



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Mayor Jacobs Announces Roadwork Project to Help NW Elementary**

*KNOXVILLE, Tenn.*— The Knox County Mayor’s Office and the Knox County Engineering & Public Works Department have developed a much-needed infrastructure plan – and the necessary funding – to help the school system complete the long-awaited Northwest Elementary School project.

At issue was Coward Mill Road, a thin thoroughfare that is currently not wide enough to safely handle the bus traffic headed east to the future school. The road also does not have pedestrian walkways along it for students.

The problem was first raised during a Knox County Commission meeting earlier this spring when local leaders questioned the road’s safety. Officials at the time felt the road wasn’t wide enough to handle the school traffic.

Jim Snowden, the county’s Senior Director of E&PW, commissioned a study to look into the road and then came up with a number of proposals to fix it.

The solution? Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs has agreed to put up \$2.25 million – about half of the needed funding – to pay for the road project. The Knox County Board of Education agreed to cover the other half.

The funding will allow crews to widen Coward Mill Road an additional four feet to create two 10-foot wide lanes along a 1.6-mile stretch from Pellissippi Parkway east to Chuck Jones Drive near Ben Atchley Tennessee State Veterans’ Home. Crews also will build either sidewalks or greenways along the same stretch of road.

“I’m glad we were able to form a great partnership with the school to ensure that this project was brought to fruition in a safe and timely manner,” said Mayor Jacobs. “Despite facing budget constraints right now, this is something we knew needed to be done. We weren’t able to include it in this year’s proposed budget, but we were able to cover our portion of the project’s cost through some savings we incurred on a separate road project.”

Snowden, whose department will oversee the work, agreed.

“After the traffic concerns were raised, we took a little bit of time to make sure they were addressed,” Snowden said. “We’re going to mash the gas hard and get this finished as fast as we can.”

As it stands, the plan is to start work on the road by early summer 2021, so that it's complete when the new school opens for students in August 2022.

The Knox County Board of Education approved the road project Wednesday night. The Knox County Commission will talk more about it during the board's Monday work session and then vote on it during its June 22 regular meeting.

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