



MARCH

Maintenance Madness!

Editor's Note: The following is intended to be read in the voice of an overly enthusiastic sportscaster.

Gov. Jim Justice and Secretary of Transportation Jimmy Wriston, P.E., recently announced **the tipoff** to the 2024 West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) Core Maintenance Program, marking another significant stride in the state's commitment to infrastructure upkeep and investment.

Applying the **full-court press** to potholes, as over 30,000 potholes have already been patched along 4,000 miles of roadway as part of Operation R.I.P. Potholes, the program is **on its way to another win** as it aims to continue the momentum of prioritizing core maintenance during the upcoming paving season.

Core maintenance is a **roster** of activities that include patching and maintenance of paved roads; maintenance of gravel roads; ditching and other activities to make sure roadways are drained properly; mowing, brush-cutting, and clearing trees and branches from over roadways **to play defense** against water,

keeping it away from road surfaces and help wet roads dry faster.

Core maintenance has been on WVDOT's to-do list since the 1980s, but Gov. Justice and Wriston made core maintenance a top priority. No WVDOT crews **have been sitting on the bench** with the continued funding, leadership, and support of roadway maintenance.

The 2024 WVDOT Project Map was also announced recently as the agency is set for **another successful season**. The map tracks not only core maintenance projects in every community and every county in the Mountain State, but also lists every paving project, bridge project, slide repair project, and Roads to Prosperity project scheduled for the year. Data will be updated every two weeks, so citizens can look at what projects are planned on their road, in their community, and follow them from start to finish, **seeing results** in live time.

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Check Your Vehicle for Recalls

While you may think your vehicle is perfectly safe, it could be subject to important safety recalls. In fact, in 2022, there were 1,050 safety recalls affecting more than 31 million vehicles and motor-vehicle related equipment in the United States. Fortunately, it's easy to check to see if your vehicle is among those affected by safety recalls.

Vehicle Safety Recalls Week runs from Monday, March 4, through Sunday, March 10, 2024. The West Virginia Governor's Highway Safety Program (GHSP) and the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) are reminding drivers about important safety recalls.

Visit nhtsa.gov/recalls and enter your vehicle's 17-digit Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to find out if your vehicle has open safety recalls. You can find your VIN on the lower part of your car's driver's side windshield. The VIN is also on your car's registration card.

"Getting unsafe vehicles off the road is a key ingredient to safety and saving lives," said GHSP Director Jack McNeely. "A recall means that something about the product presents a danger to the safety or health of the consumers who have it."

Drivers should check for vehicle recalls twice a year. They should

add, "check for safety recalls" when turning clocks ahead or backward, when doing other important things like checking smoke detector batteries. You can also sign up for recall alerts on the NHTSA website. You will get an email if your vehicle is part of a future recall.

Or download NHTSA's SaferCar app, which tells you about recalls and directs you to local dealerships who can do the vehicle repairs. Once you download the app, you can put in your vehicle's VIN, and information about your tires, car seats, and other automotive equipment. NHTSA will send you an alert about any safety recalls. The app is available for iOS and Android.

Even though vehicle manufacturers send out alerts and warnings by mail and email, millions of recalled vehicles never get fixed. That puts drivers, passengers, and others at risk. Drivers who think their vehicle has a safety-related defect that isn't covered by a current recall can contact NHTSA online at nhtsa.gov or by calling the agency's Vehicle Safety Hotline at 888-327-4236. Sometimes, one complaint can spark a safety recall.

Safe Cars Save Lives. It's important to get safety-related repairs done immediately to keep yourself and others safe on the road.

Maintenance Madness!

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"In seven short years, under Governor Justice's leadership, we went from not being able to tell you what our people were doing out there to now being able to tell you how many potholes we've patched daily and weekly," Secretary Wriston said. "The changes we've implemented will pay dividends for the people of West Virginia for generations to come."

In 2021, the WVDOT completed about 82 percent of their core maintenance. **Like a well-oiled offense**, in 2023, eight out of 10 districts got 100 percent of their work done, with an overall average of about 97 percent.

"We strive to be perfect," Wriston said. "We're going to shoot for 100 percent in all 10 districts this year."

All the core maintenance being performed in March will be **madness** and a sure **slam dunk** for West Virginians!

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



Local Backroads "Asphalt Heaven"

Motorcycle enthusiast Scott Williams has graced the pages of "WVDOT Today!" before, gushing about the suitability of West Virginia's country roads for pleasure riding.

Now Williams, a contributing editor to the online publication "Rider Magazine," has shared his enthusiasm with an online article about a recent excursion to the Mountain State in an article titled, "Asphalt Heaven: Riding West Virginia Backroads."

"My favorite motorcycle dance floors are smooth asphalt ribbons that snake over mountains and along waterways, and some of the best I've found anywhere are West Virginia backroads," Williams writes in the article, which can be found at ridermagazine.com.

For those of you reading online, you can find the article [here](#).

"Appropriately called the Mountain State, it's where the Allegheny, Blue Ridge, and Appalachian mountain ranges converge. With the highest average elevation of any state east

of the Mississippi River, the roads curve over and around a rugged, varied landscape. ...For riders who love to lean, it's idyllic."



Williams, who was so enthusiastic about his experience in West Virginia that he volunteered to be a guest on the "WV On the DOT" podcast (Episode 150), was particularly taken with the quality of many of the roads he traversed.

In the article, Williams attributes the generally good condition of Mountain State backroads to Gov. Jim Justice's \$2.8 billion Roads to Prosperity construction and maintenance program, and to Mountain Rides, a cooperative effort between the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) and Department of Tourism to create tourist routes specifically groomed for motorcyclists and other road tourists.

Mountain Rides routes, Williams noted, "are in excellent condition, have good shoulders and guardrails, and run through beautiful scenery."



To learn more about the Mountain Rides routes, made possible by a partnership between West Virginia Department of Transportation and West Virginia Tourism, check out wvtourism.com!



New Training Center Takes Shape



A state-of-the-art training center is under construction in Building 5 in Charleston.

“We want to build a training center to bring everybody to the central office to do our own training instead of paying someone

else to do it,” said Hussein Elkhansa, West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) Chief Technology Officer.

Elkhansa said the WVDOT’s emphasis on data-driven decision making requires that all personnel be up to date with current techniques and technologies.

As such, the new training center will feature individual laptop computers, state-of-the-art microphone and camera systems, and will feature two 96-inch TVs and an 89-inch “smart” TV with touch screen technology.

The center is big enough to accommodate 35 to 40 people, with the ability to be split for smaller class sizes.

Elkhansa hopes to have the training center up and running by summer.

Remember Byrd’s Blank Sheet of Paper?

Just a few short years ago, then Secretary of Transportation, Byrd White, told us about a blank sheet of paper. Start fresh and design what you want — like a blank sheet of paper. Fast forward, we’ve had some amazing years! Our time has been marked by ribbon cuttings and groundbreaking ceremonies, by new equipment, by learning the right way to mill and fill a pothole, ROADeo winning! Babydog with her own little shovel! Catching up on slide repair with our own drilling crews!

WVDOT Today! Newsletter is asking you to think about the biggest wins in you’ve been part of. How do you measure those wins? Start with a year that’s significant to you and think — where was I then? Where am I now? Share it with us next month!

And if you don’t have a blank sheet of paper to start with, you can start below....

(Day) (Month) (Year) was a significant marker of time for me, because that’s when....

Since then...

The best day of all was...

I’m proud to work with....

Because they do great things, like...

The win that took the most work was...

I knew our work was worth something when...

What brought out the best in my co-workers was...

Operation R.I.P. Potholes Update!



In late January, Gov. Jim Justice and the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) realized a predicted long stretch of unseasonably warm weather would give the WVDOH an opportunity to jump start the traditional spring pothole patching season. A couple of bad winter storms, followed by thawing and freezing, had led to a bad patch of potholes around the state.

Working with local asphalt plants, the WVDOH made arrangements for plants in the Kanawha Valley, Princeton, and Morgantown to open early, allowing access to hot asphalt to make permanent pothole repairs in five of 10 WVDOH highway districts.

“Our major focus this time of year is trying to address the potholes causing the greatest amount of danger for our drivers,” said Joe Pack, P.E., Chief Engineer of District Operations. “Our goal is to get out in front of the major issues so we can make repairs in a timely fashion, so it doesn’t impact the drivers.”

Although a few cold and a few rainy days put a damper on milling and filling operations, WVDOH road crews in District 1, District 2, District 4, District 9, and District 10 have been patching almost nonstop since late January and early February.

Gov. Justice dubbed the patching blitz Operation R.I.P. Potholes. Since Gov. Justice and the WVDOH announced Operation R.I.P. Potholes on Tuesday, January 30, 2024, WVDOH road crews have patched 30,376 potholes along 4,090 miles of road. That’s the distance from Charleston to Europe, encompassing all of the United Kingdom, Spain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, most of Germany, half of Norway, and part of Sweden.

WVDOH crews are not just throwing hot asphalt into potholes and tamping it down, but are milling and filling the holes to make permanent repairs.

First, the area around the potholes is milled out to make a squared-off hole. Then the old debris is swept out of the hole to leave a clean surface for the new asphalt to bind to. Then a sticky layer of tacking compound is put into the hole to help the asphalt stick.

Finally, hot asphalt is put in the hole and rolled out flat. When properly done, patches done using this method will last for years.

A Day in the Life of a DMV Customer Service Agent

By Rob Macko

The West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has 26 regional offices to serve the citizens of the Mountain State. They are staffed by hard-working customer service agents, who are the backbone of the entire operation. The customer service agents do it all. They help customers acquire or renew DMV documents like driver's licenses, registrations, and titles. The agents also take turns working as examiners for driving tests.

To get a sense of what DMV customer service agents go through, I recently visited two regional DMV offices. I went to the state's largest office in Kanawha City and one of the state's smallest offices in Spencer. I worked with several agents to see what a typical day is like and to get their thoughts on some of the positive changes at the DMV.

Thanks to the leadership of Gov. Jim Justice, Secretary of Transportation Jimmy Wriston, P.E., and DMV Commissioner Everett Frazier, the DMV updated its computer system, increased the number of driver's services that could be done online, administered more than 100,000 online driver's license knowledge tests, and created a system where customers could book appointments online.

"We're always telling people, 'Do the appointments,' then you can get in quicker," said Joanna Asbury, a customer service agent at the Kanawha City DMV regional office.

All these changes have drastically reduced wait times for DMV customers by 50 percent.

One of the biggest changes gave customer service agents more money in their paychecks. The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) brought the DMV into its Classification and Compensation Career Plan in January 2022. This change meant that every DMV employee received a raise and a path forward to a successful career.

"It's been a major boost in morale," said Cecil Loyd, the Executive Director of DMV Regional Office Operations.



"It's allowed us to get more employees coming in. More quality employees because they can actually make more money now coming in. They want to stay. They're happier now because they're making more money. They went from feeling underappreciated because of how low they were paid to, 'Hey I'm actually doing something important!'"

Loyd told me about one of his managers with more than 30 years of experience whose husband had passed away the summer before the raise kicked in. He assured her that changes were coming. "She got her letter and she started crying and actually called me and said, 'You don't understand how important this is. This saved my house.' Cause she almost doubled her salary!"

"It was a massive morale boost and it just validated that we were working hard and we did deserve recognition like that," said Barbara Randolph, the Spencer Regional Office Manager. "I think it helps with employee retention because they don't want to find other jobs now that pay better, because we are very competitive with that now."

"When I first started the pay wasn't very good," explained Susan Hughes, who has been a customer service agent in the Spencer office since 2010. "I didn't think it was, but it's good now. I'm not going to complain," she said with a giggle.

"I know this might sound kind of silly, but it made my job more enjoyable," Becky Bragg told me. She's a customer service agent who has worked in the Spencer office for 18 years. "All the responsibilities we have. I felt like we should have been paid a little bit more and comparable to other states, so it was a great morale booster."

Larry Ray also appreciates the raise that he received and the pay increases offered in the Classification and Compensation Career Plan.

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DMV Customer Service, Continued

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Ray has worked as a customer service agent in the Kanawha City office for seven years. "It seems like it helped out," he said. "There's not a lot of people leaving like there was before."

That stability means that customer service agents bring lots of experience and knowledge with them to work every day. The end result benefits the customers.

"Everybody was really nice," said customer Jacob Quick of Charleston. "In contrast to being here years ago, yes. This has been a very pleasant experience."

"It was the best I had so far here," remarked customer Donald Thomas of Jackson County. "I walked in. Told them what I

VISION OF MOTOR VEHICLE



needed. Was walking to my chair. Never even got to sit down. And I'm outta there. I wasn't in there for 10 minutes at the most."

I found the customer service agents to be friendly and happy knowing that they're helping their fellow West Virginians get the documents they need to legally drive on our roads.

They wanted to make sure that their current customers were

taken care of and satisfied with the results before moving onto the next one. They did their jobs with a sense of pride and professionalism, and thanks to the Classification and Compensation Career Plan, they are now rewarded for their hard work with bigger paychecks.

WVDOH Wins Award for Wellsburg



The West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) and Flatiron Construction will receive one of eight prestigious Grand Awards at the 2024 American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) Engineering Excellence Awards Gala Dinner on Wednesday, May 15, 2024, in Washington, D.C.

The WVDOH and Flatiron decided to build the 830-foot main span of the bridge on the bank of the Ohio River just upstream from the bridge site and float the bridge into place in April 2021. It was the largest bridge float ever attempted in North America.

The grand opening of the bridge, which joins the communities of Wellsburg, West Virginia and Brilliant, Ohio, was held on Wednesday, September 21, 2023.





Friday, February 23, 2024, was Motosports Day at the West Virginia State Capitol in Charleston. More than 30 vehicles, including road racing, rally, off road, and oval track cars, were on display outside the Capitol building, and motosports enthusiasts and organizations met with state lawmakers and officials.

As a rule, the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) supports the motosports industry.

“With an emphasis on safety,” stipulated Perry Keller, Chief Economic Development Officer for the WVDOT.

In 2023, the West Virginia Legislature passed the Motorsport Responsibly Act, allowing racing and other motosports on state roadways. But the new law also came with a set of rules and regulations.

“We have a whole process to go through,” Perry stressed. Racing on West Virginia streets and highways is open only to accredited organizations with proper training, safety equipment, and insurance. Motosports organizations must also coordinate with local governments, emergency services, businesses, schools and other entities.

VISION AWARDS

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

Jonathan Shaffer — Central Office

Jeffrey Apicella — DMV

James Coffman — District 9

Eric Tipton — DMV

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.

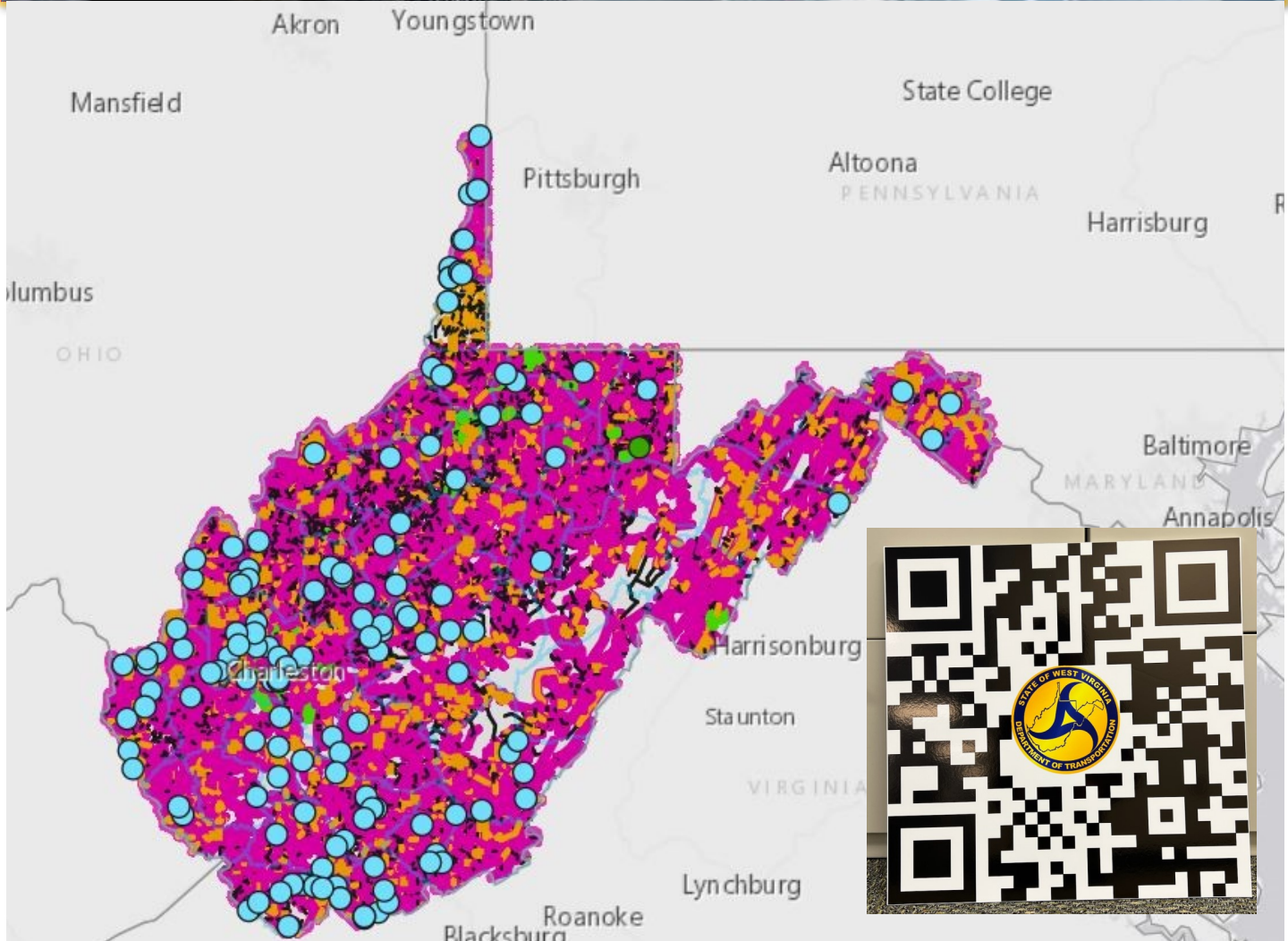
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How to Use the Online CORE Maintenance Map



1. Visit Transportation.wv.gov webpage
2. Click on Project Map (or scan QR Code)
3. Click on the search bar and type in your address.
4. If a road or street near yours is color coded, there's a project.
5. Different colors indicate the project status.
6. Tabs at the top take you to different kinds of projects.
7. Be proud of the work your WVDOT is doing in your neighborhood, wherever you are!

