

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE TURNPIKE ON SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA¹

- The Turnpike opened Southern West Virginia to both east-west and north-south vehicle traffic, allowing the region to take advantage of significant interstate commerce opportunities.
- Raleigh County recorded the fastest rate of job growth in the Beckley-Bluefield region during the 1990-1998 period, growing more than twice as fast as the state. The regional share in trade and government jobs was above both the state and national averages in 1998, reflecting the region's extensive highway infrastructure.
- The City of Beckley and Raleigh County have benefited from easy access provided by the road transportation system. Raleigh County is a regional hub for shopping and services in Southern West Virginia. The City and County have benefited from growth in the retail sector and hospitality industry, as well as manufacturing and housing.
- The Turnpike most directly impacts counties with a physical connection to the Turnpike: Raleigh, Mercer and Fayette Counties. When compared to the other southern counties, these three have fared better in terms of population retention, increases in per capita income, workforce size, unemployment rates and retail sales.
- For a 15-year period from 1990 to 2005, the aggregate population in the counties that are not adjacent to the Turnpike declined by 11.1%; however, Raleigh, Mercer and Fayette Counties declined by only 1.1% in this period.
- The per capita income for these three counties grew by an average of 15.8% from 1994 to 2004 while per capita income of the other southern counties grew by an average of 14.2%.
- On an absolute basis, per capita income in the Turnpike counties is \$3,029 higher – a difference of more than 14.0% - than per capita income in the other southern counties.
- Based upon the 2004 per capita figures and the 2005 population information, the Turnpike counties contain 45.3% of the 12-county region's population, but generate 48.5% of aggregate income.
- The Turnpike counties have the three largest workforces in the region, representing 47.7% of the workforce, while having 45.3% of the population.
- From 1990 to 2005, the Turnpike counties workforce grew by 0.7%, while the other southern counties' workforce declined by 4.1%.

¹ Public Resources Advisory Group, Independent Financial Advisors – “Independent Review and Analysis of the West Virginia Parkways, Economic Development and Tourism Authority, February 5, 2007”

- Mercer and Raleigh Counties had the lowest 2005 unemployment rates of the southern 12-county region.
- Retail sales for the Turnpike counties have been strong, with Raleigh and Mercer Counties ranking first and second in 2005 sales. Fayette County – with 10.5% of total 2005 retail sales – was well above the 5.3% median for the 12-county region.
- The Turnpike counties generated a majority of retail sales in the 12-county region, with 54.7% of the 2005 total.
- Fayette County's retail sales growth rate from 2000 to 2005 was the strongest in the region at 29.3%.
- Legislatively mandated economic development and tourism financial support of the Hatfield and McCoy Regional Recreation Authority, total expenditure \$2.5 million.
- The Boy Scouts of America has acquired more than 10,000 acres in Fayette County in the New River Gorge region, within 20 miles of Tamarack. The Summit: Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve at the New River Gorge has been chosen to be the permanent site of the Boy Scout's National Scout Jamboree and a premier destination for Scouts and their families from around the world