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Marketing and Communications contact:

Andrew Oppmann, 615-339-8851 cell or Andrew.Oppmann@mtsu.edu

City, MTSU celebrate renovation of Middle Tennessee Boulevard

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. — The City of Murfreesboro and Middle Tennessee State University celebrated Friday the renovation of Middle Tennessee Boulevard, an \$18.2-million project that turned the thoroughfare into a gateway for the campus.

Former U.S. Rep. Bart Gordon and U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander joined Murfreesboro Mayor Shane McFarland and MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee for a ceremony to open formally the enhancements in the .8-mile stretch between East Main Street and Greenland Drive.

“The partnership between the city of Murfreesboro, MTSU and our elected officials is strong,” McFarland told the crowd assembled at the Faulkinberry entrance for the occasion. “In fact, I would say it’s never been stronger.”

Construction on the upgrade, overseen by the city, began in December 2016. It turned the boulevard into a four-lane, divided road with a landscaped median, MTSU-branded gates, bike lanes, improved sidewalks and lighting, new traffic signals, decorative crosswalks, and underground utilities.

McPhee said, “Thanks to the commitment and perseverance of our local, state and federal elected officials, as well as members of our university community, we now have a beautiful, enhanced front door for our campus and Murfreesboro’s historic downtown area.”

Federal funding, secured by Gordon before leaving Congress in 2011 and supported by Alexander, was key to the project: \$5.8 million in high-priority project funding and \$1.2 million in congestion mitigation air quality improvement funds.

The city also allocated \$6.2 million, including surface transportation monies it received from the federal government, and MTSU provided \$5 million.

Gordon, who like McFarland is an MTSU alumnus, said he was proud of the efforts unveiled Friday, describing the project as a “game changer, not only for the university, but also for ongoing efforts by the city to improve and enhance important gateway districts.”

“This project makes our city safer, enhances the beauty of this wonderful campus and demonstrates how leadership at the city, state, university and federal levels can work together for the benefit of all of our citizens,” said Gordon, who was awarded an honorary doctorate by the university in 2013.

McPhee said he “would be remiss if I didn’t mention that it was Bart’s vision and the tireless support from him and his staff, along with Senator Alexander and his office, which made this project a reality.”

Alexander said the boulevard now “creates a great first impression for a great university.”

“MTSU has proven over the last few years that it is committed to high academic standards and helping students complete their degrees,” he said.

“This new entrance will help attract even more students,” said Alexander, a former governor and former president of the University of Tennessee, citing how first impressions of a campus can often be a determining factor in college choice.

The senator also thanked McPhee and McFarland, adding, “Your leadership has helped make this possible.”

Other elements of the project include:

- Traffic flow on Faulkinberry Drive changes to “right turn in, right turn out” onto Middle Tennessee Boulevard.
- A pull-in area for buses has been added to the front of Murphy Center.
- Pedestrian crossings with signals have been added at Lytle and Division Streets, and crosswalks at Bell Street and Faulkinberry Drive have been upgraded.
- Brick walls with planned MTSU signage have been erected at the corners of Greenland Drive and another wall added at East Main Street to better define major entry points onto campus.
- Flagpoles are erected at the corner of Greenland Drive.

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FOR MEDIA: Five (5) photos attached

CAPTIONS:

MTBLVD-1: MTSU and the city of Murfreesboro hosted a ribbon-cutting Friday, Aug. 2, to celebrate the completion of an \$18.2 million renovation project to Middle Tennessee Boulevard. Cutting the ribbon, from left holding scissors, are former Congressman Bart Gordon, MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee, Murfreesboro Mayor Shane McFarland and U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander. Pictured with them are a host of state, local and university representatives. (MTSU photo by J. Intintoli)

MTBLVD-2: MTSU and the city of Murfreesboro hosted a ribbon-cutting Friday, Aug. 2, to celebrate the completion of an \$18.2 million renovation project to Middle Tennessee Boulevard. Preparing to cut the ribbon, from left, are former Congressman Bart Gordon, MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee, Murfreesboro Mayor Shane McFarland and U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander. (MTSU photo by J. Intintoli)

MTBLVD-3: MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee gives remarks Friday, Aug. 2, at a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of an \$18.2 million renovation project to Middle Tennessee Boulevard. (MTSU photo by J. Intintoli)

MTBLVD-4: Traffic flows Friday, Aug. 2, along Middle Tennessee Boulevard at Faulkinberry Drive, which now features upgraded crosswalks and signals as well as new landscaping and decorative entrances. MTSU and the city of Murfreesboro hosted a ribbon-cutting Friday to celebrate the completion of the \$18.2 million renovation project to Middle Tennessee Boulevard. (MTSU photo by Jimmy Hart)

MTBLVD-5: Traffic flows south Friday, Aug. 2, along the upgraded Middle Tennessee Boulevard toward Bell Street at MTSU. The .8-mile stretch between East Main Street and Greenland Drive features four lanes, a landscaped median as well as upgraded crosswalks and traffic signals. MTSU and the city of Murfreesboro hosted a ribbon-cutting Friday to celebrate the completion of an \$18.2 million renovation project to Middle Tennessee Boulevard. (MTSU photo by Jimmy Hart)

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Andrew Oppmann

Vice President and Spokesman
Middle Tennessee State University
Marketing and Communications
205 Cope Administration Building
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132
Cell: 615-339-8851
Office: 615-494-7800
Twitter & Instagram: @aoppmann
For MTSU news anytime: www.MTSUNews.com

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