00) – TDOT awarded a 2-year contract to support shoreline adoption programs, storm drain and litter skimming devices, cigarette litter receptacles, and volunteer cleanups within the Tennessee River watershed.

Special Litter Programs:

- Adopt-A-Highway (\$35,000.00) – This all-free, all-volunteer program allows for the public to keep 2-mile stretches of State Highways tidy, while receiving roadside recognition signage. Costs to TDOT include pickup supplies, transport and disposal fees, staff time, program marketing materials, and signage.
- Litter Hotline (\$60,000.00) – In conjunction with TCA § 51-1-401, TDOT is required to maintain a toll-free hotline for residents to report acts of littering. Litterbugs receive an educational mailer and Nobody Trashes Tennessee promotional materials.
- Nobody Trashes Tennessee (\$3,275,000.00) – The Nobody Trashes Tennessee litter prevention campaign launched in June 2017, to spread awareness and correct litter behaviors of Tennesseans and the travelling public. Annually, the campaign purchases media and joins with various partners to display public service announcements, creative images, and Out-of-Home advertising. In 2024, the campaign garnered 102.7 million impressions and generated 497 pieces of earner media coverage. Each November, the campaign challenges partners to conduct “No Trash November” cleanups, with the goal of removing thousands of pounds of litter from Tennessee roadsides.

Additional Resources:

TDOT Litter Grant Website	https://www.tn.gov/tdot/LitterGrant
Nobody Trashes Tennessee Websites	<p>Landing Page:</p> <p>https://nobodytrashestennessee.com/</p> <p>Research:</p> <p>https://nobodytrashestennessee.com/our-litter-research/</p>
Adopt-A-Highway Website	https://www.tn.gov/tdot/AdoptAHighway
Tennessee Litter Hotline E-Form	https://www.tn.gov/tdot/LitterHotline
TDOT Maintenance Operations Contact	<p>Timothy Colvett Maintenance Contracts Manager Timothy.Colvett@tn.gov (615) 253-2899</p>
TDOT Highway Beautification Contact	<p>Mike McClanahan Transportation Manager Michael.McClanahan@tn.gov (615) 741-0803</p>

TDOT LITTER PROGRAMS

November 2024

REVENUES



\$12.1 MILLION (est) FY23
malt beverage & soft drink
tax collections.

CONTRACTED PICKUP

\$14.6 MILLION Interstate and State Highway
Contracts

\$122,703 Trustee Labor

\$277,415 Dept. of General Services
Contracts

\$1.4 MILLION County Contracts

\$339,689 Municipal Contracts

LITTER BY NUMBERS

\$35 MILLION Amount TDOT spends annually on litter pickup & prevention education

↑ **34%** Increase in the amount spent by TDOT annually since July 2020

\$614,144 Cost of in-house spot pickup of roadside litter by TDOT staff

\$6.6 MILLION Cost of in-house bulk items pickup of roadside litter by TDOT staff

88 MILLION Pieces of litter on Tennessee roadways at any given time

↓ **12%** Reduction of statewide roadside litter since 2016

GRANTS AND EDUCATION



\$5.5 MILLION County Litter Grants

\$1.6 MILLION Granted to Keep Tennessee
Beautiful

LITTER PROGRAMS



\$35,000 Administration of Statewide
Adopt-A-Highway Programs

\$60,000 Administration of Statewide
Litter Hotline

\$3.2 MILLION Nobody Trashes Tennessee
Campaign

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

**NOBODY
TRASHES
TENNESSEE**
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORTATION

KEEP
TENNESSEE
Beautiful

**LITTER
HOTLINE**
1-877-8LITTER

TN **TDOT**
Department of
Transportation

For more information, contact the TDOT Highway Beautification
Office at (615) 741-0803, or Michael.McClanahan@tn.gov