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MILISSA REIERSON

Governor Bill Haslam and Franklin Mayor Ken Moore share a light moment on the porch of Carnation Plantation following Haslam's announcement yesterday that the state will award the city a \$500,000 grant for the Eastern Flank Battlefield Parks Access Improvement Project.

Franklin

Governor awards \$500,000 for Eastern Flank Battlefield roadway

BY PAM HORNE
STAFF WRITER

Gov. Bill Haslam visited Franklin yesterday to announce a \$500,000 grant for the construction of a critical roadway feature of the Eastern Flank Battlefield Park.

An enthusiastic crowd of Franklin civic leaders and historic preservationists gathered on the lawn of Carnation Plantation to hear Haslam and former Franklin Mayor John Schroer, now Tennessee's Commissioner of Transportation.

This announcement is a huge boost to local efforts to restore the 110-acre battlefield park.

The funding, which is part of a state Department of Transportation enhancement grant, will be combined with \$369,000 in city funds to cover the \$900,000 visitor access road.

"Tennessee's Civil War battlefields are wonderful

educational destinations, and they attract thousands of visitors to the state each year," Haslam said. "It is imperative we preserve these areas and make the necessary improvements to ensure they are accessible to residents and visitors. I'm pleased the state can contribute to those efforts."

State enhancement grants are made possible by a federal program established in the early 1990s to assist non-traditional transportation projects. In communities, Haslam said, Franklin's unique public-private partnership was attractive to TDOT.

"The community owns the project and then we can come in and help," Haslam said following the announcement. "The community has an investment in this."

Aldermen have felt pressure to jumpstart the road project because of the potential for tourism growth associated with the Sesquicentennial Commemoration of the Battle of Franklin, Nov. 30, 2014.

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Governor

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Carrion Plantation alone sees more than 40,000 visitors annually.

Robert Hicks, one of the park's earliest champions, also spoke to the crowd, specifically recognizing the 14 groups of preservation organizations that have worked tirelessly to reclaim the battlefield. He also recognized the efforts of Kay and Rod Heller, who held the property, while funding could be secured.

"Jim Lighthizer, president of the Civil War Trust, has called this the largest private-public cooperative effort in the history of Civil War preservation, with no close second anywhere," Hicks said.

Three entities—the city of Franklin, The Civil War



From left in back are Eric Jacobson, Battle of Franklin Trust; Sen. Jack Johnson, author and historian Robert Hicks; and IDOT Commissioner John Schroer and in front holding the check are Rep. Charles Sargent, Franklin Mayor Dr. Ken Moore and Gov. Bill Haslam.

Trust and the American Battlefield Protection Program—ultimately made the park become a reality.

The access road's completion, along with signage and interpretive features, is considered by city officials and preservationists to be critical to the park's future vitality.

Haslam's announcement yesterday gave officials the opportunity to move forward on the single-lane loop road that will begin on Lewisburg Pike just west of Carrion Park Drive.

The access road will take visitors to the Fleming Center at Carrion and continue alongside the Confederate Cemetery near the old Carrion Clubhouse. The final portion of the loop road will route travelers almost parallel to a Carrion Lane following paths that were formerly used by golf carts when the property was used for a private golf course.

Mayor Ken Moore, along with several aldermen, including Margaret Martin, Ann Petersen, Michael Skinner, Pearl Bransford and Beverly Burger were present for the outdoor gathering on the



Julian Bibb points to a map of the new roadway Eastern Flank Battlefield.

the Eastern Flank Battlefield Park.

One of those groups is Franklin's Charge, which initiated a dialogue several years ago between the city

lawn of the plantation. Representatives from many of the local battlefield preservation groups were on hand for the announcement.

Eric Jacobson, chief operating officer and historian of The Battle of Franklin Trust, welcomed visitors and emphasized the significance of this funding.

Robert Hicks, whose New York Times best-seller "Widow of the South" has drawn national attention to Franklin's story in the Civil War applauded the efforts of more than 14 community organizations that have galvanized support for



Milliecent Morley, Director, Claiborne and Hughes Health Center, Alderman Pearl Bransford, and Jennifer Bransford, also of Claiborne and Hughes Health Center, were present to celebrate Governor Haslam's announcement.

and private groups. The result was a \$5 million public-private acquisition of the undeveloped land where a

portion of the battle took place.

"This is a remarkable day," noted Julian Bibb, founding director of Franklin's Charge, a non-profit organized solely for battlefield protection in Williamson County. "This is the beginning of so much more that will happen over the next three weeks. This will turn the park into something that can be enjoyed by city of Franklin residents and her tourists."

The Board of Mayor and Aldermen, in conjunction with the city's newly formed Battlefield Commission, has been working on a plan to construct the road, even giving it priority ranking on a long list of capital investment projects for fiscal year 2012.



Mayor Ken Moore welcomes Gov. Bill Haslam to the podium following brief remarks outlining the city's efforts to ensure the preservation of Eastern Flank Battlefield Park.

PAM HORNE