

West Virginia Wins Roadeo!

For the first time in 20 years...



On Thursday, September 29, 2023, equipment operators from the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) met operators from 10 other states to sweep the 2023 Southeast Regional Roadeo in Beckley.

WVDOH took home the overall trophy for the first time in 20 years while meeting stiff competition from operators from Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

“It’s the top operators for each state that’s competing,” said Joe Pack, P.E., WVDOH Chief Engineer of Operations and event coordinator.

Twelve operators for each state competed in six different events: Single axle truck, double axle truck, low boy trailer, backhoe, motor grader, and tractor mower. The last three events were timed.

Events might include running a tight obstacle course, parallel parking a massive trailer, knocking over tennis balls with a grader without disturbing the posts they’re sitting on, or picking up a golf ball with a backhoe and dropping it into a tiny cup. Because if you can pick up a golf ball, you can miss a gas line when out in the field.

“It’s reflective of what they do every day,” Pack said.



The West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOT) Public Relations Division wants to give a big shout-out to the District 6 employees who helped lug equipment, set up tents, and straighten chairs for the Wellsburg Bridge dedication on Wednesday, September 20, 2023.

SHOUT OUT TO Ron Castelluci, Burl Williams, Albert Plotts, Chris Everson, Curt Ossman, Matt Chipps, Gerry Robinson, Sam Zavatsky, Lenny Coffman, John Krieger, Josh McCoy, and Eric Woodburn.

We couldn't have done it without you guys!



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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Decades in the Making: Wellsburg

Gov. Jim Justice, West Virginia Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., federal, state, and local officials took part in a ribbon-cutting ceremony in September to celebrate the grand opening of the 1,875-foot Wellsburg Bridge connecting the communities of Wellsburg, West Virginia and Brilliant, Ohio.

Hundreds of people joined in the festivities on the bridge, which will open to vehicular traffic on the morning of Thursday, September 21, 2023.

"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. Justice said. "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."

Flatiron Construction, headquartered in Broomfield, Colorado, was awarded an approximately \$131 million contract for construction of the new bridge. The 830-foot main span of the bridge was built off-site on the bank of the Ohio River just upstream from the bridge site.

Once again, the Governor is here to cut a ribbon on a project that has lingered and lingered and lingered," Secretary Wriston said. "In 2016, we elected the most dynamic governor in our state's history, who had a vision to put transportation at the forefront of our economic recovery. He is a Governor who is transforming our economy, diversifying our economy, and building the infrastructure that West Virginians and Ohioans deserve and appreciate."



In Memory of Tom Badgett

We in the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) express our condolences and celebrate the memory of longtime WVDOT employee Tom Badgett.

Badgett died Friday, September 29, 2023. He was 72. Badgett served with the WVDOT for more than 40 years.

“I don’t know anybody more dedicated to our maintenance operations than Tom Badgett,” said West Virginia Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E. “He gave everything he had. His whole life here.”

“He retired and came back as a consultant, just to help me do exactly what you’ve seen us do,” Wriston said.

“Change the culture in Highways. Focus on core maintenance. Emphasize the things

that deteriorate the road. Get the equipment we need. He didn’t have to do that. But he cared.”

Badgett graduated from Parkersburg High School in 1970.

He is survived by his wife of 43 years, Brynda Nichols-Badgett; a son, Ryan (Shawna) Badgett of Walker, West Virginia; a grandson, Brady Badgett of Walker, West Virginia; two step-grandchildren, Kalie (TJ) Schweitzer of Whipple, Ohio and William LeMaster of Fairmont, West Virginia; two step-great grandchildren, Chloe and Emlyn Schweitzer; and several brothers and sisters-in-law, nieces, and nephews.

WVDOT dedicates its Rodeo win to Tom, whose work was apparent in our big day.



Contract Awarded to fix Hinton Sinkhole

On Thursday, September 28, 2023, the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) awarded a contract to permanently fix a massive sinkhole, once and for all, on WV 20 in Hinton is among projects that were included in a bid letting on Tuesday, September 12, 2023. The project will be funded by bonds sold through Governor Jim Justice’s \$2.8 billion Roads to Prosperity program.

Orders Construction Company Inc. was awarded a contract for \$4,249,398 to install a new, permanent drainage system under WV 20 in Hinton to carry Brier Branch under the road.

In June of 2022, a large sinkhole opened along WV 20 near the Hinton Police Department after an old underground drainage structure collapsed. Work Crews put in a temporary structure



and filled the hole, but heavy rains washed out the temporary repair in November 2022. Crews then put in a temporary bridge to span the hole until more repairs could be made. In January 2023, crews filled the hole with enough rock and dirt to fill an Olympic size swimming pool until permanent repairs could

be made. It took a weekend to install the temporary bridge.

Contractors will bore a new hole under WV 20 and install a new drainage pipe to carry Brier Branch under the road. “This will be a permanent rerouting of the stream and a closure of the old drainage structure,” said Joe Pack, P.E., WVDOH Chief Engineer of Operations. “It’s a permanent fix.” Once the work is complete the temporary bridge will be removed and WV 20 will be repaved.





From Rita Pauley, Assistant Commissioner —

Who you gonna call??? Whether it is moving furniture, making, collating and distributing mass copies, building walls, or removing dead rodents--Office Services does it all. There is no request they won't willingly take on and excel in its execution. Need to microfilm documents to be retained, have a vehicle serviced, or just need boxes for a move Office Services does that. What about the world's smallest screwdriver to repair eyeglasses or have a dead squirrel removed from your parking space, give Office Services a call. Those of us who work in the Charleston office routinely rely on all of the services provided by Ameche Watson's excellent staff in office services. The next time you see one of the Office Services employees be sure to thank them!

From Andy Leaphart, P.E., Chief Engineer of Operations, South Carolina Department of Transportation —

Love seeing this (even though that trophy belongs in South Carolina!) A lot of folks overlook the morale and team building this brings throughout the organization. Stressing the safety training was huge in keeping this as a part of our program at SCDOT. Thanks again to West Virginia for all you did to make this years' event a success. Looking forward to doing it again next year in North Carolina!

From Rob Pennington, District 2 Engineer—

In District 2, we are very appreciative of the assistance we receive from other Districts and Divisions that occurs on a routine basis and in some instances on a short notice.

Districts have been very willing to share material and equipment across district boundaries which has allowed for our work to be completed more promptly and ultimately to better serve the public. We currently have a District 10 crew installing pile and lagging walls in District 2 as an example of how Districts are helping one another. We are thankful to Ryland and Nikki for their support and the efficiency of their crew.

We routinely have questions arise from the public in regards to our road inventory including ownership and maintenance responsibilities. This has required us to perform further research into the road history including Commissioners Orders and Historic Highway Maps. Angela Liller of the Information Technology Division, has been a great resource for these

requests. The staff responds promptly and in detail to any request we pose and has trained our District personnel on available resources so they can research on their own. This has allowed us to be responsive to public inquiries and also make fewer requests of their staff.

We also have recently had an uptick in requests including SWAT cases regarding traffic signals, lighting and work zones. These requests often require technical assistance from Traffic Engineering Division. We would like to acknowledge the timely and professional assistance provided by Ted, Brandi, and Matt on these recent requests. By being more responsive, the public has confidence we are listening to their concerns.

These are just a few recent examples and are only a small snapshot of the cooperation and assistance from other districts and divisions.

From Scott Eplin, Assistant Deputy Secretary —

The customer service department at the Beckley location for the Turnpike needs recognition. They are very prompt and friendly, along with taking pride in their building. It's good to know that our customers are exposed to that level of service.

From Nate Tawney, General Counsel—

This month I'll turn to... Districts 7 and 8 maintenance crews doing a heckuva job keeping Central West Virginia in good shape! Also, Planning Division - it's a great place to stop and have a cup of coffee and hear about some of the neat things they're working on.

From Jake Bumgarner, Special Programs Engineer —

I want to thank and recognize all folks behind the scenes that helped make the Southeast Equipment Operator Safety and Training Conference (ROADEO) a success in the fact that we not only won, but we were able to showcase the "Almost Heaven" West Virginia that we know and love. With Tony Clark, the former WV State Representative on the Southeastern Rodeo, leaving and being thrust into that role to replace him late in the game, I couldn't have asked for a better team to have around me. I am sure that I have missed someone that helped in the process in some manner over the past year preparing for this event and I do apologize. It is certainly not my intention to exclude anyone that put time and effort into this (Continued)





From Jake Bumgarner, continued from previous page...

event, but I did want to give credit where credit is due by recognizing as many folks as possible, because it is very hard to pull off an event of this magnitude. Let alone a victory, without people behind the scenes putting in the work.

I also want to thank the Secretary, Jimmy Wriston, and the Deputy Secretary, Alanna Keller, for the unwavering support in this whole process. Not only did they ensure we had the resources to put on a great event, compete and win, but they took time out of their very busy schedules and were present to show how important the success of our organization, team and individual employees is to them.

In the process and preparation leading up to a Southeast Rodeo, those involved and the competitors become a family. I am honored to be able to be a part of that atmosphere. I want to encourage those operators that want a chance to compete at the highest level in our field and get to be a part of this great experience to sign up next year at your local district competitions. We are always looking for those with the desire to represent West Virginia as the best of the best equipment operators. I look forward to repeating our win next year in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The following people assisted with the Rodeo: Joe Pack, Carla Rotsch, Melissa Miller, Lori Suite, Brandon Cook, Sasha Danberry, Holly Vest, Jeannie Ward, Nikki Poe, Heather Bowling, Natasha White, Monica Ashford, Jennifer Ballard, Rich Radford, Randall Roberts, Amy Potter, Shelia Young, Elizabeth Proudfoot, Ronie Hall, Heather Schoolcraft, David Brabham, Kari Maury, Rob Maury, Steve Carr, JR Crouse, Dustin Loudin, Jacob Johnson, Mike Daley, Sarah Marsh, Judy VanPelt, Shirley Shaffer, Randy Weasenforth, Mark Lower, Mike Harper, Nathan Thomas, Renee Clendenin, Justin Stinson, Natalie Ringer, Brad Garrison, Corey Gast, Dylan Cooper, Richard Teter, Abigail Deloughery, Melinda Mastrogiuseppe, Bridgit Buffington, Aaron Stroud, Deven Barron, Melissa Masuga, Aly Skaggs, Jessica Shrewsberry, Jacob Adkins, Cyndi Lucas, Shane Hudnall, Andy Estep, Bill Keher, Ritchie Plumley, Andy Silvester, Bruce Rohrbough, Ryan Canfield, Alvin Cutright, Eric Dever, Thadd McClung, Melissa Jarvis, Josh Sweeney, Bill Keller, Mike Himes, Mike Karlen, Tim Coffman, Terry Mullins, D9/D10 Crews, Allen Scarbro, Joseph Ray, Jeff Milam, J.R. Smith, Mike Matherly, James Sampson, Lee Poff, Kevin Weiss, Bennett Murphy, Troy Morgan, and Rusty Marks.

Thanks again to the whole group, and any who I may have left out.





More than 570 people registered to take part in the 2023 Southeast Regional Rodeo on Wednesday, September 27, 2023, and Thursday, September 28, 2023.

But only one of the 11 states participating took home the trophy for best overall performance in the annual event.

“This year, West Virginia won the trophy,” said West Virginia Transportation Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E.

“I couldn’t be more proud,” Wriston said. “I have never seen a group want something so badly, and work so hard, and work together so well to achieve something. This is the epitome of what the Governor talks about; know the difference between effort and achievement.

“They put the effort out, and they achieved!”

The West Virginia team competed with 12-person teams from Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, all of whom are the best equipment operators in their respective states.

“We get the best operators in the districts, and we have a state competition to get the best in the state,” Wriston said. “Other states are doing this, too.”

So only the best of the best equipment operators take part in the Rodeo.

“All of these activities in the competition are designed to mirror what they actually do on the roads,” Wriston said. “It demonstrates the highly skilled level of the operators.”

“It literally takes your breath away to watch how precise these guys can move these things,” Wriston said.

Competition takes place in six events: single axle truck, tandem axle truck, lowboy trailer, motor grader, backhoe, 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 towing a mower through an obstacle course.

WINNERS:

BACKHOE:

John Garrett, West Virginia—Third Place

Jeremiah Law, Virginia—Second Place

Hunter Butler, Tennessee—First Place

MOTOR GRADER:

Daniel Evans, North Carolina—Third Place

Joshua Williams, South Carolina—Second Place

Scott Burgess, South Carolina—First Place

TRACTOR WITH LOWBOY TRAILER:

Michael Carr, Tennessee—Third Place

Chad Loudin, West Virginia—Second Place

Nike Simpson, West Virginia—First Place

SINGLE AXLE DUMP TRUCK:

William Blackwell, South Carolina—Third Place

Nick Southern, West Virginia—Second Place

Joe Strickland, West Virginia—First Place

TANDEM AXLE DUMP TRUCK:

T.J. Pulley, Arkansas—Third Place

Chris Schaar, Tennessee—Second Place

Michael Pannell, Mississippi—First Place

TRACTOR MOWER:

Jeff Allgood, Virginia—Third Place

Larry Carman, Tennessee—Second Place

Steven Ford, South Carolina—First Place

OVERALL WINNERS:

South Carolina—Third Place

Tennessee—Second Place

West Virginia—First Place and the trophy!!!





Making a Career with WVDOH

Leslie Graham, P.E., Development Engineer for West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) District 10, thought she wanted to be a teacher. The Princeton High School graduate went to Bluefield State College on a basketball scholarship and thought teaching would be her career.



see how effects citizens,” Graham said. “It’s cool to put down on a piece of paper, ‘This is what we want.’”

The flexibility of working for the WVDOH has left Graham time to pursue her other jobs as mother to two children – Emma, 9, and Rowan, 4 – and to pursue her other passion, coaching.

“I taught for two years,” Graham recalled. “I didn’t like it. It wasn’t what I thought it would be.”

Graham wasn’t sure what she wanted to try next, but she knew she liked art and math. “Originally, I wanted to be a graphic designer,” she said.

An adviser suggested she take a CAD class, just to see if she liked it. Graham was hooked.

“The CAD class was a really good combination of math and art,” she said. “That’s just how my brain works.”

Graham switched to engineering and didn’t look back. She graduated in 2010 and hired on with the WVDOH in 2011.

“With engineering, you get to start a project, see it through and

“I think this is the perfect place for women to work,” Graham said. “You can take time off if you need it.”

Like engineering, Graham came to coaching somewhat by happenstance.

“I played volleyball and basketball in high school,” Graham said. Though an injury cut short her own career, the local middle school needed a volleyball coach.

“I actually really like it,” she said. “It’s fun to see the growth of the kids and how they change.

“For me it’s about teaching them to be adults,” Graham said. “How to clean up after yourself and be responsible. They’ll be done with volleyball at some point.”



Portrait of a Winning Team

West Virginia took home the trophy in the Southeast Regional Rodeo for the first time in 20 years on Thursday, September 28, 2023. Meet the winning team!

(Left to Right)

Joey Smith, District 10; Chad Loudin, Equipment Division; Mike Simpson, District 8; Chance Swecker, District 8; Joe Hinton, District 9; Michael Hill, District 7; Eric Blankenbeckler, District 10; John Garrett, District 1; Nick Southern, District 8; Randal Randolph, District 1; Carlus Bailey, District 7; Joe Strickland, District 9.





WV on the DOT

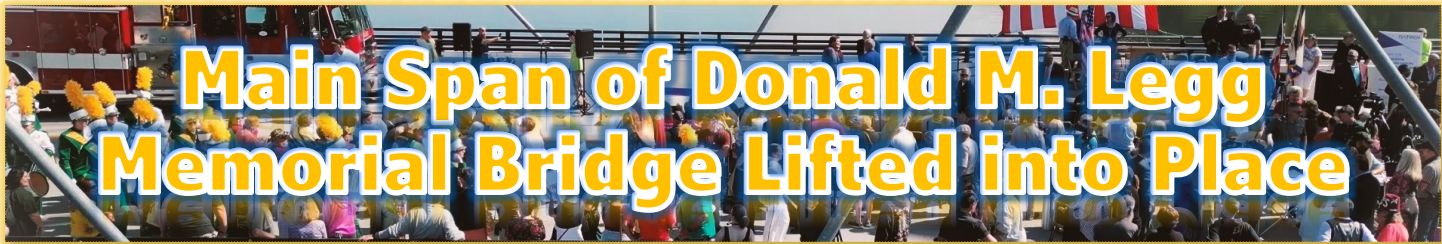
Recorded live from the Wellsburg Bridge
And the 2023 Southeast Equipment Roadshow!

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It was another Roads to Prosperity milestone on Wednesday, September 6, 2023, as contractors lifted the main span of the new Donald M. Legg Memorial Bridge into position in Nitro.

The main span, five beams wide, 11 feet tall, and 314 feet long, was pre-assembled and

lifted into place Wednesday from a barge in the middle of the Kanawha River. The section of bridge weighs about two million pounds.

“Thanks to the Governor, we are almost finished with this important project,” said Joe Pack, P.E., WVDOH Chief Engineer of Operations.

The main span of the old Donald M. Legg Memorial Bridge was gently lowered onto a barge in December 2022 as contractors Brayman and Trumbull began disassembling the old structure. The bridge served the public for 60 years, opening to traffic in 1962.

Contractors spent the preceding few months working on approach spans and pouring new concrete support piers for the main span on top of the old bridge piers. Lifting the main span into place completes construction of the bridge superstructure, although Brayman and Trumbull will still need to pour the bridge deck and pave the new roadway.

Contractors hope to pour the bridge deck before winter and complete paving when asphalt plants open in the spring of 2024.



Construction of the new bridge between the Nitro and St. Albans exits of Interstate 64 is part of an approximately \$225 million project to upgrade I-64 to six lanes from Nitro to the US 35 exit. The project also called for construction of five new bridges in addition to the new Donald M. Legg Memorial Bridge.

The project is paid for through Gov. Justice’s \$2.8 billion Roads to Prosperity program.



“This is one of the largest Roads to Prosperity projects in the state,” Pack said.

In October 2022, Gov. Justice announced the opening of the Nitro WW I Memorial Bridge just north of the old Donald M. Legg Memorial Bridge to carry westbound traffic. The old bridge is being rebuilt using a portion of the existing piers to carry

traffic east. Each bridge will be four lanes wide, to allow drivers traveling between the Nitro and St. Albans exits to drive without having to merge into through traffic.

Completion of the two bridges and widening I-64 to six lanes will open a major bottleneck on one of the most heavily travelled sections of interstate in West Virginia. The old Donald M. Legg Memorial Bridge carried approximately 60,000 vehicles a day.



A Dream Bridge Come True

Governor Jim Justice and Secretary of Transportation Jimmy Wriston joined an estimated 2,500 people to celebrate the new Wellsburg Bridge, connecting Wellsburg, West Virginia to Brilliant, Ohio on Wednesday, September 20, 2023. Among the 2,500 were many voices who have been speaking out in support of the bridge for decades.

As West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) works to make Governor Justice’s vision for our roads a reality, there is a special moment with each new bridge where we hand the bridge over to its community and celebrate with them. We shared this moment with the community of Spencer for the Col. Ruby Bradley Bridge ribbon cutting, and with Madison for the Lt. Darwin K. Kyle Memorial Bridge, and with Nitro and St. Albans with the Nitro WWI Memorial Bridge on I-64. Each ribbon cutting signifies the dedication of many who worked together to make a dream real. Each is a story worth telling.

On Monday, September 25, 2023, WVDOT Public Relations released a video featuring interviews from five people in the Wellsburg area who worked for decades to try to find support for the bridge. This video, featuring Helen Mayle, Walt Ferguson, Jason Ferguson, Jack Yost and Tim Ennis, and titled “Wellsburg, A Dream (Bridge) Come True” is available on WVDOT’s YouTube channel.

“I used to come across on the ferry, and the ferry froze in the river and sank in 1948,” said Helen Mayle, member of the Citizen’s Bridge Committee, who formed decades ago in support of the bridge. “We haven’t had a crossing since.”



Mayle was all smiles, and tears, on the bridge as confetti rained down moments after Governor Justice cut the ribbon.

“They said ‘Well, you’ll never get it,’ said Mayle. “And I said, don’t bet on it.”



“All these communities are great people,” said Walt Ferguson, chairman of the Citizen’s Bridge Committee. “We’re very fortunate to live in this area, so anything to update it, to make it better for the people and the community, I’m all for.”



“This beautiful item that we’re going to have here on the river is going to benefit both sides of the river,” said Jason Ferguson, Walt’s son and President of Brooke County Parks and Recreation. “I think it’s going to help economically. I think it’s going to help the whole community, with community interest, festivals, things like that.”



“Helping folks with employment,” said Jack Yost, former member of the West Virginia State Senate. “Helping folks with businesses. The colleges, the universities here in Brooke County and Ohio County, everyone’s going to benefit from this bridge.”



“I was here pre-dawn hours,” said Tim Ennis, former member of the West Virginia House of Delegates, on the historic Wellsburg Bridge float. “Truly it was pioneering engineering we were witnessing.”

The Wellsburg Bridge, made possible by funding freed up by Governor Justice’s Roads to Prosperity program, is designed to serve the community for 100 years.





The 2023 Standard Specifications Book and Construction manuals were recently received by the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) and delivered to various divisions.

The creation of the latest edition of the manual has been a huge undertaking by the WVDOT's Technical Support Division, Publications Section.

"Working with the book has been a great learning experience," said Janie Matics, Assistant Specification Engineer. "I am learning things I never thought I'd learn about when I was in school. The importance of a bolt. Also, I enjoy the people I work with throughout each division."

Matics helped deliver the books. So what is a specification and what are these manuals?

"A specification gives material testing construction details on how we pay for an item. I compare it to a cookbook and instead of making food, we're making highways," Matics said.

Matics said there are specification committee meetings every other month for changing specifications and adding new ones. The committee is transparent, and meetings are open with agendas posted online along with previous manuals. There are voting members from each of the WVDOT divisions in meetings.

"If you want to change a spec, you'll be called a champion of that item," Matics explained. "It has to at least go through two meetings so everyone can look at it, make comments, add questions and suggestions. It could go a while through the committee until either people are comfortable with it or it gets pulled."

VISION AWARDS

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

Cynthia Lucas—District 2

Rodney Pettit—District 7

Danny Smith—District 7

Harry Anderson—DMV

Melissa Dingess—DMV

Rusty Marks—Public Relations

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.

I ~~Just~~ Work Here.

