

WV DOT Today!

"It's not letting me load the software," said the quiet, but steady voice of a middle school competitor at 8:15 on a Saturday morning as he conversed with WVDOH employees, masked up and working silently at laptops with their morning coffee.

"Are you set up in a school or at home?" One of the volunteers asked.

And the morning proceeded; 27 teams competing from 27 different locations in the 20th Annual West Virginia Bridge Design and Build Contest. By 2:00 that afternoon, the young man who patiently worked his way through technical difficulties was standing outside a Wendy's eating lunch when it was his turn on the screen, to accept his 3rd place win in the the Middle School Division, his first year competing. For 20 years, the West Virginia Division on Highways has hosted the West Virginia Bridge Design and Build Contest for overcomers just like him.

Ninety nine teams from around the state competed in this year's competition. Of those, the target was to have 25 compete in the finals; so 27 were invited (go ahead and start with the alternates, surely someone will decline.) All 27 teams

accepted. Professors from WVU Tech arranged students to present to them on what you can do with engineering. Not what some other person elsewhere with more advantages can do, in imaginary towns with more opportunities, but what

someone like them, a recent graduate named Lauren Owens, did with her summer Engineering Co-Op experience with WVDOH. West Virginia jobs; West Virginia schools. WVDOH's 20 year investment in the competition is to show our students the bridge over the precarious valley

between middle and high school, to college and quality careers in our state; how possible it is to grow up here and to

thrive here for a lifetime.

**This year, the students not only competed in the competition, they also wrote in to let the committee know why bridges in West Virginia matter. Read their words, starting on page 9. View a list of finalists, with 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners on page 4.*

Watch for next year's competition, open to every middle and high school student in West Virginia, with a big in-person final competition to more than make up for this year's virtual setting.



WVDOH Invests in Tomorrow's Leaders

Also In this Issue:
Throw and NO! Mill and Fill is the way to go!



Our Drills—Our Team; Ahead of Our Schedule

The West Virginia Division of Highways reopened a 175-foot section of US 19 near Spanishburg in Mercer County sooner than expected because the crew was able to use our own drill.

On March 3, 2021, the road, undermined by the Bluestone River due to high water, collapsed during the night. The next morning, Arlie Matney was on the phone rerouting one of the two new drills to Route 19. The drills are used to build pile walls to hold up failing embankments.

“We were right along the riverbank,” Pack said. “Material was falling out from under the roadway as we were working.”

Because of the danger of further collapse, Pack decided to close the section of the road while repairs were made. DOH crews built a piling wall along that section of the road and filled in the washed-out bank to stabilize the roadbed and rebuild the road above.

The road reopened on Wednesday, March 17, two days ahead of an already aggressive schedule.

“Our crews worked diligently at it and we were able to expedite it,” he said. “We have Mike Matherly and Doug Potter, the drill operators, and the rest of the crew is Harry Thomas, Ethan Webb, Ricky Doyle, Timmy Weese, and Aaron Keene. They went above and beyond.”

WVDOH saved both time and money because they were able to do the repair work in-house.

“Our guys have a vested interest in this work,” he said. “They live here and they have family here who drive the roads, so they understand the urgency.”

“We really appreciate Governor Justice and his support of our people on the ground having what they need to get the job done,” said Joe Pack, District 10 Engineer.



• **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

Editors: Jennifer Dooley and Randy Damron;
With Rusty Marks and Jesse Ward.

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



Potholes: Squared

All around the state, jagged, ugly potholes are being milled out, swept, tacked, filled with asphalt, and rolled out into smooth, beautiful rectangles.

As Arlie Matney, County Administrator on Special Assignment, explained; "It's like your cup of coffee. You could argue whether your cup of coffee is empty or full. If it's empty, and you fill it up, the cup is still there. That's what happens with potholes. If the pothole is empty, and you just fill it and tamp it down, the hole is still there."

Milling and filling removes that coffee cup. It no longer matters if it's empty or full; it's not there. And every pothole milled and filled is a cup of coffee never spilled!

WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS

ENEMY # 1

AND WE'RE WAGING WAR

District	Material Tonnage	Material Costs	Man Hours	Labor Costs	Equipment Costs	Equipment Rental	Total Costs	Total Cost Per Ton
1	2192.43	\$ 135,578.57	9603.25	\$ 277,439.24	\$ 105,739.99	\$ 17,709.55	\$ 536,467.35	\$ 244.69
2	1486.17	\$ 96,163.99	8053.50	\$ 239,635.57	\$ 84,016.94	\$ -	\$ 419,816.50	\$ 282.48
3	35.15	\$ 2,176.84	55.00	\$ 1,669.29	\$ 737.21	\$ -	\$ 4,583.34	\$ 130.39
4	776.02	\$ 58,779.55	4531.06	\$ 105,834.31	\$ 86,097.16	\$ -	\$ 250,711.02	\$ 323.07
5	6.99	\$ 407.45	25.00	\$ 818.82	\$ 278.25	\$ -	\$ 1,504.52	\$ 215.24
7	458.03	\$ 27,112.67	1768.50	\$ 51,033.05	\$ 19,131.08	\$ 1,133.36	\$ 98,410.16	\$ 214.86
8	532.66	\$ 27,911.38	3165.50	\$ 47,238.16	\$ 19,670.83	\$ -	\$ 94,820.37	\$ 178.01
9	632.75	\$ 42,920.82	3275.50	\$ 91,812.19	\$ 42,364.48	\$ 5,225.00	\$ 182,322.49	\$ 288.14
10	499.93	\$ 27,463.44	2564.50	\$ 76,378.03	\$ 32,226.11	\$ -	\$ 136,067.58	\$ 272.17
Totals	6,620.13	\$ 418,514.70	33,041.81	\$ 891,858.66	\$ 390,262.05	\$ 24,067.91	\$1,724,703.32	\$ 260.52



Tune in to your local radio or t.v. station every morning to hear highlights of your area pothole milling & filling program.



High School:

7Salamanders, Garrett Ferguson & Jonathan Lewis, Frankfort High School, **First Place.**

Pier Pressure, Paisley Tabor, Hurricane High School, **Second Place.**

BridgeBridge, Andrea Miller, Greenbrier East High School, **Third Place.**

TBridge, Trinity Teixeira, Pikeview High School.

Jerry Bones, Justin Lester, Pikeview High School.

Season of Steel, Callia Yang and Maximus Yang, George Washington High School.

Bland, Austin Casto and Andrew Canterberry, St. Albans High School.

Nyck and Holly, Benjamin Chambers and Hannah Jones, Pikeview High School.

TayK, Caelan Adkins and Dallas Napier, Wayne High School.

Emma S, Emma Sherman, Musselman High School.

Bean Team, Keegan Bennett and Payton Mandell, Frankfort High School.

Spartan Bridge, William Gabbert, Greenbrier East High School.

Frankford Federalists, Malachi Crews, Greenbrier East High School.

Two Bachelorettes, Allyson Young and Eva McLeod, Frankfort High School.

Truss The Bridge, Benjamin Blackwell and Ayden Legg, St. Albans High School.

Fortnite, Gabe Paxton and Jed White, Greenbrier East High School.

Lily, Laura Tecci, Greenbrier East High School.

Snazzy Jazzers, Mary Lilly and Matthew Williams, Pikeview High School.

Swag Money, Justin McCullough and Jackson Hefner, Greenbrier East High School.

Turtle Squad 7.0, Justin Dargo and Hunter Hall, Woodrow Wilson High School.

Middle School:

Thinkers, Jason Cramer, Midland Trail High (Middle) School, **First Place.**

Silas & Tyler, Silas Yates and Tyler Luketic, Mountain Ridge Middle School, **Second Place.**

BridgeBot, Aiden Miller, Princeton Middle School, **Third Place.**

Panther Pride, Jillian Campbell, DuPont Middle School.

RMS is Best, Peyton Milleson, Romney Middle School.

Blossom, Holly Ward, Midland Trail High (Middle) School.

Bridge Boi's, Ariel Smith, Romney Middle School.

VISION AWARDS

Congratulations to the following individuals being recognized this month by Secretary Byrd White and Deputy Secretary Jimmy Wriston, P.E., for their dedication to The Vision.

Lecia Atkins—District 1

Doug Borrer—State Rail Authority

Sydney Burke—Engineering Division

Luke Chambers—District 10

Fernanda D'Agostin—Strategic Management

Audra Gibberson—District 10

Katrina High—District 10

Kevin Lewis—District 8

Travis Long—Technical Support

Greg Quatro—District 8

Reshma Joy—Strategic Management

Jason Tharp—Contract Administration

Tim Myers—District 8

The Vision is simple; to be the best DOH 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 DOH 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.



Making Things Happen: the John Blue Bridge

By Rion Wimer.

The John Blue Bridge Replacement Project will replace an existing three-span truss bridge where WV Route 28 crosses the South Branch Potomac River, near Springfield, WV.

The existing bridge is 419'-6" in overall length. It was constructed in 1936 by the Fort Pitt Bridge Works of Pittsburgh, PA. A through truss was utilized for the main span and pony trusses were utilized at each end of the existing

structure. Originally, the bridge was known as Grace Bridge, but was later renamed to John Blue Bridge to recognize an early settler of the area. The area surrounding the existing bridge has been the site of many historical events in Hampshire County. During the American Civil War, an engagement occurred at the site of the Wire Bridge that the current truss bridge replaced.

The replacement structure will be 478' in length. It consists of three spans with the center span being the longest at 195'. The substructure design consists of semi-integral abutments, caisson foundations at each pier, and single columns with hammer-head caps. Superstructure will be steel girders, a concrete deck, and concrete parapets (barrier walls). When completed, the new structure will be similar in appearance to other newly constructed bridges throughout the state. While appearance is similar, construction is more difficult due to staged construction. The contractor is using a barge for access.



Staged construction is required due to site constraints including an archeologically sensitive area. During Stage 1 (current), foundations will be constructed followed by piers, approximately two-thirds of the pier caps, and one-half of the new bridge deck. Once Stage 1 is complete, traffic will be moved onto the new structure. Then the existing truss bridge will be demolished to allow for Stage 2 construction. Stage 2 construction will complete the pier caps, posttensioning of the pier caps, and the second half of the new bridge deck. Roadway approach work will also match the stages and be completed half-at-a-time. A temporary traffic signal system is in place and will remain in place until completion.

Two pile and lagging retaining walls will be constructed as part of the bridge replacement. The retaining wall to the North of the bridge will allow for shifting Route 28 to the West. It will support the roadway as it travels adjacent to John's Run. A second retaining wall on the South side of the bridge allows for shifting the roadway to the West while avoiding the archeologically sensitive area. Both retaining walls utilize rock anchors to tie-back the steel piles into bedrock. Such a tie-back system is not commonly used throughout the state.

Minor improvements will also occur for Long Road (CR 28/4) and Camp Cliffside Road (CR 28/5) at their intersections with Route 28.

Capital Midwestern Little League Thanks WVDOH

Andy Estep's I-64 pothole patching crew spent a recent rainy day cleaning up a hillside on WVDOH right-of-way, which runs between the interstate and a local little league field. The fence had sections missing, and Larry Abshire, president of the little league group, was concerned the area was a danger to the children who used the field. Kathy Rushworth, District 1 Maintenance Engineer, tracked down funding for the project. The newly cleaned hillside looks like just another hill, but that isn't how it looked before.



WV DOT Welcomes News FHWA Administrator

The West Virginia Department of Transportation is proud to work with Brigitte Mandel, the new Acting Division Administrator for the Federal Highway Administrations West Virginia Division.

A Civil Engineering graduate of Virginia Tech with a Master's Certificate in Project Management from George Washington University, Mandel will be managing the West Virginia Division



remotely from her office in Utah, where she is Deputy Division Administrator for the Utah Division. Mandel began her 90-day rotation for the West Virginia Division on March 15.

Mandel considered a career with WVDOH before deciding to take a job with the federal government.

Meet Your Chief Engineers: Ryland Musick

Ryland Musick is Chief Engineer of Programs for the West Virginia Department of Transportation, where he oversees the Planning Division, Programming Division and Strategic Systems Division for WV DOT. He oversees more than 100 employees.

Musick likens the three divisions he supervises to different parts of a single body. The Planning Division, he says, is like the hands, reaching out to the public and government entities relaying information about the numerous highway projects. The Programming Division is like the heart, drawing in the state and federal funding



needed to build highways and pumping it out to the rest of the body to get the job done. The Strategic Systems Division is like the eyes, reporting project information to the public so they can see what is taking place.

Musick has a BS in Civil Engineering from West Virginia Tech, a Master's in Engineering Management from Marshall University Graduate College and a PhD in Transportation Infrastructure from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute. When not working he plays a mean tenor sax and likes to ride jet skis and ATVs.

Thank you, WVDOH.

Dear Mr. Thorne,

We wanted to contact you about the absolutely wonderful job that Mr. Roger Kitsmiller and his crew did on the culvert at the end of our driveway. We live in Hampshire County and had this done work done on March 3rd, 2021. Mr. Kitsmiller and his crew were here early in the morning, actually a little before he had told us they were going to start our project! Both my husband and I spoke with Mr. Kitsmiller and he was so kind, courteous and genuinely enthusiastic about doing this project for us. We both could tell he and his crew took such great pride in their work! The quality of the job they did was extremely impressive. It was obvious they paid attention to every detail

from digging the ground, laying the pipe, gravel placement to the beautiful way they placed the stone around the culvert ends. They even replaced out mailbox better than we had installed it originally! We simply cannot say enough how pleasant this experience was and how pleased we both were with this whole process. In today's world it's so rare to find someone like Mr. Kitsmiller and his crew who are personable, hard working and genuinely take such pride in their work!

We so appreciate the amazing job that they all did! Roger and his crew are a true treasure and we appreciate them so much.

Sincerely, Bob and Tracy Carl



WV on the DOT Podcast

Available on the Soundcloud App.

New Shows: Thursday 4:00 p.m.

Or listen on our webpage: transportation.wv.gov



Bridge Safety Inspectors: Out in the Elements All Year

“We inspect everything from the streambed to the guardrail,” said WVDOH District 1 Bridge Inspector Harry O’Conner, who has been a bridge inspector for more than 12 years.

WVDOH State Bridge Engineer Tracy Brown said such attention to detail is what keeps West Virginia’s bridges safe. With DOH responsible for more than 7,000 bridges, a regular schedule of inspections is vital to ensure the safety of drivers.

Brown said most bridges in the state are inspected every two years, but might be inspected more frequently depending on the condition of the bridge.

Brown said the regular inspections are vital in determining the condition of the state’s bridges, setting or adjusting weight limits or occasionally bringing bridges out of service until they can be repaired or replaced.

“The bridge safety inspectors are our eyes and ears on the ground,” Brown said. “Everything that we do is based on the safety of the public. That eclipses everything.”

O’Conner said there are about 1,200 bridges in District 1, which includes Boone, Clay, Kanawha, Mason and Putnam counties alone, and closer to 1,500 if you count the ones shorter than 20 feet.

Every single one must be inspected regularly. And it doesn’t matter if it’s a multimillion-dollar bridge on the interstate or a backroad bridge over a minor creek – each must be inspected with the same attention to detail.

On a recent bridge inspection over Manilla Creek near Poca, bridge inspectors used long aluminum poles to check whether material was washed out beneath the bridge abutments.



The bridge consists of a pavement deck over a wooden bed, supported by several steel I-beams. A pillar in the middle of the creek supports the center of the bridge.

They looked for cracks in the concrete. All measurements were meticulously written down, and the areas they checked marked with red spray paint.

Inspectors paid a lot of attention to the bridge’s steel superstructure. Using small sledgehammers, they knocked as much rust as they could off several sections of the steel beams.

Once the loose rust scales were removed, they used rulers and calipers to determine how much good steel was left under the rust. Again, measurements were written down and the areas they checked marked with red paint.

After a while, inspection crews can almost predict what they’re going to find by sound.

“You’ll get a high-pitched ring out of good metal,” O’Conner said. “Bad metal will kind of thud.”

During the inspection, a local dog wandered onto the bridge site and had to be fussed over by the bridge crew. That happens a lot, O’Conner said.

“Once up in Clay County we had a deer come up to us,” he said. “He was letting us pet him by the time we left the bridge.”

Training and Development: Upcoming Schedule



- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| April 1, 2021 | Civility Begins with You |
| April 15, 2021 | Excel Basics |
| May 6, 2021 | Dr. Who (Keirsey Temperament) |
| May 19, 2021 | Introduction to Site Manager |
| June 17, 2021 | Word Basic |



Go Orange: Work Zone Safety Awareness



Every year, WVDOH takes a day to remind our people to make work zone safety a top priority, with every work zone, every day by asking employees to wear orange. This year, Go Orange Day will be an extensive, statewide effort to remind each other and join together in keeping “Heads Up; Phones Down” — to save each other’s actual lives. So, heads up, it’s not too early to starting thinking ORANGE.



Visit the WVDOT Online
Newsroom at:

[Transportation.wv.gov/communications/pressrelease](https://transportation.wv.gov/communications/pressrelease)

***Vaccinations.**

***Testing.**

***Distancing.**

***Masks.**

Protect each other.



Bridges: In the Words of Leaders

West Virginia Bridge Design and Build Contest 2021 finalists describe the importance of bridges.

West Virginia is one of the most unique states in the entire country due to its geography and topography. If it were not for bridges, our state would not be traversable.

West Virginia is so beautiful, but without bridges to connect our many peaks and cross our valleys and waterways, most of it would never be seen.

All the bridges in West Virginia are purposeful, but the uniqueness of its bridges is what I really like. From the many wooden covered bridges (Philippi, Indian Creek, etc.) to the massive New River Gorge Arch bridge, West Virginia's bridge designs are varied and beautiful.

But my absolute favorite bridges in West Virginia are the ones that my dad helps build. Like the Harmon Creek Bridge in Weirton, WV. They took an "old" triple pier bridge and built a new single pier bridge. They built it in two stages, so traffic could still travel across during construction. Attached is what it looked like when it was finished and a picture of me visiting one of his jobsites.

-Jillian Campbell

All over the world you will find bridges. These bridges can range from towering arch bridges like the New River Gorge Bridge to small bridges made out of small pieces of wood that just cross the stream in your backyard. The bottom line is that bridges are extremely important in our world. They make previously uncrossable terrain now a part of our everyday travel plans. They are also very relevant in the industrial and tourism industries. West Virginia's tourism industry is particularly affected by bridges. Even though we are "Wild and Wonderful," West Virginia is often looked over by many people. Bridges such as the New River Gorge bring in thousands of tourists every year. It's the beautiful bridges in our state that bring light to our beautiful landscape, natural wonders, and loving communities. Many people assume these qualities are consistent across the United States, but when you are crossing a bridge in West Virginia, you are saturated in the natural environment and will fall in love with our state.

Personally, our favorite bridge is the New River Gorge Bridge. We have traveled here several times

and have fell in love with the bridge, environment, and community. We were blessed with the opportunity to do the bridge walk. This was a life changing experience, it opened our eyes to see how interesting bridges could be. We were fascinated with how intricate the design of the bridge was while still being able to observe the landscape and natural beauty of our state. This bridge brings in thousands of tourists every year for Bridge Day. This is an amazing experience and showcases the amazing things West Virginia has to offer.

In conclusion, bridges are amazing. They are piers to the nations travel industry. More importantly they bring tourists from all across the world to West Virginia which helps show how amazing our state is. Bridges show how amazing our state is which is why they put the New River Gorge Bridge on the quarter!

-Garrett Ferguson and Jonathan Lewis

Bridges without a doubt are a quintessential part of travel, especially in West Virginia. With over 6,636 bridges in West Virginia. Not including the all-important railroad bridges, city and county bridges, Turnpike bridges and many more. For one of the smaller states that is a massive amount, but in part it is due to our abundance of mountains and valleys. Bridges are one of the only ways we can preserve our natural architecture and yet still allow the ease of travel. Most of these brides are not the huge metal or covered structures we iconically think of when we think of bridges, yet we travel over them every day, most of the time without thinking or noticing. This just goes to show how essential they are and how natural they seem here in West Virginia. They are a part of every day life.

-Trinity Trent

Bridges in West Virginia are important because we have so many rivers and streams that you would not be able to cross without a bridge. These bridges are what link the towns, cities, and small communities in West Virginia together. The bridges over these streams and rivers provide access for motor vehicles, motorcycles, trains, and pedestrians. Along with that we have such rugged terrain and mountains that without bridges travel would be much more difficult or impossible.

- Justin Lester

(Continued, next page.)



West Virginia Bridge Design and Build Contest 2021 finalists describe the importance of bridges.

Bridges play an extremely important role in our state. The numerous hills, valleys, creeks, and rivers that are common in Appalachia have made areas hard to travel. They are now accessible to everyone due to the construction of bridges. Bridges such as the New River Gorge Bridge in Fayetteville are massive and impressive feats of engineering, but even the smallest bridge can have the same impact on our travel throughout this beautiful state. Even today, four bridges were used to participate in this contest. Bridges assist in everything from personal travel to large scale transportation of goods and resources, and many people are unaware of the scale of their usefulness.

-Caelan Adkins, Kiah Napier

When are the most iconic and defining architectural marvels in our beloved state of West Virginia is the New River Gorge bridge, upon his viewing instills stills in every true Mountaineer a sense of belonging and home. This bridge is so celebrated that it has a state festival in honor: bridge day. Sammy Bridges have always instilled a sense of wonder and exploration. It seem that to go to any major city in West Virginia we cross a bridge a symbol that to me came to represent opportune.

-Matthew Williams

Bridges in West Virginia signify dedication, monumental modernization, and self-sufficiency. From the New River Gorge Bridge to the occasional small-town low-water bridges, each one represents the true beauty of our home state. The engineers that build these phenomenal structures are the backbone of our state. Without them, we would not be able to have the luxuries that we experience every single day of our lives.

Bridges allow industries to boom. By building these formations across our beautiful state, our businesses and tourists can get from point A to point B safely, efficiently, and quickly. Whilst in the process of traveling, these voyagers can have the experience of a lifetime on our West Virginia bridges. For example, at the Belpre Bridge in Parkersburg, WV, one can see the entirety of the Ohio River along with the beautiful parks of our state on the east side of the bridge. This truly captures the sheer beauty and astounding nature

of our state. West Virginia Bridges are inspiring. Younger generations will be able to live the rest of their lives with these structures that contribute greatly to our beautiful culture.

-Keegan Bennett

Bridges are an important component of West Virginia's infrastructure. Given the rugged terrain, bridges play a key role in connecting our people, our communities, and allowing for resources to be delivered in an expeditious fashion. My favorite bridge, like many others, is the New River Gorge Bridge in Fayette County. Since I was a young girl, I have had the opportunity to walk across and even zipline from this world-famous bridge many times. Thanks to this competition, and friendships developed over the years with the WV DOT and ASCE, my family has enjoyed visiting the New River Gorge Bridge and the Long Point overlook.

-Paisley Tabor

Why do we need bridges in West Virginia, and why are they important? We need bridges in WV because it creates a safer, shorter path over bodies of water. Also, West Virginia generates much of its revenue from tourists coming to bridge day, or to admire the many famous West Virginia Covered bridges. My favorite bridge in WV is the 2nd oldest bridge in west virginia, the Van Metre Ford Bridge, because it is located in my native berkeley county.

-Tyler Luketic

Bridges are vital in West Virginia because they connect communities. In West Virginia, we thrive off of being around people and seeing each other. Without bridges our opportunities to be together would be limited. To see one another we would have to travel longer distances by going through mountains and valleys instead of just going from one mountain to another. Our bridges are the reason why I can travel from Mercer County to Monongalia County in four hours rather than four days. Bridges are also important to our heritage. The New River Bridge gives us beautiful views, a way to pass over the Gorge, and is the location of the Bridge Day Celebration. The Point Pleasant Bridge is an icon in our Mountaineer Story because it gave us the folktale of the beloved Moth Man. Without our bridges our Country Roads could not take us home.

-Mary Lilly

(Continued, next page.)



Bridges: In the Words of Leaders—Page 3

West Virginia Bridge Design and Build Contest 2021 finalists describe the importance of bridges.

When you hear West Virginia you may not automatically think of bridges, but you should. Bridges make West Virginia the great state it is. There are many bridges across the world, but in my opinion, they do not compare to the one's in this great state. They are incredibly important to West Virginia for many reasons. My favorite bridge out of every bridge in the world is right here in West Virginia. Bridge builders and the bridges they build are the reason both visitors and those born here alike can experience West Virginia and the reason many towns here are still alive. Bridges are incredibly important in West Virginia for a variety of reasons. One reason they are important is because they link our communities together. Bridges make our whole state one community and makes us feel connected to every town and city in our state. Without bridges we would not be able to get to some of the beautiful places in West Virginia. Bridges allow people from outside West Virginia to experience the true beauty of it. Bridges in West Virginia also help our economy. If it was not for bridges, it would cut off many scenic areas of West Virginia. Without these scenic areas it would make visitors not be able to visit. This would hurt the places in our great state that rely on tourists. They also allow transportation of our natural resources to get to its destination, which is incredibly important. There are many beautiful bridges in the world from the iconic Tower Bridge in London to the

San Francisco Bridge. However, the bridge I love the most is right here in my home state, West Virginia. The bridge I love the most out of them all is the Wheeling Suspension Bridge. I love this bridge for many reasons. One reason I love it is because of its beauty. The architectural design of it is gorgeous. I also love it for its history. It was once the longest suspension bridge in the world from 1849 to 1851. The original Wheeling Suspension Bridge was destroyed by a tornado only five years after it was built, but the new bridge includes the same history of the original one. The history of West Virginia fascinates me and since the Wheeling Suspension Bridge is one of the most historical sites in West Virginia it makes me love it even more. I also love it because it doesn't allow cars on it, like most bridges in West Virginia do. It allows visitors to truly take in the breathtaking views of West Virginia. In conclusion, bridges are incredibly important for West Virginia. They allow us as a community, as well as others outside of it, to connect. They also help our economy. West Virginia would not be West Virginia without its bridges. One of the bridges of West Virginia that makes our great state the state it is the Wheeling Suspension Bridge. The Wheeling Suspension Bridge provides visitors to soak in the stunning views of West Virginia. I am so utterly thankful for the bridges and those who built the bridges in West Virginia because without them my home would not be the same.

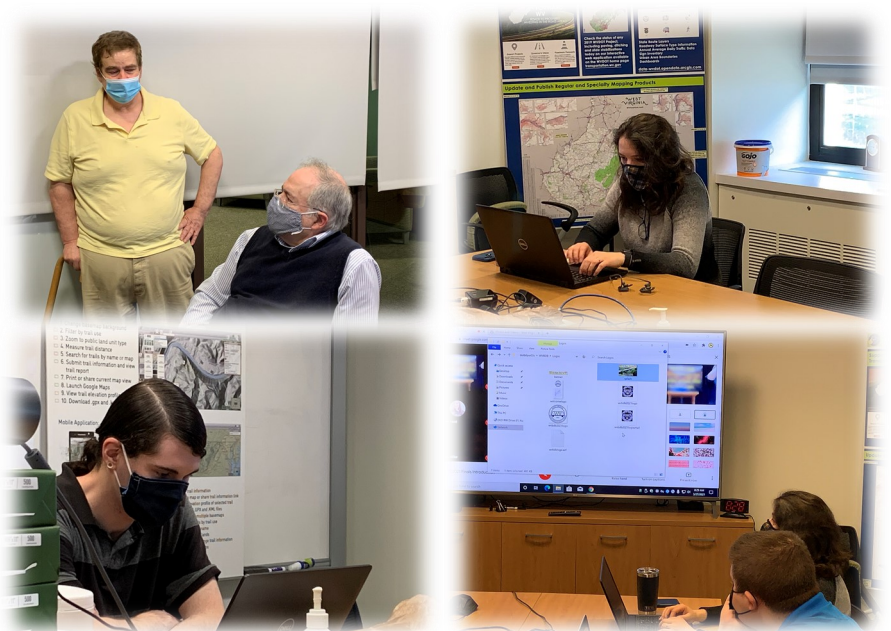
-Emma Sherman

Behind the Scenes

A lot of good-hearted folks worked to make this year's virtual West Virginia Bridge Design and Build Contest a success for our dedicated students.

Here are a few scenes of the team working together to make the final competition happen. Pictured here are Marshall Burgess, WVU Professor "Dr. G," Fernanda D-Agostin, Brandon Bragg, and Josh Sizemore.

Also, special thanks to Tigra Yang, Hussein Elkhansa, Dustin Fezell, Benjy Simpson, Steven Leftwich, Ryland Musick, and all others who participated. The contest didn't have to happen this year, but you—and many others—made it go.



Going Through Changes? Read This!

By Natasha White

Changes happen in life, and with those changes often comes a to-do list that can seem overwhelming. On that list are often changes to consider regarding your various insurance policies, and the primary responsibility lies with each policyholder to take the proper steps to report those changes.

Do not let the insurance changes overwhelm you, though! Your Benefit Coordinators and Specialists can help you with those changes.

It is important that all Qualifying Events are reported immediately, however, it is vital that we all understand that the Qualifying Event of Divorce is of utmost importance to be reported promptly.

Page 32 in the most current version of the PEIA Summary Plan Description offers a clear explanation of the timeframe for reporting:

“Qualifying events which end eligibility (such as divorce) must be reported immediately. For purposes of eligibility, the term “immediately” shall mean as soon as practically possible and, in no case, greater than thirty (30) days from the date of the event, e.g. divorce.”

Divorce is the only situation in which there is not an actual “grace period” which consists of the month of event and the two consecutively following calendar months. As indicated in the Summary Plan Description, it is of utmost importance that the Qualifying Event of Divorce be reported *immediately*.

Why, you may ask, is it such a big deal? Well, not only do you likely not want to continue to cover the cost of having an ex-spouse on your coverage for various reasons; the Agency cannot continue to pay the higher employer portion of premiums, nor can PEIA continue to pay claims for ineligible dependents.

To not remove an ineligible ex-spouse from coverage immediately is legally considered to be insurance fraud and could result in a collections process to obtain reimbursement from the policyholder for the overpayments made by the Agency and PEIA for the ineligible dependents.

Please, do not wring your hands and wonder what on Earth to do about making changes.

The DOH Personnel Division’s Central Benefits Section is available to assist you, as well as the assigned Benefit Coordinators within your District or Division office. Help is only a call or email away.

Bluefield Transit Transfer Station

Gov. Jim Justice; U.S. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va. and West Virginia Transportation Secretary Byrd White were on hand for the groundbreaking of the \$2.7 million Bluefield Area Regional Transit Regional Transfer Station in Bluefield on Monday, March 29, 2021.

The project, in the works since 2017, provides a central location for passengers on BAT’s nine bus routes to transfer buses, use the restroom and grab a bite to eat. Previously, BAT passengers in downtown Bluefield have had no warm, safe and dry place to get out of the elements. The station will also give Greyhound a place to pick up and drop off passengers.

“It’s a great benefit to the citizenry and helps bring BAT into the 21st century,” said Bill Robinson, executive director of the West Virginia Department of Transportation’s Division of Public Transit. The station is named in honor of BAT Director Larlyn Patrick McKinney.

West Virginia Department of Public Transit has been working diligently on this project; which will soon be a reality.



Byrd White: Secretary of Transportation



DMV Reminds Motorists: Avoid Distracted Driving

WEST VIRGINIA GOVERNOR'S HIGHWAY SAFETY PROGRAM COORDINATES

DISTRACTED DRIVING AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

SAFER EMPLOYEES, SAFER ROADS: DON'T DRIVE DISTRACTED

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. The West Virginia Governor's Highway Safety Program (GHSP) is partnering with law enforcement agencies across the state for statewide distracted driving high visibility enforcement efforts.

In addition to coordinating enforcement efforts across the state, the GHSP is focusing public education efforts on making sure people know that distracted driving is not only unsafe but is illegal in West Virginia. If a driver is cited in violation of West Virginia's distracted driving laws, the fine is \$100 for the first offense.

Not that long ago, the phrase "distracted driving" conjured up images of drivers eating, smoking, changing a radio station, or reaching for something that had fallen from the seat. Though all of those actions still result in distracted driving, the nature of distracted driving has changed dramatically in recent years. Cell phone use enables drivers to access the internet and social media sites and has caused otherwise safe drivers to become highly distracted and that puts them and everyone else on the road in danger. Many people don't realize how precarious distracted driving really is. In 2019, distracted driving claimed 3,142 lives.

Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of job-related deaths, and approximately 10 percent of those are the result of distracted driving. Employers often absorb the costs and liability associated with these crashes. Employees must contend with injuries, medical bills, time off from work, damaged vehicles, and other issues stemming from crashes caused by distracted driving.

Whether you are driving a state vehicle for work purposes or your own personal vehicle for your own travel, remember these tips to always drive focused:

Set the GPS coordinates before leaving. Plan routes in

advance so driving remains the focus.

Know the vehicle's features before the drive. Know where the windshield wipers, climate control adjustments, and radio settings are in advance, so the driver's eyes stay on the road.

Put your cell phone on "do not disturb" or turn it off before driving. Recent research from the National Safety Council shows that hands-free devices are as much of a distraction as hand-held devices. Place the phone out of sight to remove the temptation to text or talk while driving. Pull over in a safe place when a call or text is necessary and cannot wait.

Keep mental distractions in check. Never drive angry, fatigued, or drowsy. Always redirect attention back to the road if daydreaming begins while driving.

Prevent in-car distractions. Never reach for dropped items while driving. Keep loose items contained so they don't slide around while steering or braking.

Avoid eating, drinking, and grooming while driving. Multitasking behind the wheel increases the likelihood of crashes. Pull off the road to eat. Consider using a straw for drinks. Never apply make-up or do other personal grooming while driving.

A little planning before you're on the road—and a commitment to driving focused—will make all users of West Virginia roads safer.

Did you know? Each state is required by federal statute to have a highway safety program. West Virginia's program falls under the Division of Motor Vehicles. Our mission is to reduce crashes, fatalities, and injuries on West Virginia's roadways. We do this through concerted media and enforcement efforts in an attempt to change driving behaviors. We want YOU to be safe on the roadways so that we ALL are safe on the roadways.

For more information, please visit the dmv.wv.gov/ghsp or visit the GHSP's social media channels at facebook.com/wvghsp or twitter.com/WVhighwaysafety.

Cut Here. Save This Photo. Your Grandchildren Will Someday Ask You: "What Was a Pothole?"



TRET Program: A Path to a Better Career

Lecia Atkins had taken some college classes, but hadn't finished when she first came to work for the West Virginia Division of Highways in 1995.

"I started as an Office Assistant 2 at Materials," said Atkins, who works in District 1.

Audra Giberson had taken two years of courses at Concord College when she came to DOH in 2006. "I started out as a maintenance secretary," said Giberson, who works in District 10.

Atkins worked at several departments within DOH, advancing as she went. Giberson had moved up to an administrative secretary when her District Manager suggested she look into the Transportation Engineering Technician Training program, or TRET.

"At that time I was working two jobs," Giberson said. "He said I could earn more by going into construction and the TRET program."

Both Atkins and Giberson decided to give TRET a try.



TRET Program Coordinator Kim Ballard said the program started in 2000 to recruit new engineering technician talent to DOH, by encouraging workers who might have an interest in engineering to pursue a career as a technician.

"We actually send them to school and pay for their school and their books, and we give them time to do the schooling during work time," Ballard said. Once participants take all their courses and rack up 10 to 12 years of experience, they reach Level 5 of the program.

Ballard said about 30 employees have taken advantage of the TRET program. Atkins and Giberson are among those who have reached Level 5.

"I figured that I would be a secretary forever," Atkins said. "I never thought about changing careers or moving up like I did."

"I had gone about as far as I could in clerical," Giberson said. "I would have had to go into administration or something to advance. This program took me in a totally different direction. "I don't see it as a big deal," she said. "I just see it as growing."

Wave Two: Migration into WVOASIS

By Kelley McClanahan

It has been a long ride on wave two, but it is all about to come to a smooth landing on shore when a HUB demonstration takes place on March 30th and 31st. This demonstration will be with DOH management and representatives from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to review DOH's new HUB system as it works in conjunction with Federal systems to meet Federal requirements and processes to receive FHWA certification. HUB is the center of all DOH projects, tying all aspects together, with respect to, the projects, the project schedules, expenditures, progress, and status. HUB is project specific with project initiatives and authorizations required following planned procedures and processes. This vision that began in 2017 is about to reach fruition. A tentative Go Live date for HUB is June 7th, contingent on FHWA certification.

Training for HUB has started, and people can still sign up for training. You can email Tressie Lopez and copy Mary Queen to get registered today.

But that is not all the good news, the HRM Time and Leave Project is also going to be demonstrated on March 31st. A tentative Go Live date for the new time entry system (TIME I) is set for May 24th, contingent upon FHWA certification.

Training for timekeepers and reviewer/approvers will begin after April 12th and end by May 10th. At this time, those who have been identified will be contacted by the Payroll team with dates and times of trainings scheduled.

DOH has big things on the horizon. Some exciting things, some hard things, but all things moving our Division forward to a great future.

