

# WVDOT Today!

January 2023—Volume 5: Issue 1



## A Look Ahead for 2023!



Following a successful year that saw completion of the Nitro WW I Memorial Bridge and near completion of the biggest Roads to Prosperity project in history – replacement or rehabilitation of 26 bridges in Wheeling – West Virginia Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., is looking forward to an equally productive 2023.

“Corridor H is Number 1 priority. King Coal Highway. Coalfields Expressway. These are your big-ticket items that we’re working on,” Wriston told hosts Randy and Jennifer on the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) podcast “WV on the DOT.”

All three projects have seen substantial investments under Gov. Jim Justice’s \$2.8 billion Roads to Prosperity program. All but 17 miles of Corridor H – which stretches from Weston across central West Virginia to Strasburg, Virginia – is currently under construction or contract. Major portions of the Coalfields Expressway from Beckley to Pound, Virginia, are under contract. Progress is also being made on the King Coal Highway, which will link Williamson and Bluefield and open up much of McDowell, Mercer, Mingo, Wyoming and Wayne counties to development.

Wriston said one of his goals in 2023 is to develop better working relationships with federal officials to streamline projects.

“We appreciate our natural resources and the great outdoors

probably more than anybody else in the nation, because it’s who we are,” Wriston said. “We’re not going to do anything that jeopardizes the natural assets that we have out here.”

Wriston is looking forward to the opportunities provided by the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which will provide West Virginia more than \$540 million over the next five years to replace and upgrade the Mountain State’s bridges.

“We have the most comprehensive bridge management system in the country,” Wriston said. “We have completed a 10-year bridge program that consists of over 2,500 bridges.”

Wriston is especially excited about a provision in the IIJA that allows municipal bridges or other bridges not owned by the WVDOT to receive 100 percent federal funding. The WVDOT is working closely with cities to repair or replace aging city bridges all around the state.

“We’ve made great strides,” Wriston said, when asked what he would say to DOT employees. “I’m very proud to be working with you.

“I’m here to support you,” he said. “I’m here to get you what you need. It’s my job to see you have every path to success, personally and for the organization.”

*To listen to the podcast, go to [transportation.wv.gov](https://transportation.wv.gov) and click on Podcast.*



# Brothers Take on Marathon to Raise Money for Children's Medicine

David Oldaker, a Maintenance Assistant for the West Virginia Division of Highways in District 7, and his brother Tommy are always up for challenges. The two will take on a new one on March 4 when the pair run a marathon in Myrtle Beach for a cause.

The Oldakers are currently training to run the 26th annual Myrtle Beach Marathon, a 26.2-mile race. In doing so, the brothers are trying to raise money for West Virginia University Children's Medicine.

David has run half-marathons and triathlons but never a full marathon. He said this would be the perfect opportunity to train for one and have a cause behind it. His daughter works as a nurse at WVU Children's Hospital after graduating from WVU in the spring. Oldaker said he has been influenced by her.

"Some of the stories that she has told and some of the kids there that don't have anyone to care for them, watch out for them," Oldaker said. "I thought about how in some small way can we help a child and maybe make a positive impact in a child's life.

"I thought maybe we use our legs and raise awareness while pounding out miles on behalf of someone else."

Oldaker's brother is a school teacher in Randolph County. He said he and his brother have children and understand that there are

some things parents cannot handle by themselves.

To help David and Tommy make a bigger impact with a donation in honor of the patients and families being treated at the hospital, there is a direct donation link of <https://give.wvu.edu/fundraiser/4295718>.

Someone can also write a check to WVU Children's Hospital with the memo "Myrtle Beach Marathon" or put David's name in it. Checks can also be written to him and the Oldakers take cash.

Donations support the WVU Medicine Children's Child Life Program.



**WVDOT Today!** is a monthly newsletter published by the West Virginia Department of Transportation's Public Relations Division. The purpose of this publication is to facilitate connection across the diverse worksites and professions represented among WVDOT employees to empower us to function as **one West Virginia Department of Transportation.**

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## Early Birds Help Stop Water Leak

Two West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) employees are being applauded for their efforts in helping stop a water leak that caused damage in WVDOH headquarters in Charleston.

On Thursday, Jan. 12, 2023, Highways Division Manager 2 Nancy Davidson and Transportation Accounting Technician Senior Hope Bailey arrived for work around 5:30 a.m. When the pair got into Building 5, they couldn't believe what they saw.

"We walked into the lobby and started to turn down our hallway and at the same time, we both saw puddles of water," Davidson said. "We both went 'Oh My' and we took off running.

"When we got closer to our area you could hear the gusher sound. We found it coming out of the window units. I then told Hope I was going to locate help."

Secretary of Transportation Jimmy Wriston, P.E., said a water



leak on the ninth floor, where Davidson and Bailey work, caused damage from that floor to the basement. Davidson said building maintenance workers showed up and stopped the water.

"A column of water made it all the way to the basement, doing some damage to the carpets, ceiling, cabinets, and documents," Wriston said. "The water always wins."

Wriston credited Davidson and Bailey for reporting the leak as soon as possible. He said he quickly contacted Secretary of the Department of Administration Mark Scott and help was brought in.

Wriston and Scott met in Building 5 before 8 a.m. and put together a plan for cleaning up while continuing to work.

"It's part of the great team that Gov. Jim Justice has built," Wriston said. "Where a cabinet secretary can make a call at any time of the day or night and respond to each other and help each other when we need things."

## Cenforce Director Retiring

Todd Schoonover, head of the Central Office heavy equipment division and Central Forces, recently retired following years of dedicated service. Schoonover was instrumental in the rebuilding of the Trout Run Bridge in Pocahontas County.

"Todd Schoonover was a dedicated employee who, for many years, kept numerous wheels turning within our organization. Todd was very skilled, and his knowledge and expertise of the WVDOH are irreplaceable. Todd's retirement is a huge loss that will be felt

by many of us within the WVDOT family.

Todd and I worked together on many different projects over the years. Todd was always ready and willing to assemble a team for the task at hand as efficiently and as quickly as possible. Some of the various projects include building an Observation Deck at High Falls on the West Virginia Central Railroad, building an ash pit at Cass, adding a roof to the Cass Concession stand, and building a new bridge at Trout Run between Durbin and Cass. Todd has also worked on many different bridges on

both the South Branch Valley Railroad and West Virginia Central.

This collaboration began the vision of "One DOT" by utilizing the vast expertise of the DOH to help smaller DOT Agencies. Todd is a master at getting the job done, and I cannot thank him enough for all the projects he completed for State Rail. Todd, you will be greatly missed by your co-workers, but we all wish you a very happy and joyful retirement."

**Cindy Butler, Commissioner Multimodal Transportation Facilities**



# WVDOH Names New Webster HQ After Fallen Employee

During an emotional ceremony, the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) opened its new Webster County headquarters while dedicating it to a WVDOH employee who passed away at the previous location.

The previous WVDOH Webster County headquarters, located in Webster Springs, was destroyed in a fatal fire that took place in December 2017. DOH worker Stephen Cogar died in the blaze at the age of 22.

Cogar's family, friends and co-workers were on hand for the grand opening of the facility in December.

Greg Bailey, P.E., WVDOH Deputy State Highway Engineer for Operations, said Cogar had only been a WVDOH employee for a couple of months before the fire, but his impact was already felt around the workplace.

The new facility is in Bolair. Plans for a new headquarters had been in works before the fire, Bailey said, including the location which is ultimately its own special story.

"Stephen Cogar, who lost his life in the fire, grew up almost within sight of the building here," Bailey said. "He loved to fish, loved to hunt and so he spent a lot of time walking these very grounds where the facility stands. The facility site was picked out well before the tragedy happened."

Bailey said the facility is much more than the most modern headquarters in the WVDOH now. He said the facility and its few dozen workers are a symbol of hope and resiliency.

"One of the most important parts to take out of this is with all the tragedy going on at that time, the employees of Webster County picked up and went on, as far as what the people in Webster County were seeing in terms of road care," Bailey said.



"The workers stepped up and said 'We are not going to let this defeat us. We are going to do what we need to do.' It was an amazing story."

Bailey said in the aftermath of the fire county employees worked in temporary locations around Webster Springs. He said one employee even had to work in a hotel room.



The new facility is a standard design, according to WVDOH officials, but it does come with additions such as a coating on the floor of the mechanic's bay. There is one addition that everyone gathered around during the grand opening – a monument outside the building by the flagpole honoring Cogar.

The monument reads, "This facility stands in honor of Stephen Matthew Cogar who was a young dedicated employee whose life was tragically taken in the structure fire on Dec. 4, 2017. May God bless Stephen's memory and may God bless the safe keeping of all those who use this facility."

Cogar's family pastor, Kyle Hall spoke at the ceremony. He said the dedication shows the dedication that the WVDOH and its employees have for one another.

"It shows me that you care about your organization but more importantly you care about the people in your organization," Hall said. "That speaks volumes as to who you are and it speaks volumes to your employees, who are willing to embrace Stephen into your family, how he impacted you, and the memories you have of him."

"Now we're dedicating a building in his honor that overshadows where he grew up as a young man."



# Like Father, Like Son. David Ball Continues Tradition of Engineering



professional respect trickled down and I am both thankful and honored. Although he isn't here with me physically, I know he continues to watch over me and my family. After I started at HNTB, I got involved in several major bridge inspections for the WVDOH plus a pilot ancillary inspection program for District 2 and have been surprised by the amount of people who have come up to me and said they worked or went to school with him. I am honored to try and fill his shoes and can only hope that I have the kind of impact on others' lives like he did."

--David Ball

### David Ball

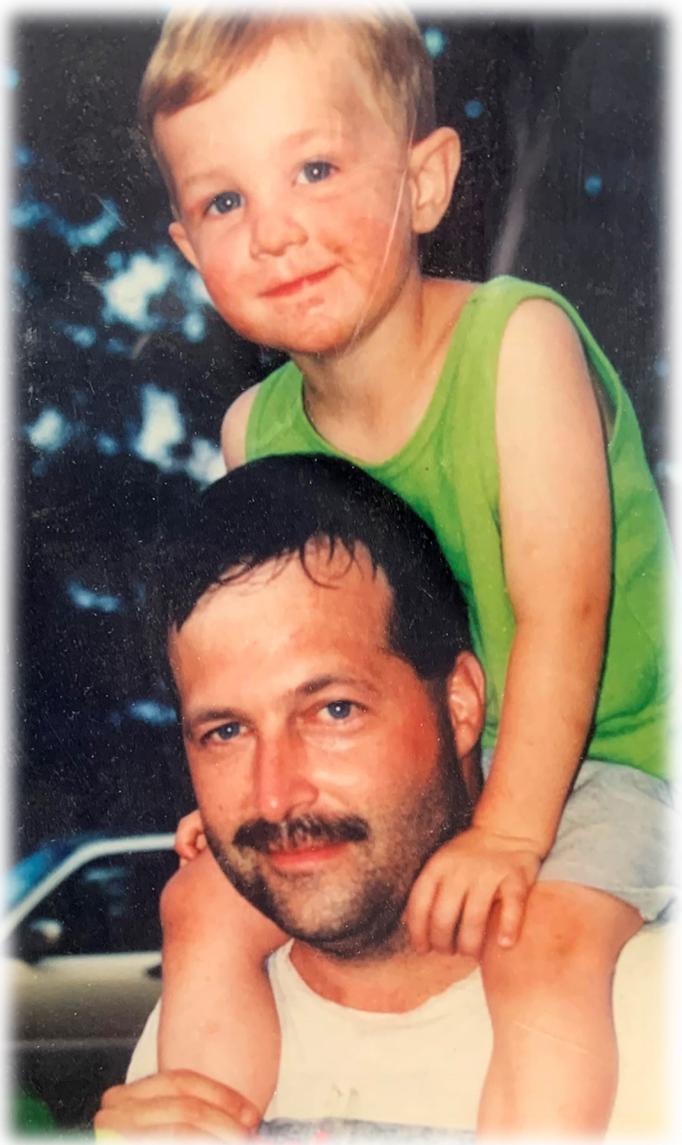
Jeff Ball was a well-respected and long-serving bridge and construction engineer with the West Virginia Division of Highways. He passed away unexpectedly in 2010 at the age of 47.

Ball lived for engineering, and he lived for his family. Today, his son, David, is following in his footsteps as a consultant. Here is David Ball's story:

"I have always been certain that I would grow up to be an engineer. Anytime anyone asked me why, my answer was always because that's what my dad did. Growing up, I knew I wanted to be just like him. I wanted to be patient, kind, and to serve my community. He was always there for family and friends no matter the time or situation. Unfortunately, he passed away before I got the chance to learn directly from him.

Despite this, he has always been a major reason I pursued engineering. I had always grown up listening to my dad talk about what he did and hovering his shoulder and watching him model bridges on his computer. Every time I would be worried about a class or didn't have the energy to continue, I told myself that I wasn't only doing this for myself. Having this motivation really pushed me to finish school and make myself competitive in the field.

After finishing school, I was fortunate enough to land an Engineer position at HNTB in Scott Depot. I'm pretty sure I interviewed well but also smart enough to know my dad was very well respected within WVDOH and by clients. So I'm sure that level of



## WVDOT Virtually Invited to ASCE Conferences Around the State

The student chapters of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) at several West Virginia engineering schools are organizing upcoming annual conferences and say West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) employees are welcome to participate virtually.

Wael Zatar, a Social Engineering Professor at Marshall University with the Department of Civil Engineering said there has traditionally been an arrangement with the WVDOT to welcome employees to speak at their chapter's conference. Through the all-day conference, students listen to professional presentations in their field and interact with the many practicing engineers, an ASCE release stated.

The Marshall University Society of American Military Engineers (SAME)-ASCE Student Chapter's 15th Annual Richard F. McCormick Technical Conference is being held on January 25th starting at 8 a.m. The conference will be held at the Marshall University campus in Huntington in Room BE5 of the Memorial Student Center as in previous years. This year's conference will

offer six hours of Professional Development Hours (PDH) credits.

"In order to be active members, the students organize these conferences which are meant to be fundraisers for student chapters and give students the ability to meet professionals working in the social engineering arena," Zatar said.

"They get used to them so they can find jobs and have discussions with employers."

Zatar, who is the president of the West Virginia section of ASCE, said his chapter will supply a certificate for those attending the full day of conference activities. According to the ASCE, the certificate will indicate that this conference contained contact time that should satisfy six PDH.

The conference, which Zatar said will consist of between 50 and 75 students, will run until 4:30 p.m.

Zatar said ASCE students at Marshall are active in the community and visit WVDOH sites such as the Nitro bridge and other bridge walks.

## Carolyn Long Steps Down as President of WVU Tech

Long-serving West Virginia University Institute of Technology President Carolyn Long has retired following 11 years of service.

Under Long's leadership, which began in January 2011, WVU Tech has grown in enrollment and added highly sought-after academic programs. As noted by Reed, in 2017, she oversaw the completion of the transition of WVU Tech from its former home in Montgomery to its new campus in Beckley.

"WVU Tech is growing and thriving, and I want it to continue to



do so," Long said earlier in the year. "This was a difficult decision as I love WVU Tech. I've thought about my retirement plans for quite some time, and I feel that now is the right time for me and for Tech that I return to retirement."

Many West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) engineers, including Transportation Secretary

Jimmy Wriston, P.E., are alumni of WVU Tech. West Virginia University graduate and accomplished university administrator T. Ramon Stuart takes over as president of WVU Tech.

# Turnpike Customer Service Gets Five-Star Reviews

Not once, but three times in recent weeks, travelers along the West Virginia Turnpike have had nothing but good things to say about the Turnpike's customer service department. Emails were addressed to Wayne Webb, Director of Customer Service Operations for the West Virginia Turnpike.

Heres' what they had to say:

**Dear Mr. Webb,**

As a retired administrator I know personally how quickly the general public can be to criticize employees in a public sector position and not quite as quick to complement on a job well done as was the case with Amber Shreve today.

Long story short, I was in an unusual position today and needed to make a vehicle change on EZ Pass for the West Virginia Turnpike for a trip tomorrow. I met many obstacles when trying to log into my account and on my third call to the Turnpike office I was connected with Ms. Shreve. After a 40+ minute phone call with very many problems, she was able to reset my account to the same as it was before all of this occurred. She was very pleasant and professional during this entire process, which made the entire process much easier for me to deal with given the circumstances.

In today's world it is hard to find (and retain) dedicated and professional employees such as Amber Shreve; she made a very lasting impression on me today with her professionalism and dedication to finding a resolution to my problem.

Thank you very much for your time and please pass along to Ms. Shreve that her actions did not go unnoticed and was very much appreciated.

Respectfully yours,

Alan S Witherspoon

**Last week** I called the West Virginia Turnpike Customer Service line and was lucky enough to speak with Keith. You could tell that he was new to the job, and I had many pointed and specific

questions about tolling, whether I could use my Riverlink EZPass for automatic tolling, and other general questions. Keith took his time, was patient, professional, and with the help of his Supervisor, Joella, they were able to help me and get my questions answered.

So, here is the reason having employees like them is important. Weekly, my son and his four co-workers have the choice of taking I-64 in West Virginia or I-81 in Virginia for the bulk of their grueling 7.5-hour commute to Manassas, Virginia. Tolling is always something that discourages travel and tourism because of cost but kindness and grace offsets that. This past Sunday, they chose West Virginia, and a lot of the reason was the quality of the customer service we received the week before. Because of that choice, they spent at least \$200 weekly in your state, which adds up.

Please convey my thanks to them and have a blessed Christmas holiday.

Thank you, Aspen Taylor

**To Parkways customer service director Wayne Webb:**

Hi Mr. Wayne, my name is Jerry with Sunshine Transportation. I was passing through West Virginia on the way to Florida, and called to settle a toll debt. When I did, I got customer service representative Tiffany Burdett.

I just wanna let you know she was terrific to talk to you, and very, very helpful in terms of professional attitude and a soothing demeanor, which makes her one of the best customer representatives I've ever talked to over the phone. She was extremely delightful, and had a very pleasing attitude. If you ask me, she's very worthy of a promotion. I just wanted to leave this customer review on her behalf for her professionalism, and I hope she hears about it. I only wish that every customer rep around the world was as easy to talk to, and pleasing as Tiffany.

Thank you very much and have a good day.



## WVDOH Work Crews Show their Respect

We recently received the following email about work crews in District 1:

**Good Morning.** I hope this email finds the correct person. I wasn't sure who to send it to.

I just wanted to take a moment to send an email and recognize one of your crews. I attended a funeral yesterday in Smithers, West Virginia (Fayette County). The procession went to Glasgow, West Virginia (Kanawha County) to the cemetery. About 2:00 p.m. the funeral procession went past a WVDOH crew in the area of London, West Virginia (Kanawha County) that was cleaning ditches.

Upon entering the construction area, the crew stopped traffic in the opposite direction to allow the procession to proceed without stopping.

They also stopped working and took off their hardhats and held them at their chests to pay their respects until every vehicle passed.

Little did they know the person in the procession that they were honoring was an Army Sergeant in the Vietnam War who also was a Purple Heart Recipient and an educator in the Upper Kanawha Valley.

After the funeral the family was also commenting on the level of respect from these workers. I told the family I would reach out to the DOH and let them know. Please extend our thanks to the crew who truly showed the highest level of respect during the family's most difficult day.

Sincerely,

Floyd Keeney, Jr.

## Temporary Repairs Complete on Hinton Sinkhole

West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) work crews have filled in a massive sinkhole along WV 20 in Hinton in preparation for permanent repairs in the spring.

In June, a sinkhole about six feet wide and about 30 feet deep opened on WV 20 next to the Hinton police station. A 90-year-old drain under the road began failing, leading to the collapse.

WVDOH work crews installed a 120-foot temporary culvert and fill material under the road, but heavy rains from Hurricane Nicole on Friday, Nov. 11, 2022, washed out the fill and made the sinkhole worse.

In a two-day construction blitz, WVDOH bridge crews installed a temporary bridge beside the massive sinkhole to divert traffic away from the hole while temporary repairs were made.

WVDOH District 9 Engineer Jim Moore, P.E.,



said crews were able to install a new, temporary drainage pipe inside the old structure. Beginning Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023, crews began filling in the massive sinkhole with about 2,500 cubic yards of fill material. That's almost enough to fill an Olympic size swimming pool.

Next step was for work crews to top off the 2,500 cubic yards of fill with gravel and stone and grade the surface flat to get ready for permanent repairs in the spring. The temporary bridge will remain in place until then.

After giving the new fill plenty of time to settle, the WVDOH intends to pave over the sinkhole and restore WV 20 to two lanes as it was prior to the sinkhole opening up.

Paving will be done when asphalt plants open in the spring. This will restore two-way traffic and allow removal of the bridge.





Todd Schoonover, Central Office Central Forces and Heavy Equipment Director Todd Schoonover recently got the honor of installing the last bolt in the Trout Run Bridge in Pocahontas County. Central Forces, or Cenforce, played a major role in rebuilding the bridge, which washed out during the 1985 flood

Rebuilding the bridge will allow Cass Scenic Railroad to reopen the rail line between Cass and Durbin, adding an excursion train run and further increasing tourism opportunities for Pocahontas County and the Mountain State.

SEE TRIBUTE, PAGE 3.

# VISION AWARDS

Congratulations to the following individuals being recognized this month by Secretary Wriston for their dedication to The Vision.

Jacob Thompson—District 2

Patricia Angeline—DMV

Rita Pauley—Cabinet Secretary's Office

Anna Moon—Legal Division

The Vision is simple; to be the best DOT in the country, for the purpose of giving our West Virginia the chance it should have — a place of prosperity and joy, where citizens have the best chance to build the lives they hope for. To be the best DOT in the country based on the quality of our work and motivation. To be the safest place for our employees to work. To be the best trained, and most educated.

To go Above and Beyond, every day.

