

TRANSPORTATION IN WEST VIRGINIA

TOO MANY NEEDS, TOO LITTLE FUNDING

Long before a deadly bridge collapse on Interstate 35 in Minnesota focused attention on the nation's infrastructure, a group of concerned citizens knew about the crisis facing West Virginia's transportation system.

They knew that in its current condition, the state would be unable to perform maintenance on existing roads and continue to fund new highways.

They knew that the highway department would need an extra \$200 million per year to maintain the state's current surface transportation system.

In August 2006, in order to raise public awareness of the crisis facing transportation and to foster public debate and a long term solution, West Virginians for Better Transportation (WVBT) organized.

Tasked with informing the public, local leaders, legislators and the media about the problems facing the state's surface transportation system, WVBT began a series of public meetings focusing on the problem - the inadequacy of current resources to meet the transportation needs of West Virginia now and in the future.

WVBT's educational campaign, "Keep West Virginia Moving" includes statewide print and media advertising along with an interactive Internet site. Grassroots volunteers conduct presentations to educate local communities on how this crisis will affect them and the state as a whole. It is the goal of the coalition for members to be the catalyst for urging elected officials to provide long-term solutions.

"We feel it's kind of like the horse pulling the cart if the citizens aren't behind the need for better transportation," said Joe Deneault, chairman of the coalition and vice president of engineering for HNTB Corporation. "We feel that by educating West Virginians on the operational,

improvement and expansion needs of the transportation system, the organization will make transportation a major issue."

The group is spreading the word that something must be done, telling anyone who will listen about the condition of West Virginia's surface transportation system.

Some of the startling statistics include the following:

- Vehicle miles of travel in West Virginia increased 79 percent between 1980 and 2000, increasing from 11 billion to 19 billion miles.
- Eight percent of West Virginia's urban Interstates and 21 percent of the state's rural Interstates are considered congested because they carry traffic levels that result in significant delays during peak travel hours.
- While the U.S. average is only 20 percent, West Virginia leads the nation in percentage (92 percent) of miles (36,703 miles) that are state maintained.
- Despite its relatively small size, West Virginia maintains the sixth largest network of state roads in the nation.
- West Virginia is only one of four states having jurisdiction over both state and county roads (the other states are Delaware, North Carolina, and Virginia).
- At 2.19 per 100 million vehicle miles, West Virginia's traffic fatality rate is nearly 50 percent higher than the national average of 1.50.
- West Virginia ranks second to last in the country in capital investment per state maintained mile - \$7,594 per lane mile compared to the national average of \$23,967.
- Thirty-seven percent of the state's bridges are considered structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, the sixth highest percentage in the nation.

"While substantial progress and improvements have been made during the past several decades, West Virginia's surface transportation system faces serious challenges now and in the coming years," said Deneault. "If we don't address the problems now, we will be overwhelmed.

"Without our citizenry thinking its important, the hard steps to solve the problem most likely won't be taken," he said.

The goal is to provide West Virginians with a clear view of the value of investment in transportation and the effect the failure to invest will have on their lives and future as well as that of future generations. The group will not lobby for a particular solution.



"We're not saying there is a particular solution that needs to be supplied," Deneault said. "The issue is making everyone aware there is a problem. West Virginians are great at solving problems. But they have to believe that there is a problem and that it is something that has to be dealt with."

"Most citizens don't think about the long-term impact the lack of funding for the State Road Fund will create in terms of loss of economic development and employment," Deneault said. "The West Virginia Department of Transportation and the construction industry have done such a good job in maintaining the current system that people don't have a concept of the looming crisis facing our transportation system."

West Virginia has about \$1 billion every year to spend on road projects, of which half comes from the federal government and the rest from state sources. But the state Division of Highways estimates that the 170 projects currently on the drawing

board would cost \$20 billion to fund.

"We used to say it took \$1 million-a-mile to build a new stretch of highway," Deneault said. "Today, it's closer to \$10 million-a-mile."

The coalition has held meetings throughout the state to educate not only residents but local leaders, elected officials and media representatives about the crisis.

"The coalition kicked-off our statewide educational campaign, Keep West Virginia Moving, in Beckley in August 2006," said Deneault. "We have since held meetings in Wheeling, Martinsburg, Morgantown, Elkins, Parkersburg, Huntington and Charleston."

The first meeting of the coalition was held in Beckley. The coalition was joined by then-House Speaker Robert Kiss, Bill Baker with the 4-C Economic Development Authority, and Marc Meachum with the Greater Bluefield Chamber of Commerce, who each dis-



Photo by Steve Brightwell

Beckley Mayor Emmett Pugh joined West Virginians for Better Transportation in Beckley on August 29, 2007 to tout the importance of a safe and modern transportation system.

ussed the economic potential of Southern West Virginia.

"There is no good way in or out of McDowell County," Meachum told press conference attendees as he discussed the King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway.

Speaker Kiss reminded attendees that twenty years ago I-64 was incomplete, U.S. Route 19 to Summersville was not a four-lane highway, and the improvements had not been made to Cranberry Creek which routinely flooded. The speaker also warned that if West Virginia hopes to see economic progress, more infrastructure and highway needs must be met.

Brenda Harper, vice president and general counsel of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce, joined the coalition in Charleston. She, along with Senator Evan Jenkins, D-Cabell, and Charleston Mayor Danny Jones, touted the importance of a safe and modern highway system.

"Highways equal jobs," Harper said. "The transportation system is vital to the economy of West Virginia. Highways are vital in educating children and moving commodities. If you don't support transportation you are against jobs and that is a sad thing for West Virginia," she said at the Charleston press conference.

Senator Jenkins praised the coalition for getting involved before too much damage has been done.

"Transportation Secretary Paul Mattox and Governor Manchin are engaged in the issue, the legislature is engaged, and through this coalition, the public will be engaged," Senator Jenkins said.

Joe Deneault, chairman of West Virginians for Better Transportation, tells attendees at the Beckley regional meeting that the state is facing a financial crisis when it comes to maintaining our present transportation system. Their educational campaign, Keep West Virginia Moving, has reached residents, legislators and local leaders from Bluefield to Wheeling to Martinsburg.



Photo by Steve Brightwell

27% of West Virginia's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition.



West Virginians for Better Transportation is a statewide coalition of businesses, trade associations, chambers of commerce, convention & visitors bureaus, community groups, local leaders and many others.

More than 120 organizations and associations have joined together to express their united concern about West Virginia's transportation needs and to call on state leaders to develop long-term solutions.

Let's all work to Keep West Virginia Moving

4-C Economic Development Authority

AAA East Central

Advantage Valley

American Council of Engineering Companies of West Virginia

American Legion Mountain Knapp Post #5

Asphalt Pavement Association of West Virginia

Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce

Beckley-Raleigh County Transportation Authority

BizTech & The Jefferson County Telework Center

Buckhannon-Upshur County Chamber of Commerce

Build Route 98 Committee

Builders Supply Association of West Virginia

Business Development Corporation of The Northern Panhandle

Central Appalachia Empowerment Zone of West Virginia

Chamber of Commerce of Martinsburg and Berkeley County

Chamber of Commerce of the Mid-Ohio Valley

Charleston Convention & Visitors Bureau

Charleston Regional Chamber of Commerce

Chester-Newell Area Chamber of Commerce

City of Beckley

City of Bridgeport

City of Charleston

City of Elkins

City of Point Pleasant

City of Ranson

City of Spencer

Community Health Network of West Virginia

Congressman Nick J. Rahall

Constructors' Labor Council of West Virginia, Inc.

Contractors Association of West Virginia

Corridor G Regional Development Authority

Development Authority of Mercer County

Eastern Panhandle Home Builders Association

Elkins-Randolph County Chamber of Commerce

Fayette County Chamber of Commerce

First Things First Committee

Greater Bluefield Chamber of Commerce

Greater Greenbrier Chamber of Commerce

Harrison County Chamber of Commerce

Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority

Home Builders Association of West Virginia

Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce

Independent Oil & Gas Association of West Virginia, Inc.

Interstate 73-74 Corridor Association

Jackson County Development Authority

Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce

Jefferson County Development Authority

KYOVA Interstate Planning Commission

King Coal Highway Authority

Kiwanis Club of Beckley

Little Kanawha River Parkway Authority

Logan County Chamber of Commerce

Main Street Point Pleasant

Marion County Chamber of Commerce

Marion County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Marshall County Chamber of Commerce

Mason County Area Chamber of Commerce

Mason County Commission

Mason County Development Authority

Mid-Atlantic Laborers' Employers Cooperation and Education Trust

Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association

Mineral County Commission

Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce

Morgantown Area Economic Partnership

New River Convention & Visitors Bureau

New River Parkway Authority

North Central West Virginia Home Builders Association

NCWV Section of the American Society of Highway Engineers

Preston County Chamber of Commerce

Preston County Economic Development Authority

Princeton-Mercer County Chamber of Commerce

Professional Independent Insurance Agents of West Virginia

Putnam County Chamber of Commerce

Putnam County Commission

Putnam County Development Authority

Randolph County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Region II Planning & Development Council of West Virginia

Ritchie County Chamber of Commerce

Roane County Chamber of Commerce

Roane County Development Authority

Route 35 Committee

Shawnee Parkway Authority

South Charleston Convention & Visitors Bureau

Southern West Virginia Convention & Visitors Bureau

U.S. Route 50 Association

Vision Shared, Inc.

Webster County Economic Development Authority

Weirton Area Chamber of Commerce

Weirton Jaycees

West Virginia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus

West Virginia Association of Counties

West Virginia Association of REALTORS

West Virginia Bankers Association

West Virginia Business & Industry Council

West Virginia Chamber of Commerce

West Virginia Coalfields Expressway Authority

West Virginia Crushed Aggregates Council

West Virginia Economic Development Council

West Virginia Forestry Association

West Virginia Gasoline Dealers & Auto Repair Association

West Virginia Highway Users Conference

West Virginia Hospital Association

West Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association

West Virginia Housing Institute, Inc.

West Virginia Labor Management Trust

West Virginia Laborers' District Council

West Virginia Local Technical Assistance Program

West Virginia Manufacturers Association

West Virginia Motor Truck Association

West Virginia Motorcycle & ATV Association

West Virginia Municipal League

West Virginia Oil and Natural Gas Association

West Virginia Oil Marketers & Grocers Association

West Virginia Operating Engineers

West Virginia Primary Care Association

West Virginia Roundtable

West Virginia Society of Certified Public Accountants

West Virginia Society of Professional Engineers

West Virginia State Medical Association

West Virginia Tourism Commission

Wyoming County Circuit Clerk

Yeager Airport

...and more than 100 other companies.

Take an active part in preventing a transportation crisis

join today

www.KeepWVMoving.org

an educational campaign of West Virginians for Better Transportation





U.S. Rep. Alan Mollohan, D-WV, joined the coalition in Morgantown. He told attendees that funding transportation comes down to deciding what priorities to pay for, given the limited resources available, and projects that push economic development and diversification stand the best shot of being funded.

Charleston's Mayor Danny Jones said he is glad to support the coalition and grateful for the concerted effort. The mayor said he understands the crisis the transportation department is in, stating he works with the WVDOH on paving needs but knows that if the city doesn't pay for paving, state roads in the city will not be paved.

The inaugural press tour concluded in Morgantown, where they were joined by Morgantown Area Chamber of Commerce President Brad Allamong.

"There is probably no more important matter [than transportation] facing the chamber and this city," Allamong said.

Morgantown Mayor Ron Justice and Monongalia County Commissioner Asel Kennedy represented the Monongalia County Transportation Planning Organization.

"Anyone supporting highways is OK with us," Mayor Justice said.

Since its inception, the coalition has had representatives speak at nearly 50 meetings throughout the state including various Rotaries, chambers of commerce and development authorities. They have appeared on "Decision-Makers" and MetroNews' Talkline with Hoppy Kercheval on a number of occasions.

Local government, business and community leaders from throughout the state were invited to attend a series of regional educational meetings to learn about the challenges facing West Virginia's surface transportation system and to understand

the outlook for transportation funding.

The meetings were held in seven locations including Beckley, Huntington, Charleston, Morgantown, Martinsburg, Bluefield and Wheeling in the Fall of 2007.

In Charleston, on October 1, the coalition was joined by Representative Shelley Moore Capito, (R-WV), and Mayor Jones.

"With West Virginia's terrain, it costs more to build highways than in other states," Rep. Capito told attendees. "We've got to come up with more creative ways at the state level to fund construction and maintenance projects. I am your federal partner in the building and maintaining of West Virginia's highway transportation system, but competition between the states is intense and is a constant battle.

"It is great that West Virginians for Better Transportation is shining a light on this problem," Rep. Capito stated.

Mayor Jones discussed how Charleston implemented the city user fee to fund road maintenance and repairs.

"We know that there is not enough in the coffers to take care of all the roads in West Virginia," the mayor said. "We also know that if we do not perform maintenance locally, it will likely not be done."

Mayor Jones and the City of Charleston are supporters of the coalition. The mayor said he was proud to tout the importance of a safe and modern transportation system at the Charleston meeting.

The Charleston meeting was followed by regional meetings in Huntington and Morgantown.

"People feel like they have little input into the DOH system," Sen. Evan Jenkins told those attending the Huntington regional meeting. "We have to step up to the plate locally ... to build confidence in the public. We have to approach this problem in a very different way than we have in the past," he said.

"I want to commend WVBT for brining

forward the need to invest in our highway transportation system," Rep. Alan Mollohan, D-WV, said at the regional meeting in Morgantown.

"I can't think of a more important topic as it relates to economic development, particularly in North Central West Virginia," said the First District Congressman, who serves on the powerful House Appropriations Committee.

"To lay a foundation for future West Virginians, we must diversify the state's economic base. We must have a modern transportation system to support diversification and we need a strategy to focus on this area."



As an exhibitor at the 2007 WV Equipment, Design and Technology Exposition (EXPO), West Virginians for Better Transportation was able to spread their message to the construction industry. Steve Cvechko, Central Contracting, and Gene Thompson, Ahem & Associates, proudly support the coalition by wearing the "Fund our Roads" sticker.

Rep. Mollohan gave an overview of the current federal transportation funding legislation.

"West Virginians need to understand the challenges facing the nation's highway system and the realities today that impact funding for transportation," Rep. Mollohan stated. "This is a great service West Virginians for Better Transportation is performing."

The meetings were sponsored by the

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who we are	danger ahead	news & updates
Mission contact	Roads	<p>Needed: Funding strategy for roads, State forecasts 39 percent drop in improvement money in next 5 years</p> <p>MORGANTOWN — Citing an estimated 39 percent drop over the next five years for West Virginia's fund for new roads, bridges and other transportation improvements, Joseph T. Deneault, the chairman of a...</p> <p>10/15/07 Group wants to plug holes in W.Va. roads MORGANTOWN, W.Va. (AP) A statewide lobbying group is...</p>
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Through the website, www.keepwvmoving.org, the coalition keeps supporters up-to-date on the funding crisis. The website features a list of supporters, information on how to get involved, press releases, statistics and news articles detailing the funding crisis.

WV Municipal League and the WV Association of Counties.

"The West Virginia Association of Counties is very pleased to be a co-sponsor of these important and timely regional meetings and to encourage all county officials to attend the meetings most convenient to them," said Patty Hamilton, the association's executive director.

"Educating our local leaders about the state's transportation system and its needs is vital, now more than ever," said Lisa Dooley, executive director of the WV Municipal League. "I think these regional education sessions will be critical in getting a greater understanding not only about our current situation, but also what the future holds."

The coalition is routinely sending press releases to keep transportation issues on the minds of West Virginia residents.

"I am excited there is a group out there that is going to attempt to educate the public," said Transportation Secretary Paul Mattox. "Let the public debate and decide what level of highway program they want to fund."

The coalition has garnered support from nearly 250 business, organizations and groups throughout the state during the

past year. Coalition partners include various economic development authorities, contractors, engineers, trade associations, labor associations, chambers of commerce, transportation authorities, freight companies, city and county governments, congressional leaders, convention and visitors bureaus and a variety of tourism groups including hotels and resorts. (For a list of supporters, see the ad on page 8.)


"Taking into account the number and variety of our supporters, WVBT is quite possibly touching every home in the state," said Deneault. "To me, this says people in West Virginia care about our transportation system and want to see solutions regarding the current and future challenges."

"The involvement of those in the transportation and construction industry is key to providing the resources and volunteers needed to make the message successful," Deneault remarked. "The industry is aware of the looming crisis and the benefits of a reliable and safe transportation system."

"West Virginians for Better Transportation is the tool that is used to inform the public and the legislators of the needs surrounding the transportation system in West Virginia," said William H. Hillborn Jr., vice president of engineering for

Kanawha Stone Company, Nitro, and a member of the coalition's Board of Directors. "We pay particular attention in keeping our elected officials informed of the status of West Virginia's surface transportation system and its needs."

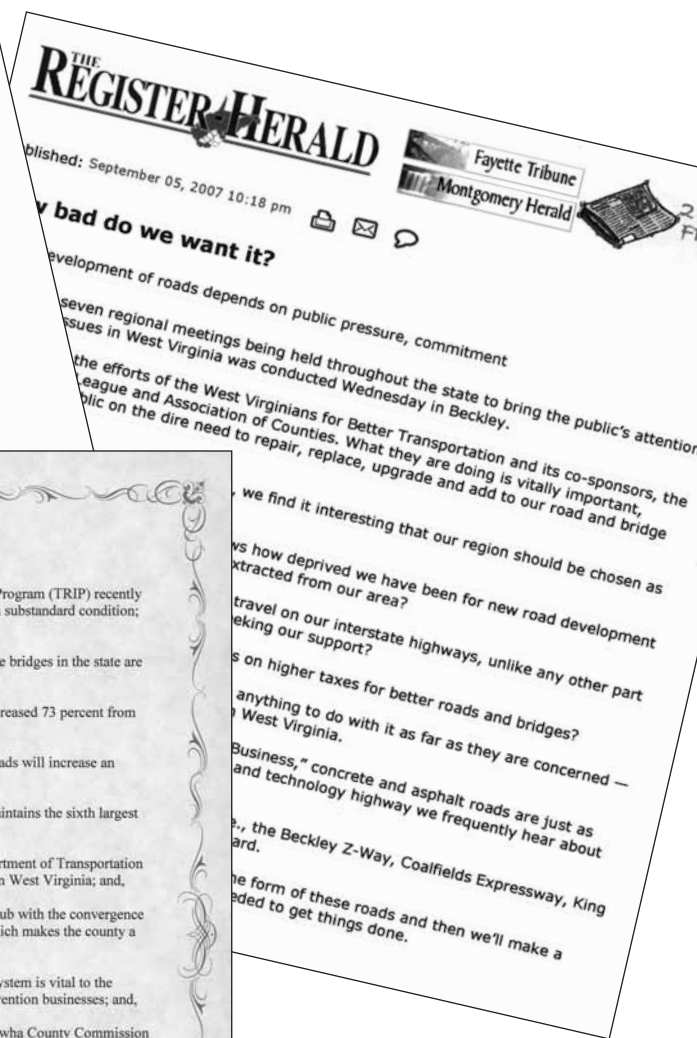
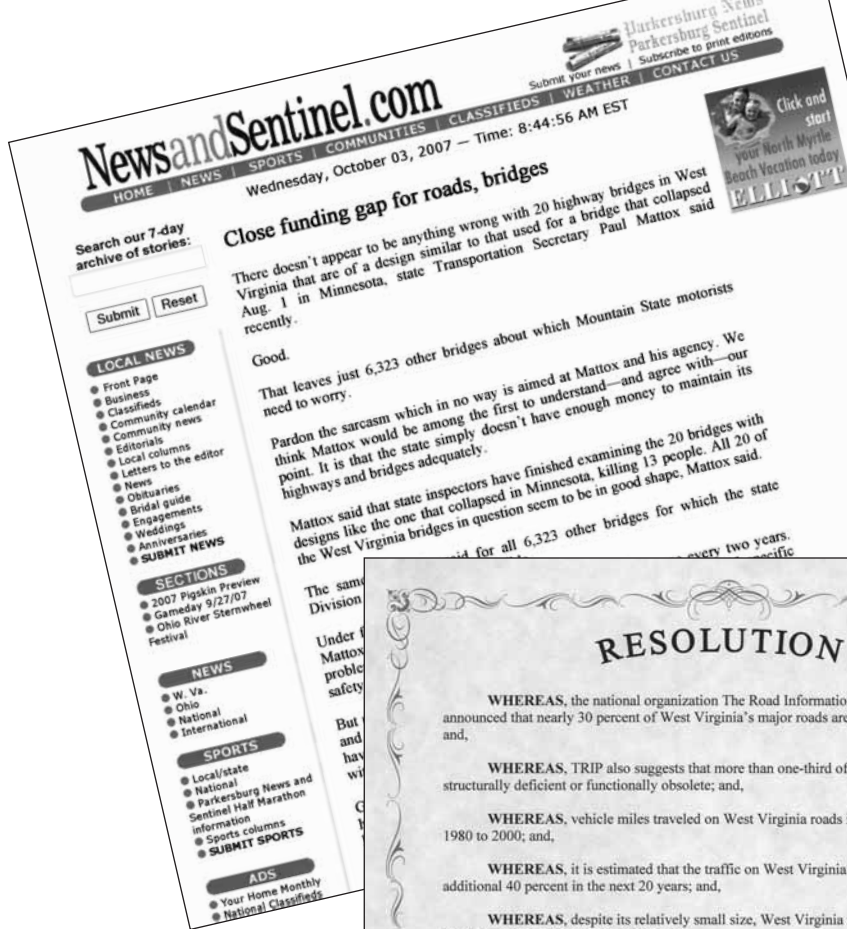
"From an industry perspective, we know the problems and issues," said Paul Martin, general manager of Palmer Engineering and a member of the coalition's Board of Directors. "This coalition reaches many people who take our highways and bridges for granted. Before WVBT, people had no way of knowing how much it costs to maintain our roads and keep the public safe. There is now a loud voice telling them about the crisis we are facing and urging them to get involved."

Membership in West Virginians for Better Transportation is free and supporters receive updates to keep them informed of both the coalition's activities and the status of the State Road Fund crisis. Members are also provided the tools and information needed to enlighten the state's residents about the transportation system and its impact on the economy. 

**For more information on WVBT,
or to become involved,
visit www.keepwvmoving.org, call
(304) 345-7623
or e-mail
Info@keepwvmoving.org.**



Representative Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), joined the coalition on its press tour in Charleston on October 1. Rep. Capito pledged her continuing support for funding West Virginia's highway transportation system.



The Kanawha County Commission adopted a resolution at their September 27 meeting in support of WVBT.

WVBT has generated statewide press and editorials about the need for transportation funding.

The 22-member board of directors includes a diverse mix that consists of representatives from business, labor, tourism, local government and the state's transportation industry. WVBT board members include:

- Ted Bostic – Chamber of Commerce of Martinsburg and Berkeley County
- Dan Cooperrider – West Virginia Paving, Inc.
- Joe Deneault – HNTB Corporation
- Lisa Dooley – West Virginia Municipal League
- Carol Fulks – West Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association
- Don Gianni – Weirton Area Chamber of Commerce
- Brenda Harper – West Virginia Chamber of Commerce
- William H. Hilborn Jr. – Kanawha Stone Company
- Rodney Holbert - Chamber of Commerce of the Mid-Ohio Valley
- Charles Lanham – Ohio Valley Bank
- Roger Lilly – Cecil I. Walker Machinery Co.
- Paul Martin – Palmer Engineering, Inc.
- Bill Medcalf – Vecellio & Grogan Inc.
- J.D. Morgan – Snowshoe Mountain, Inc.
- Robert O. Orders Jr. – Orders Construction Co., Inc.
- Richard Plymale – RPM Engineers, PLLC
- Judy Radford – 4-C Economic Development Authority
- Ed Robinson – E.L. Robinson Engineering Company
- Mark Sikora – HDR Engineering, Inc.
- Louis S. Southworth II – Jackson & Kelly PLLC
- Gary Tillis – West Virginia Labor Management Trust
- Jan Vineyard – WV Motor Truck Association / WV Oil Marketers and Grocers Association