



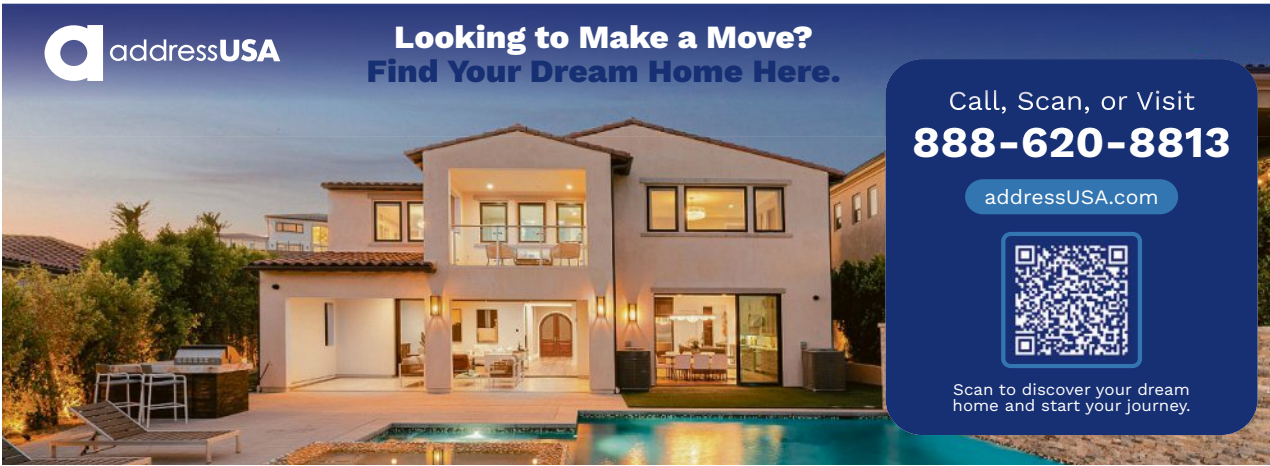
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THE LEAF-CHRONICLE

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Prosecutor Will Ayers speaks during a hearing for Christa Gail Pike in Knoxville on Aug. 11. Pike is set to be executed Sept. 30 for the 1995 murder of Colleen Slemmer, in which Pike saved a piece of Slemmer's skull as a souvenir. PHOTOS BY BRIANNA PACIORKA/NEWS SENTINEL

Christa Pike did not prevail

Judge dismisses most of challenges argued during special master hearing

Keith Sharon
Nashville Tennessean | USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Most of the challenges argued by Christa Pike's legal team during a hearing in Knoxville have been dismissed.

Senior Judge Mark Ward, a special master appointed by the Tennessee Supreme Court, presided during the three-day hearing that ended just before noon on Aug. 13. In a report filed Aug. 20, Ward found that Pike failed to show that lethal injection, the scheduled method of execution, would cause her needless suffering.

Attorneys for the state and for Pike will be able to lodge challenges until Aug. 28. The state plans to execute Pike Sept. 30.

Pike attended the hearing via video

Journalists from The Tennessean, the Knoxville



Luke Ihnen, attorney for Christa Gail Pike, speaks during the hearing for Pike.

News Sentinel and other media outlets were in the courtroom at Knoxville Criminal Court, but Pike was not. Her image was streamed from the Debra K. Johnson Rehabilitation Center, where she has been imprisoned for more than 30 years.

Pike sat at a long conference table in a light blue long prison-issue top. In the minutes before the

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TN picks I-24 toll lane team that pledges \$24.8 billion for roads

State officials to consider expansion toward Clarksville

Vivian Jones
Nashville Tennessean | USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

State officials have selected a vendor to construct new, elevated toll lanes on Interstate 24 and say their pick will disturb surrounding neighborhoods and businesses less than previously expected.

The vendor, DriveTN, has agreed to pay the state \$24.8 billion in concessions over 50 years, establishing a new dedicated funding stream for roads — which could prove transformational to the state's massive backlog of unfunded road projects.

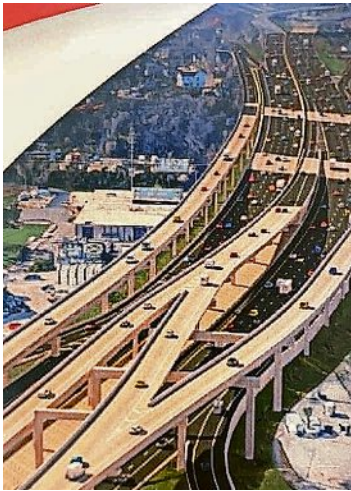
Members of Tennessee's Transportation Modernization board considered four bids from potential vendors analyzed by the Tennessee Department of Transportation for the project during their meeting Aug. 19. They voted to partner with DriveTN, a consortium of six companies, to construct, operate and maintain the toll lanes.

DriveTN will build new, in some places elevated, lanes of traffic along I-24 between Nashville and Murfreesboro, which drivers can pay a fee to use. All existing lanes of traffic will remain free of charge.

DriveTN expects construction costs to total \$9.2 billion, which will be entirely privately funded.

"Today is the beginning of a new era for infrastructure in Tennessee," Gov. Bill Lee told board members at the start of their meeting. "I want to underscore the magnitude of this for Tennessee. What we're discussing today will be America's largest and most

See TOLL LANES, Page 10A



A rendering of proposed raised toll lanes along the Interstate 24 corridor between Nashville and Murfreesboro shows lanes of traffic on raised structures to minimize destruction of surrounding neighborhoods. PROVIDED BY THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Bonnaroo 2027 a bust, festival may be back in '28

Heavy rainfall has been big disrupter for Manchester event

Audrey Gibbs
Nashville Tennessean | USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival will not return in 2027, organizers have announced.

The Manchester, Tennessee, festival shared it will be taking a year off following their successful 2026 festival, and 2025 mid-festival cancellation.

In a social media post, festival organizers said the Farm, particularly its main venue, needed a year off after back-to-back years of storms.

"This wasn't an easy decision, and not one we take

lightly, but in our hearts, we know this break will only make Bonnaroo better," the post read.

"We hope you'll continue radiating positivity in your community throughout the year and thank you for loving this festival as much as we do."

The announcement comes after days of rumors among fans and industry observers, who were curious about the future of Tennessee's largest music festival — fueled in part by the absence of a date announcement.

Bonnaroo's decision follows a turbulent period for the festival.

In 2021, organizers called off Bonnaroo before the festival began due to remnant rainfall from Hurricane

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Bonnarrovians take shelter as the rain begins to pour down at the Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival at The Farm in Manchester on June 14. NICOLE HESTER/ THE TENNESSEAN

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