



WV DOT Today!

October 2024, Volume 6: Issue 10



WVDOT Placed 4th Overall in 2024 ROAdeo!



The 7th Anniversary of Roads to Prosperity!



WVDOT Wins Big at TransComm With Wellsburg Bridge Opening Award!



WVDOT Takes Home National Communications Award!

On Tuesday, September 24, 2024, the Public Relations Division of the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) took home a national communications award for Best Event at the 2024 TransComm communications conference in Atlanta. The award was for a grand opening event at the Wellsburg Bridge organized by the public relations division and held in September 2023.

An estimated 2,500 people attended the bridge opening, which included live music, a car show, marching bands, massive amounts of confetti, and fireworks. During daylight.

Let that sink in.

“West Virginia was honored to receive this award from TransComm, who had to choose among many wonderful events held across the nation,” said WVDOT Public Relations Division’s Event Director Randy Damron, who organized the huge event. Not only did Damron have to coordinate appearances by Gov. Jim Justice, federal and state highways officials from both Ohio and West Virginia, state legislators, and local dignitaries, but he also had to oversee all the details -- from making sure there was enough confetti to ensuring that all the chairs were properly lined up on the bridge.

“This was a team effort in our small public relations office,” Damron said. “We had all hands on deck for what proved to be an award-winning event.”

The Public Relations Division currently has a staff of seven, and competed at TransComm with state communications departments with dozens of employees.

“West Virginia has been a winning machine this year,” said WVDOT Public Relations Director Jennifer Dooley. “Show up. Do the work. Report on the work and tell the story – it’s the WVDOT recipe for success, and it works no matter what division or district you’re in within our agency.”



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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WVDOH Takes Home Two Wins in 2024 Southeast Regional ROADeo in North Carolina!

Equipment operators for the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) took home first and second place wins and came in fourth overall among 12 teams competing at the 2024 Southeast Regional ROADeo, held this year in Raleigh, North Carolina.

"The safest place in the world to work is the West Virginia Department of Transportation," said state Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., who braved wet weather with Mountain State equipment operators to cheer them on during the competition. "We have undoubtedly the best operators in the entire country."

"Last year, as we hosted the Regional ROADeo, we proved the best operators," Wriston said. "Best of the best."

West Virginia won Best Overall DOH in the 2023 Southeast Regional ROADeo, winning in more categories than any other state. The event, held last year in Beckley, was the first WVDOH overall victory in 20 years.

This year, Carlous Bailey took home a second-place win in the tandem axle truck event, while James Soles took first place in the grader division.

The equipment operators ROADeo is a training and safety conference in which leading equipment operators from each state compete on a course designed to test their skills. Workers from around the region moved golf balls as carefully as they would work around utility lines in the field and completed other complex and delicate tasks showing their mastery of heavy equipment.

"This ROADeo competition is something our Division of Highways has participated in for years, but used to hide the light under a bushel basket, as the saying goes," said Jennifer Dooley, West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) Public Relations Director. "Now we let it shine. With the influx in new equipment, increased training opportunities, and with Secretary Wriston working hand in hand with our operators on the ground; this has grown into something our operators can use to inspire those they train, and it's working."

States take turns hosting the conference, with judges from each state participating in scoring each year.

Competition takes place in seven events: single axle truck, tandem axle truck, lowboy trailer, motor grader, backhoe, skid steer, and tractor mower. Truck events involve running an obstacle course, parallel parking, and seeing how close drivers can back up to a bay.

In the backhoe event, operators must use a tiny spoon attached to the backhoe to pick up a golf ball and drop it into a cup. The grader event involves knocking tennis balls off a tube with the grader blade without knocking over the tube. The mower event involves driving a tractor towing a mower through an obstacle course – both forward and backward.

The point of the precision events is to demonstrate equipment mastery; if a backhoe operator is deft enough to drop a golf ball in a cup, he or she is deft enough to dig at work sites without hitting buried power lines or other utilities.

"Last year, West Virginia won first place," said Dooley. "This year, we placed fourth in the region overall. That's a far cry from the DOT we used to be, where we didn't want to talk about the Training and Equipment Operators ROADeo at all. The handful of operators who participated in the competition are on their way back to West Virginia, to the work zones you're seeing all around the state, so be aware and help them get home safely to their families."



WVDOT Celebrates Seven Years of The Roads to Prosperity Program!

On Saturday, October 7, 2017, Gov. Jim Justice asked West Virginia voters to approve a constitutional amendment allowing for the biggest bond sale in Mountain State history, to be used for road and bridge construction and maintenance projects in every corner of the state. The result was the \$2.8 billion Roads to Prosperity program, the largest infrastructure investment West Virginia had ever seen.

On Monday, October 7, 2024, Gov. Justice joined Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E.; Tourism Secretary Chelsea Ruby; and 1,320 West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) workers to celebrate the success of Roads to Prosperity. Each highway worker held a card representing one of the 1,320 projects paid for through Roads to Prosperity.

Gov. Justice originally envisioned Roads to Prosperity as a way to create almost instant jobs in West Virginia, while addressing decades of underinvestment in the state's roads and bridges and spurring economic development in all parts of the Mountain State. Roads to Prosperity included major highway projects like \$224 million to replace or upgrade 26 sets of bridges along Interstate 70 in Wheeling, \$254 million to upgrade Interstate 64 to six lanes between Nitro and the US 35 exit and replace the Donald M. Legg Memorial Bridge over the Kanawha River with two brand-new spans, to smaller bridge, paving, and slide repair projects in every county in the state. Without Roads to Prosperity, many of the smaller projects might have lain untouched for years until funding could be found to address them.

To date, 1,231 of the original 1,320 Roads to Prosperity projects have been completed, including 1,959 miles of paving, 133 bridge replacements, and 12 bridge rehabilitation projects. A total of 35 Roads to Prosperity projects are currently under construction.



WVDOH Names New Bridge on Scott Miller Hill Bypass in Honor of Robert "Bob" Ashley!

On Wednesday, September 25, 2024, officials with the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) met with local officials and members of the family of Robert "Bob" Ashley to officially name the new bridge on the Scott Miller Hill Bypass project after the former state senator and delegate. The bridge was officially designated the Robert G. "Bob" Ashley Memorial Bridge.

Ashley, who spent much of his 30 years in the Legislature pushing for the bypass project, died on Wednesday, May 15, 2024, just before the completion of the 4.3-mile bypass on US 33 between Spencer and Ripley.



"This is a project that's been on the shelf for a long time," said Jacob Bumgarner, P.E., WVDOH Chief Engineer of Special Programs.

Kanawha Stone was awarded a contract for \$40.4 million in 2020 to build the bypass, which included the construction of a new bridge. The project was funded through Gov. Jim Justice's \$2.8 billion Roads to Prosperity program.

"Without Roads to Prosperity, projects like this, projects like the Ruby Bradley Memorial Bridge in Spencer, would never have come to fruition," Bumgarner said.

The Scott Miller Hill Bypass opened to traffic on Thursday, July 1, 2024.

Members of Ashley's family were on hand for the dedication, honoring a project that local residents had been requesting for decades, and remembering one of the men who was instrumental in pushing the project toward eventual completion.

"(Bob Ashley) would be so proud that you are there doing that job that he's working with you to make things happen, make things better for West Virginia," said Ben Ashley, Bob Ashley's son. "So thank you to everyone who came here today."





WVDOT, Tourism Debut Hillsboro Radio Station!



By Randy Damron

When Gov. Jim Justice took office in 2017, he set the stage for all state agencies to work together for a better West Virginia. The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) immediately teamed up with the state Division of Tourism to form a partnership, and the partnership has had many benefits.

One of the things that came out of this partnership was the West Virginia Mountain Rides program, a series of four (and counting) scenic motorcycle and vehicle routes showcasing the state's beauty. Being a motorcycle rider and sports car enthusiast, it occurred to me that West Virginia has many exciting roads to ride and explore. Why should other states get all the attention, especially a particular road in Tennessee, the Tail of the Dragon?

The partnership resulted in the Seneca Skyway, Capitol Circle, Cranberry Corridor, and Birdeye Bend scenic routes, with more planned.

But another partnership between the two agencies became reality in August 2024 in Pocahontas County, where the Seneca Skyway travels through Hillsboro, near the halfway mark on the ride.

With a broadcasting background, the idea of a visitors information radio station came to me, to broadcast on AM radio. The station would broadcast tourist and traffic information 24 hours a day.

A plan came together for Tourism to buy an automated broadcast system. But where would the station be located?

The WVDOT has an outpost in Hillsboro with a small gas receipt building and enough real estate to erect an antenna. Another opportunity for the two agencies to work together for the good of the general public was born.

With 54 years in broadcasting, I took a vital role in installation and calibration of the transmitter and antenna system.

Although a low power station, the station broadcasts information promoting Beartown, Droop Mountain, Watoga State Park, and all that they have to offer. In addition, announcements promote the birthplace of Pulitzer Prize winning author Pearl S. Buck's homeplace and the Cranberry Welcome Center.

The station also has the ability to broadcast weather information from the WVDOT 511 platform, including winter driving conditions at Droop Mountain, elevation 3,000 feet. When it snows, it snows!

Broadcast information is recorded and produced in the WVDOT public relations office in Building 5 at the State Capitol Complex and programmed from the Tourism office in Building 3. It is then uploaded to the Hillsboro station.

Tune in to 1620 AM and hear for yourself!



Congratulations to Ron Stanevich!

The West Virginia Division of Transportation (WVDOT) wants to congratulate Ron Stanevich, who won an American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) committee service award. We appreciate all your hard work and dedication, keep up the good work Ron!

GREAT JOB!



Ron Got an Award



WVDOT Hosts Employee CPR Training!



West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) State Safety Officers hosted an employee CPR training last month in Building 7 at the Capitol. They invited all employees that wanted to get CPR certified to join in for the training. Turnout was great and the classes were very informative.

Their goal is to promote and teach each employee to provide life-saving CPR in an emergency. Safety is the goal and the more employees that are trained, the safer the workplace.

For any further information on future classes contact Shane Hudnall (304) 414-6627 or shane.a.hudnall@wv.gov.



West Virginia Parkways Authority Upgrades Customer Service Center and its Features!

The West Virginia Parkways Authority continues to improve the customer experience for motorists along the West Virginia Turnpike.

On Monday, September 30, 2024, an upgraded internal system and upgraded website for customers went live. Also released was an upgraded phone system which includes Interactive Voice Response. That response allows customers to self-serve and manage their account as well as make payments.

“Over the years, the TransCore team has reliably supported our toll road operations with the best technology and staff available, so upgrading our back-office system to their latest generation technology was an easy decision,” said Jeff Miller, Executive Director of the West Virginia Parkways Authority.

“Now that the new BOS is live, we are happy to say that motorists using the West Virginia Turnpike will have more flexibility and options for managing their toll accounts, and we feel confident our systems will support our tolling operations well into the future.”

Improvements to the customer service experience in progress or still to come include a chat feature, which allows customers to chat with customer service representatives on the website, and a third-party mail house, which allows scalability in volume of mailings (particularly useful for pay-by-plate {toll-by-mail} invoices).

A mobile app is still being designed and included with the mobile app will be a digital wallet that allows customers to pay online more easily.

Roadside toll collection system upgrade is still being performed and lanes being commissioned individually with all lanes expected to be completed by the end of year.



VISION AWARDS

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

*Carlous Bailey - District 7
James Soles - District 6
Marie Shelton - Finance and Administration
Carl Moses - Finance and Administration
Kari Davis - Finance and Administration
Hannah Thomas - District 9
Brett Thomas - District 9
Beverly Burdette - District 9
Taylor Boone - Performance Management Division
Fernanda D'Agostin - Information Technology Division
Charles Murphy - District 2
David Carr - District 7
Shane McComas - Civil Rights Compliance
Terry Smart - District 9
Cody Bean - District 5
Desiree Baugher - District 5
Robert Zirk - District 5
George Condron - District 5
Amanda Hayes - Right of Way Division
Charlotte Sutphin - Kanawha City DMV Regional Office
Tabitha Westfall - DMV Call Center Services
Jessica Reed - Engineering Division
Jason Stitt - District 7*

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.



DMV Travels to Washington DC for TSA Testing for Mobile ID!

Wednesday, September 18, 2024, DMV employees traveled to Washington, D.C. for critical TSA testing on the mobile Drivers License/ID. We are very excited to announce the mobile ID passed TSA testing for both Apple and Android operating systems. This was a huge hurdle for the mobile ID and it puts us one step closer to a pilot program for employees in late October.



WVDOT Wants to Thank Tammy Woolridge for Her Hard Work!

The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) would like to recognize Tammy Woolridge, Division 1 Manager for the Performance Management Division. Tammy is known for her dedication to the agency. She goes above and beyond each day to not only perform her assigned duties but also create a work environment that makes each employee feel at home. Today, I came out of my office, and Tammy had created this "Thankful" wall with each employee's name. She brought a snack cart with various snacks for her co-workers.



New Guests Each Week!



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WVDOH Held Touch a Truck Event in Elkins!

West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) District 8 crews recently participated in a community event that allowed locals to explore various forms of equipment in a safe environment.

Touch A Truck was held in September at Autumn Lake Health Care at Crystal Spring in Elkins.

“Our employees were delighted to take part in this community service event and were able to answer questions from the residents and their families about the equipment and what we do as an agency,” said Ralph Bennett, District 8 Transportation Equipment Manager.

“I feel it is important to do such a service as this for the elderly and their families. Not only does it create a memory it gives them a sense of inclusion and importance,” Bennett said.

WVDOH equipment operators brought several trucks to the show. Wesley Mole drove the wrecker, Nathan Harsh drove a backhoe, and Claison Knotts drove a new dump truck.



Special Thanks From a Citizen!

Hello:

Please pass along my gratitude to the team that just resurfaced Lens Creek Road. They did the job efficiently with minimal disruption and the result is spectacular.

Job well done!

Sincerely

Ken Magill



A Letter to Secretary Wriston!

Dear Secretary Wriston,

You made a profound impact on me, in your recent video discussing how citizens of West Virginia need to be cautious and responsible around road crews who are out there, in your own words, “gettin’ it done.” I sincerely hope that the worker who was injured in that July crash on I-79 is recovering. I thought that it may hearten you to hear some good news for a change....

We had a few days of heavy downpours at the end of August, and the culvert under the road across from my property was blocked. The standing water eventually flooded the road, and ended up washing out my driveway. As I was mending the driveway, I wondered who I could call to see about fixing the culvert. A quick search on the WVDOH’s website led me to the SWAT (Safety with Action Today) link, and the online request form for road repairs.

Over the Labor Day holiday weekend I submitted the online form, but to be perfectly honest, I didn’t expect much. Much to my surprise on Thursday, September 5, less than five working days after I had submitted the form—a WVDOH road crew came by to inspect the culvert. The crew explained that my online form had gone to Charleston, then to their regional office, and finally given to their team to investigate. The team that arrived were friendly, courteous and thorough. They assessed that the culvert was irreversibly blocked, and would need to be replaced. The team cautioned me that it might “be a while” before they could get to it.

Today the same crew who came out to assess the culvert, replaced it, bettering that section of our gravel road in the process. A total of seven working days elapsed since they first came out to inspect it. That’s impressive for any large, state agency—you should be proud of your team and your process! My only regret is that I didn’t get the road crew’s names. I did thank them for coming out, but I didn’t feel that my words were enough—so I decided to write this note.

I realize that a small culvert on a gravel road in the middle of Hampshire County is a minor thing, but it means quite a bit to our family. I wanted you to know how much we appreciate the difficult work that your team does every day. We’ll be keeping you all in our thoughts and prayers.

Respectfully,
Mark LeBrun



WV On The DOT presents:

In a special one-hour Roads to Prosperity seven year anniversary podcast, Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., joins WV on the DOT to share WVDOT's transformation behind the scenes to meet the increased road work demands of the Governor's program and what's next as WVDOT continues to gain ground.



Vote for Wellsburg Bridge!

There are still plenty of opportunities for Mountain State residents to vote for the West Virginia Division of Highways' (WVDOH) Wellsburg Bridge project, one of 12 finalists from around the country vying for a national America's Transportation Award, to be decided at the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) annual meeting in Philadelphia in October.

West Virginia is up for both the Grand Prize and the People's Choice Award, which is determined by public voting. Voting ends at 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, October 29, 2024, and residents can vote once every 24 hours.

Construction of the 1,875-foot Wellsburg Bridge began in 2018. Flatiron Construction was awarded a contract for approximately \$131 million to build the structure, which connects the communities of Wellsburg, West Virginia, and Brilliant, Ohio.

The main span of the bridge was built on the banks of the Ohio River. On Monday, April 26, 2021, the 4,100-ton main span was hefted onto two sets of barges, floated downstream to the bridge site, and slowly jacked up to rest on its support piers. The operation took more than 13 hours.

An estimated 2,500 people turned out for the official opening of the new bridge on Wednesday, September 20, 2023. Federal, state, and local officials from both Ohio and West Virginia attended the opening ceremony, accompanied by high school bands, confetti, and fireworks.

West Virginia's Wellsburg Bridge will compete with Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Washington state.

"These 12 projects serve as the best of the best transportation projects completed by state DOTs across the country, but they are only a fraction of the incredible work states are doing to better their communities," said AASHTO Executive Director Jim Tymon. "State DOTs today are focused on a wide range of work, including projects that enhance every mode of transportation and increase safety, equity, and quality of life. This list of Top 12 contenders serves as a great example of just how diverse these state DOT projects are."

Building a bridge between the two communities had been in discussion for a century. The bridge will drastically reduce travel time between the two communities, provide a new river crossing for commerce, spur economic development on both sides of the Ohio River, and provide another way across the river if work needs to be done on neighboring spans.

"This is an incredible day for both Wellsburg and Brilliant because we are finally opening a bridge connecting these two communities that is long overdue," Gov. Jim Justice said at the dedication. "This bridge is going to make life better for everyone who travels through West Virginia's Northern Panhandle. This is truly an incredible day, and I'm proud to see another bridge project across the finish line. The bridge might be in the Northern Panhandle, but this is a great day for all of West Virginia."



Scan to Vote!

