

WILLIAMSON A.M.

SECTION W » FRIDAY, JULY 22, 2011 » THE TENNESSEAN »

METRO PUTS OFF DISCUSSION OF COUNTY LINE BILLBOARD 3W

SEVERAL NEIGHBORHOODS BECOME SELLERS' MARKETS 9W



TODAY'S WEATHER

Afternoon showers,
by Rachel Cochran
Grassland Middle School

Battlefield park gets boost



Preservation group thrilled grant will help pay for road

By Kevin Walters
The Tennessean

FRANKLIN — It took \$5 million in public money and donations back in 2006 to buy land for Franklin's Civil War battlefield park.

As for construction of the road into the 110-acre park, it took the help of Gov. Bill Haslam and a \$500,000 grant.

Haslam announced this week that Franklin would get a \$500,000 transportation enhancement grant that city officials say is needed for that park to handle what they predict will be a rise in tourists. That money will be paired with slightly more than \$360,000 the city has socked away for the completion of the project.

Behind the scenes, Civil War preservationists are ramping up fundraising work to bolster interest in the city's ties to the Civil War in time for the 150th anniversary of the Nov. 30, 1864, Battle of Franklin. Franklin's Charge, a nonprofit organization dedicated

to preserving battlefield land, is pursuing the creation of more parks along Columbia Avenue.

Haslam's support of the grant — which came through the state Department of Transportation headed by former Franklin Mayor John Schroer — furthers the investment of public money in the park. On a bigger scale, Haslam said he sees it as an investment in the state's overall Civil War tourism program.

"We're putting together tourism events to make it easy for folks who want to come see and

From the porch of Carnton Mansion in Franklin, Gov. Bill Haslam talks about the \$500,000 park road grant. JEANNE REASONOVER / THE TENNESSEAN

» ROAD, 4W

Road is expected to boost tourism

»ROAD FROM 1W

understand what happened in the Civil War," Haslam said. "We're trying to encourage that."

Grant is unique

Of 27 road enhancement grants, this is the only one dedicated to a Civil War park.

Franklin's willingness to spend more than \$300,000 on the road helped it secure the additional state money — and Haslam's backing.

"We work with the governor to figure out what the priorities are and we take a lot of his thoughts as we go through that list," Schroer said. "It's leveraging state dollars, and we try to do that so much."

The new road won't just help tourists better find the park and, in turn, Carnton Mansion, which adjoins the property. It will decrease traffic on Carnton Lane, meaning

that the estimated 40,000 annual visitors won't have to travel through the residential neighborhood adjacent to the park and Carnton.

"It opens the park up so we'll have access to the different sites that we're going to have interpretations in," said Alderman Mike Skinner, who represents that area.

As proposed, the one-way loop road would be more than 5,000 linear feet, Skinner said.

"Can you imagine how many cars we could park end-to-end in a big event?" Skinner said.

At Tuesday's 5 p.m. nonvoting work session, Skinner and other city aldermen will discuss details of a contract to have the road built.

Donors sought

While work on the city-owned park moves forward, private donors are apparently lining up sup-

port to help Franklin's other Civil War park project along Columbia Avenue.

Franklin's Charge is seeking donors to buy a small retail space and the Domino's Pizza take-out restaurant at 1221 to 1225 Columbia Ave. That site is considered "core battlefield land" because much of the heaviest fighting occurred there.

Author and Franklin's Charge supporter Robert Hicks said he has secured a \$150,000 pledge from a donor to plan a museum for the site, when it's purchased, and a separate \$150,000 pledge to build it.

Officials with the Civil War Trust said the group's 55,000 members will attempt to raise \$870,000 needed by Franklin's Charge.

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