



April 02, 2025

Alternative Procedure for Opening, Changing and Closing County Roads

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Alternative Procedure for Opening, Changing and Closing County Roads

Reference Number: CTAS-844

There is a local option law found at T.C.A. § 54-10-216 which provides for a much easier process for opening, changing and closing county roads. The alternative procedure must be adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the county legislative body to become effective in a given county. Counties operating under this section have the following method available to them for opening, changing and closing county roads:

1. An application to open, change, or close a designated public road within the county is made in writing to the chief administrative officer.
2. Upon receiving an application, the chief administrative officer must give notice of the application to all interested parties. Interested parties include landowners and those controlling land touched by the road subject to the application.
3. The chief administrative officer must then make a recommendation to the regional planning commission, or a committee of the county legislative body if no such regional planning commission exists, regarding whether the public road should be opened, changed, or closed.
4. After receiving the recommendation of the chief administrative officer, the regional planning commission or committee of the county legislative body must make its recommendation to the county legislative body and must attach the recommendation of the chief administrative officer. Before making any recommendation with respect to opening, changing, or closing a road, the regional planning commission, or committee of the county legislative body, must provide notice of the action either by written notice mailed to affected property owners or by notice advertised in a newspaper of general circulation in the county not less than fourteen (14) days before the recommendation is made.
5. After receiving the required recommendations, the county legislative body may, by resolution adopted by a majority of its members, order the opening, changing, or closure of the public road.

If a county chooses to operate under this alternative procedure and does not have a regional planning commission, a standing committee of the county legislative body will perform the functions of the planning commission. The standing committee must be comprised of five (5) county legislative body members selected by the chair of the county legislative body each year on or before September 1. The committee will only be formed if no regional planning commission exists to perform the functions of the planning commission under the alternative procedure law and will operate for the sole purpose of considering applications to open, change, or close a county road.

Adoption of the alternative procedure does not preclude interested parties from seeking damages arising from the opening, changing, or closing of a county road to which they are otherwise entitled under the law.

As used in T.C.A. § 54-10-216, "change", with respect to the changing of public roads, does not include any proposed or actual reduction of the maximum gross weight limits of freight motor vehicles operating over public roads.

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