



Regional Meeting Campaign Commentary

My Region vs. Others

- The Department of Highways is not treating the state equally.
- There are not a lot of Beckley-area legislators on the transportation committees and maybe that's an issue.
- It's hard to ask people to pay when this region has been putting a lot of money in and not getting anything back.
- Unless my region is included, our people will not support the 6-year plan.
- We need more of a local voice; we need to decentralize the government.
- You saw the public reaction to the proposed toll increases; people in this region felt they were paying more than their fair share for a long time.
- Taxes collected never come here; bond issue money goes elsewhere.
- Local areas have very little input on where the money is spent. You're asking citizens to fund a list others chartered. The process is incumbent on local areas working together regionally and developing a list for the local areas.
- There hasn't been a highway built in Mason County since 1952.
- Local areas must work together. Compromises can be made.
- We need a different tax than the proposed service fee in Monongalia County because our problem is different.
- I-81 seems to be ideal for a toll situation.
- To me (a toll on I-81) is a no-brainer. That's why there is so much truck traffic on the road now.
- Most of the calls I receive from my delegation are highway-related, but when I see people, all they're discussing is the price of gasoline.
- Each community should pay its way on this issue.

Funding Commentary

- The Governor and the Legislature should give priority funding to roads, bridges, and other transportation infrastructure, not by adding new taxes, but by cutting spending elsewhere. There is too much waste; too many frills we could do without.
- The funding shortage is a statewide issue, not just this area.
- We pay tolls in many other states we travel. Seems to be the most logical form of transportation funding. Those that use the roads, pay to use the roads.
- West Virginia should use lottery revenue to pay for transportation.
- We don't need an increase in the gas tax. It's a short-term solution at best.
- Toll roads are working in other states. We should consider more tolls or other benefit taxes.
- Make the privilege tax a sales tax and increase it to 6 percent.
- Could have user fees or public/private partnerships. Many local initiatives are possible.
- The state needs to look at other alternatives.
- I would be in favor of a toll road for Route 52.
- Toll roads are the best option.
- People are concerned about the service fee because there is no formula for the state to assist with that funding. There's no guarantee the funding will continue as is. That should be part of the legislation.
- Because coal trucks put extra strain on the infrastructure, a coal tax should be considered. They should pay for the damage they do.
- West Virginia should look at employment taxes.
- Most of these funding suggestions and solutions are regressive. Poor people are paying the same amount as the rich.
- West Virginia should consider land use and access fees.
- Impact fees on developers would help.
- We should focus the money on counties that have the potential for growth. The resulting economic development could pay for then other counties.

- We need lower taxes for businesses so they will relocate. Then we can build.
- I'm concerned about the Monongalia County service fee because if we adopt it, will the state money stop coming?
- We have to match federal funds. If we can't get new roads, we must take care of the roads we have.
- The general public makes the decision. They tell me no new taxes period. People must request better transportation.
- A mandated long-range plan must be fiscally constrained.
- Road projects incorporated into development costs and paid by the developer.
- Reduce use of petroleum-based fuels which will drive down material costs for road construction.
- Interstate tolls.
- Research and develop alternative building materials and techniques that are less costly.
- Invest funds from tolls to be used for future repair and upgrades – not for routine maintenance.
- A passage by the State Legislature of a County-Regional Transportation Fee generated by a modest increase from local/county gasoline sales on a regional/county basis. An example would be a consortium of 5-6 counties – all local increases in gasoline taxes would be spent within each county for road improvement and construction – those that use the local roads will support and benefit from this concept.
- Tolls should be increased for out-of-state drivers only.
- Heavyweight vehicles should pay more than the average citizen.
- We should study duplication in administration costs.
- West Virginia should look outside the box – look at taxing gambling, liquor, etc. Could also consider accidents caused by drunk drivers.

General Commentary

- The situation must become a crisis before people care.
- We need to show people how they will benefit first.

- We've been putting economic development before infrastructure. We must build roads before or while development is occurring.
- There is too much discussion and too little action.
- Safety should be a major priority. We have considerable congestion in this area.
- I see a lack of willingness to vary from standard procedure and use common sense.
- We should look at successful programs in other states and model solutions after those.
- I've talked to DOH officials and they say they are hugely under funded. We need to get this message out to the public.
- Expand rail transport for long distance product improvement.
- We need comprehensive planning on a road system that allows for early/less costly land acquisition.
- Incorporate local land use needs and planning.
- Push the development of more efficient/less costly light transport, increasing life cycles of current roads.
- Recognize that money alone will not solve the problem. We need to rethink how we move people and goods, and provide services.
- We need to prioritize state and federal budgets.

Federal Perspective

In addition to the comments given by meeting attendees, WVBT had the opportunity to host West Virginia congressional delegates Shelley Moore Capito and Alan Mollohan during the meetings in Charleston and Morgantown. The federal perspective these officials provided only further highlighted the need for action on the state level.

Both officials encouraged the state to prepare for more heated battles over federal transportation funding. As it has always been, some states provide more than they get in return and vice versa for other states. West Virginia is a state that receives more federal dollars than it contributes to the system. As the larger states push for a more "get what you put in" system, federal transportation funding may begin to decrease.