



## A Letter from Mayor Graves

March 20, 2014



### Honoring the Past, Opening the Future

I'm sure most of you have played the "remember when" game.

Do you remember the first year Sports Illustrated was published in the United States? The Hershey Bar still cost 5-cents? The first U.S. nuclear submarine was launched? Hank Aaron hits his first of 755 homers? Roger Bannister breaks the 4-minute mile? The Tonight Show premieres? Doctors perform the first human kidney transplant?

The year was 1954. And closer to home – right here in Gallatin – the State Route 109 Bridge opened over the Cumberland River. The bridge linked Sumner and Wilson Counties not far from where the Woods Ferry carried people, cars, horses, and goods across the river.

The old SR 109 Bridge is a two-lane steel truss bridge, which means it is a structure of connected triangular elements that support the load. Truss bridges are one of the oldest types of modern bridges. The bridge, also called Veterans Memorial Bridge, has served this community well for the past 60 years. It opened Gallatin and Sumner County to new development, new businesses, and new residents. It has done its job admirably.

This weekend, the old bridge will carry its last car across the river. And, sometime later this year, the old 109 Veterans Memorial Bridge will be torn down to live only in pictures and memories. It relinquishes its job to a new modern bridge – a bridge that also pays homage to the past.

The new 109 Gateway Bridge opens this weekend. The new bridge is named in honor of the late Walter Durham, a Gallatin resident who served as the State Historian for many years. The chief designer of the new bridge is Henry Pate, a Gallatin native and resident, who retired from TDOT earlier this month.

Features of the new bridge include open railings that allow for views of the river, lighting reminiscent of old-timey gas-fed fixtures, sidewalks and bike paths that loop under the bridge, a waterway marker for boaters navigating the river, two flag poles, and brick monuments announcing to a driver that they are crossing into a special community no matter which direction they're going.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) has been a generous partner on design and construction of the bridge. TDOT worked closely with Gallatin, Sumner County, and Wilson County to create a truly unique bridge for our community – and for the state.

Watching the new bridge take shape has been fascinating. The bridge is 90-feet wide to carry four lanes of traffic. It is supported by eight concrete piers set into the river. The deepest pier is 75 feet. The bridge is half concrete and half steel. There are 11,000 cubic yards of concrete and 1.8-million pounds of steel in the new bridge. The longest steel span over the navigational channel is 385 feet. And, the concrete spheres in the middle plaza of the bridge weigh 3,000 pounds each.

When the bridge opens this weekend, there will only be one lane of traffic going each way. Eventually, SR 109 on each side of the bridge will be five lanes. TDOT is in the process of acquiring right-of-way to widen 109 from Odoms Bend to Airport Road in Gallatin. Once the entire SR 109 project is complete, there will be four or five lanes from I-40 to I-65.

As the name of the bridge states – it is a gateway into Gallatin and Sumner County. It will be sad for some to see the old bridge demolished. But the new bridge will be a point of pride for our community. In another 60 years, a generation will be asking – do you remember when?

