



Gov. Justice Dedicates Grant Street Bridge

On Monday, December 18, 2023, Gov. Jim Justice announced the opening of the Grant Street Bridge, reconnecting the city's North End and East Side with downtown and Princeton Avenue for the first time since the structure's closure in 2019.

The new bridge is 330 feet long and features a modern design to improve safety and traffic flow. Federal, state, and local grants funded the \$10.5 million project.

"This is another example of us pulling the rope together to get a meaningful project done," Gov. Justice said. "There were a few hurdles along the way, but we didn't let them stop us from getting this project across the finish line, and I'm proud to see us cutting the ribbon today. Bridges are more than just crossings from one side to the other. They act as connections between people, communities, and opportunities. This new bridge symbolizes our collective commitment to develop connections and economic prosperity for the City of Bluefield."

Residents impacted by the closing had been forced to use a

very narrow road, which was hazardous and resulted in increased response time for emergency vehicles.

Grant Street Bridge Timeline

June 2019: The Grant Street Bridge was closed after a Division of Highways inspection classified it as "critical" in safety, leaving motorists with a lengthy detour to get in and out of those parts of town.

October 2019: A task force of residents and city officials created to tackle the problem urged Gov. Justice to consider all options, including building a new bridge. The Governor said at the time: "I'm a firm believer, if our people are hurting and there's a way to try and help, that's what I'm going to do. That's what I've always done...I'll promise you this, and this is the honest truth, once it hits dead on my radar, I'm going to do something about it."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2.

Grant Street Dedication Continued

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1:

October 2019: A task force of residents and city officials created to tackle the problem urged Gov. Justice to consider all options, including building a new bridge. The Governor said at the time: "I'm a firm believer, if our people are hurting and there's a way to try and help, that's what I'm going to do. That's what I've always done...I'll promise you this, and this is the honest truth, once it hits dead on my radar, I'm going to do something about it."

October 2020: Gov. Jim Justice announced he had secured funding to replace the decaying structure. Highways officials helped hammer out an agreement between Norfolk Southern Corporation and the City of Bluefield. Under the agreement, Norfolk Southern agreed to turn over ownership of the bridge to

the City of Bluefield and give \$500,000 as a local match funding for construction. The DOH agreed to manage the project, with \$8 million in funding from the Federal Highway Administration and \$2 million from state sources.

April 2021: Brayman Construction Corporation was awarded a contract for \$8.097 million to build a brand-new structure.

August 2021: Demolition of the old bridge started.

May 2022: Construction on the new bridge was halted after contractors discovered soft rock on the building site which required adjusting their construction plans.

August 2022: Contractors resumed work on the bridge.

December 2023: Gov. Justice cut the ribbon, opening the structure for vehicle use.

Food and Pet Food Drive a Success

West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) employees opened their hearts, cupboards and pocketbooks for needy families and pets this holiday season.

The WVDOT Human Resources Division hosted its third annual Food and Pet Food Drive from Friday, November 17, 2023, through Thursday, December 14, 2023. Employees who brought in non-perishable goods or pet food were entered into a drawing to win gift baskets and gift cards. The drive concluded at the WVDOT Holiday Celebration in Building 5.

"To make the food drive more fun and exciting, we created a themed basket contest that created excitement with a little competition between departments," explained WVDOT Human Resources Division Manager II Kathryn Hill, who organized the food drive.

WVDOT employees collected 1,638 non-perishable food items and 323 bags or cans of pet food. They also raised \$116 for Mountain Mission in Charleston.

It was the third year Human Resources hosted the food drive.

Rand on Track

Plans for the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) to install all new storm sewer lines in the town of Rand are back on the fast track after receiving clearance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to proceed with planning and construction.

In October 2022, the WVDOH agreed to step in to help solve chronic flooding problems in the town of Rand. Planning for the new storm sewers hit a snag earlier this year after it was discovered that the storm drain outlets for the new storm sewer system might adversely impact mussels in the area. WVDOH engineers have since redesigned the outlets to avoid impacting the mussel population. The WVDOH plans to put the project out for bid in early 2024.

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.**

West Virginia Division of Highways
Attn: WVDOT Public Relations
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East
Building 5, Room A-137
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Editor: Rusty Marks

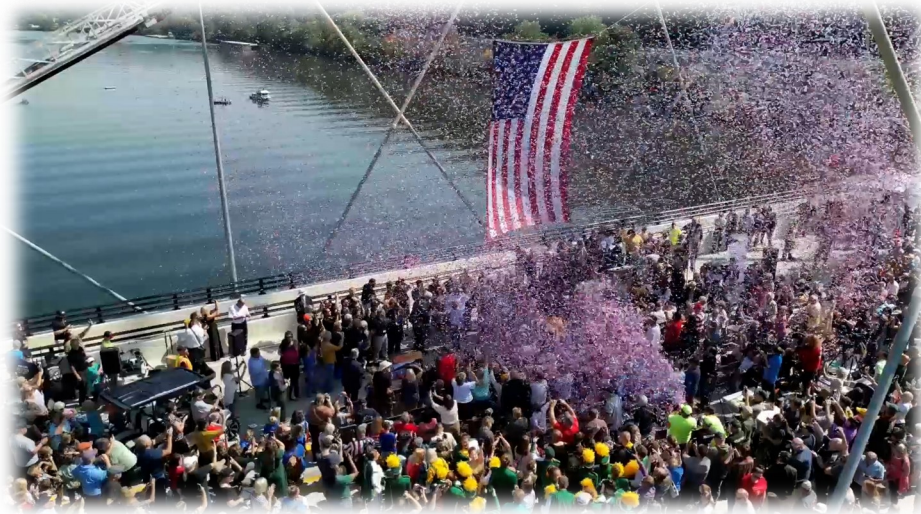
Submit articles, letters, suggestions, and Vision Award nominations to; Jennifer.J.Dooley@wv.gov.



2023: Our Year in Pictures



2023: Our Year in Pictures



2023: Our Year in Pictures



2023: Our Year in Pictures



Jennings Randolph Bridge Plans

Contractors Modjeski & Masters are designing plans for permanent repairs to the Jennings Randolph Bridge in Chester, as West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) bridge engineers prepare to reopen the span.

The bridge, which carries US 30 across the Ohio River between Chester, West Virginia, and East Liverpool, Ohio, was closed on Monday,

December 11, 2023, after a federally mandated inspection discovered cracking in two welds on the steel bridge structure. The cracks were not visible to the naked eye, but the WVDOH, in an abundance of caution, decided to close the bridge to come up with a repair plan.

“This shows that our bridge inspection program works,” said WVDOH State Bridge Engineer Tracy Brown, P.E. “Our aggressive bridge inspection program caught the issue before it could turn into a larger problem.”

The two cracks were arrested using dogbone repairs performed by WVDOH bridge repair crews from Central Forces, or CenForce. In a dogbone repair, two holes are drilled parallel to one another below and above the crack, then the holes are connected with a horizontal cut through the steel. The horizontal cut stops the crack from getting any bigger.

At the same time, Modjeski & Masters conducted additional inspections on the bridge to look for additional defects, while WVDOH bridge engineers continued evaluating the structure and planning for future repairs.

Crews from CenForce cut access holes into the steel bridge beams to allow contractors inside to inspect the welds from the inside out. WVDOH bridge engineers have been in constant communication with inspectors and contractors to determine the best and fastest way to repair the bridge and reopen it to



traffic.

The Jennings Randolph Bridge was built in 1977 using T-1 steel. At the time, welded T-1 steel was common in bridge construction, but it was later discovered that cracks could develop in the welds joining the beams. Cracks in T-1 steel welds led to the closure of the Interstate 64 Sherman Minton

Bridge in Louisville, Kentucky, in 2011, and the Interstate 40 Hernando de Soto Bridge in Memphis in 2021.

Welding codes were amended in the 1990s, and all T-1 steel was required to pass inspection before leaving the factory.

Recently, the federal government required specialized testing on all bridges made with T-1 steel. Special testing on bridges made with T-1 steel has since been conducted on bridges all over the United States.

It was during one of those tests that a few cracks were identified in welds on the Jennings Randolph Bridge. Because the cracks could cause safety issues in the future, the WVDOH shut the bridge down to repair the cracks.

Modjeski & Masters completed their final inspection, completing the specialized testing, on Friday, December 22, 2023.

Modjeski & Masters identified 18 additional internal defects on welds on the bridge. Seven of those will be arrested with dogbone repairs, while the other 11 will be repaired by drilling out the bad portions of the welds.

The WVDOH has called in contractors Triton Construction Inc. to complete repairs on the bridge. Triton is currently gathering materials and equipment to start the job.

Once those permanent repairs are made the bridge will reopen to traffic.

New guests every week!

Follow WV on the DOT on SoundCloud or Apple Podcasts.



Fairmont Bridge Demolished

On Friday, December 8, 2023, contractors for the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) used explosives to demolish the northbound span of the South Fairmont West Virginia Arch Bridge on Interstate 79. The demolition is part of a massive project to widen I-79 to six lanes from Harrison County almost to the Pennsylvania state line.



Pennsylvania-based Swank Construction was awarded a contract for \$72.5 million for the widening project, which included construction of a new six-lane bridge in place of the two South Fairmont West Virginia Arch Bridges that carry I-79 over the Tygart River near the White Hall exit. The southbound span of the old bridge was demolished in March 2023.

Contractors set up a rolling roadblock to set off explosives on the

other span at about 10 a.m. Only authorized personnel were allowed within the explosives loading/handling area. Public viewing was not allowed due to safety concerns.

Marion County Route 60, Vinegar Hill Road, was closed throughout the week in preparation for demolition of the bridge.

The new I-79 bridge over the Tygart river is about half complete. Contractors first built one quarter of the new southbound bridge before demolishing the old southbound span, then built the second quarter.

Now that the old northbound bridge has been demolished, the northbound half of the new bridge can be built.

The widening project is expected to be complete by the summer of 2025.

Market Street Under Evaluation

The West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) is continuing to inspect and evaluate the condition of the Market Street Bridge, which was closed to traffic on Thursday, December 21, 2023.

The 1,800-foot bridge, supported by two massive steel cables, was closed after a bridge inspection identified damaged sections in the cable anchorage on the upstream support cable.

Each support cable is made up of 14 bundles of steel, with each bundle made up of 107 individual strands of wire.

In June 2022, WVDOH bridge inspectors put the bridge on a three-month inspection cycle due to deterioration of the steel support cables within the cable anchorages at the ends of the bridge. At that time, inspectors identified that one of the 14 bundles of wire on the upstream support cable had deteriorated inside the cable anchorage to the point where it was no longer able to do its job.

Although the bridge cables have ample capacity to carry the weight of vehicles, deterioration in other parts of the bridge led

WVDOH bridge engineers to lower the weight limit on the 118-year-old bridge to three tons in September 2023.

Since June 2022, bridge inspectors have identified 10 other strands of wire breaking in other bundles on the bridge.

The Market Street Bridge was built in 1905, with an expected life of between 50 and 100 years. In 2010, the WVDOH awarded a contract for approximately \$14 million to extend the life of the bridge another 10 years; those repairs kept the bridge functional for 13 years.

The WVDOH bridge inspection program is one of the most aggressive in the country, going above and beyond federal requirements. Consultants Burgess & Niple conduct annual inspections on the Market Street Bridge, while WVDOH bridge inspectors conduct inspections on the cable anchorages every three months.

With the bridge currently closed, WVDOH plans another bridge inspection in January 2024 to determine if the support cables are continuing to deteriorate.





WV on the DOT podcast shows are available on Soundcloud and Apple Podcasts, or on our webpage;

Transportation.wv.gov

There are 176 episodes spanning back 176 weeks, and we look forward to jumping into the New Year with upcoming guests and topics. Send your questions to dotpodcast@wv.gov and we will answer them on the podcast!

Recent guests include:

Show #176 — 2023 Year in Review

Show #175 — Secretary Wriston

Show #174 — King Coal Highway Ribbon Cutting

Show # 173 — Michelle Oxley and Taylor Boone

Show # 172 — Joe Pack

VISION AWARDS

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

Steven Johnson — Operations Division

Ed Armbruster — Operations Division

Randy Damron — Public Relations

(Two time winner, and counting)

JD Haller — Equipment 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.

I ~~Just~~ Work Here!



Seat Belt Use Exceeds Average

More people in West Virginia are wearing their seat belts than ever before. According to the latest observational seat belt survey prepared for the West Virginia Governor's Highway Safety Program, (GHSP) 93.0 percent of drivers and front seat passengers were observed wearing their seat belts in 2023. This is higher than the national seat belt use rate average of 91.6 percent in 2022, the latest year available.

The 2023 seat belt use rate of 93.0 percent is higher than the 2021 seat belt use rate of 88.1 percent and the 2022 results of 92.5 percent. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) requires states to submit an annual seat belt survey. The survey design and methodology meets NHTSA's requirements.

"Correctly wearing your seat belt is the single most effective tool you can use to prevent serious injury or death in the event of a crash," said Amy Boggs, GHSP Occupant Protection Coordinator. "The more people we can encourage to wear their seat belts, the more people get to drive safely on West Virginia's roads. We are happy to know that the vast majority of West Virginians are wearing their seat belts. We hope to one

day reach 100% seat belt usage and will continue to strive for that goal."

Seat belt usage in West Virginia has increased dramatically since 2013, when the seat belt use rate was 82.2 percent. The passage of the primary seat belt law in 2013 and continued effort by the GHSP's Click It or Ticket campaigns, high visibility law enforcement, and education are instrumental in increasing seat belt usage.

Seat belts save lives. Increasing seat belt use is a top priority in West Virginia, which has set a long-term goal of zero traffic fatalities. The interim goal is to reduce the number of traffic deaths by one-half by 2030. The NHTSA reports 28 percent of the people killed in crashes in West Virginia from 2017 to 2021 were not wearing seat belts.

The 2023 West Virginia Observational Seat Belt Survey Report was prepared by Cambridge Systematics, Inc. Observers collected data between May 30 and June 11, 2023, during weekdays and weekends between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. They looked at 22,903 drivers and 6,410 front seat passengers for a total of 29,313 observations.

DMV Coat Drive a Success

Victoria Waybright saw people in need and wanted to do something to help her community during the holidays. So in 2022, the Specialist 2 at the West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Help Desk in Kanawha City, collected socks from fellow employees at the Kanawha City DMV office.



"I wanted to help those that needed a little bit of help and I read that socks were the number one requested item in homeless shelters so I did a sock drive," Waybright said.

Waybright expanded her efforts this year with the "Christmas Keep Warm Drive 2023." In addition to socks, she asked DMV employees and their neighbors to donate hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, blankets and gently used coats.

"We have to see people that are down on their luck asking for money outside and there's controversy over that. This way, let's keep people warm when they need it," Waybright said. "Over the holidays, I don't want anyone to be cold."

She collected the donations for a three-week period which concluded at noontime on Thursday, December 21, 2023. That afternoon, she personally delivered the items to the YWCA Sojourner's Shelter for Homeless Women & Families and the YWCA Past & Present Gently Used Clothing Store in

Charleston.

DMV employees responded in a big way. Bridgeview Elementary School in South Charleston also pitched in by clearing out its Lost and Found and delivering those items to the DMV breakroom in Kanawha City. When it was all said and done, Waybright had collected 12 bags and two boxes of coats and four boxes of new items including hats and gloves and scarves.

Waybright was overwhelmed by the generosity of her DMV employees and community members. "I appreciate it. They came through so big it brought tears to my eyes," she exclaimed. "I even had somebody bring me a 20 dollar bill today and I went shopping on my lunch break for it. So it's great."

