

WVDOT Today!



November 2021—Volume 3: Issue 11

ROUTE 35 *The Final 14.6 Miles*



The air was full of sunlight, confetti and the sound of marching bands as smiling people gathered on Veteran’s Day to cut the ribbon on the final 14.6-mile section of four lane Route 35.

Governor Jim Justice, Senator Shelley Moore Capito, Senator Joe Manchin, and Congresswoman Carol Miller were present for the celebration. Secretary Wriston, and the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs Edward “Ted” Diaz also offered remarks. District 1 Manager, Arlie Matney, was chosen to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Marching bands from Point Pleasant and Winfield high schools entertained the crowd, along with the show choir from Winfield.

The project required a completely new alignment for the highway, included 10 new bridges, and a new interchange where Route 35 meets WV 869. Crews moved 16.8 million cubic yards

of earth, laid more than 73,000 tons of asphalt, and put in more than 38,000 feet of drainage pipe for the project. The most impressive thing about the project, though, is the immediate improvement in safety for the traveling public and farmers in the beautiful river valley; who have shared the two lane road with 18-wheelers for decades.

Also on hand for the celebration were WVDOH crews who volunteered to work on their day off to make the day a success. Setting up chairs, handling the confetti cannons, putting up risers, not only mowing the median in advance but also cutting brush that had grown during the projects long construction.

For more on Route 35, listen to November 4th and 11th WV on the DOT podcast shows, and visit the Route 35 Opening tab on our West Virginia Department of Transportation webpage.



Parting Thoughts from Secretary White

One of the most difficult decisions I have made in a long time was to retire from The Department of Transportation. I really enjoyed the job, and particularly the people. I am honored. I hope that I benefited each of you as much as you benefited me. I came to the Department knowing not one person; I left with a lot a friends, a lot of people I care about.

I leave the Department in good hands; I leave a Department that has a vision.

I spent a lot of time with Jimmy Wriston over the past 2 1/2 years. He is a good man; I know that he will continue to do a fantastic job and continue to lead the DOT in the right direction.

There is not enough room in this newsletter to thank everyone who deserves thanking, everyone from Lorrie Hodges to the Agency heads, the District Engineers, Ameche Watson, Jennifer and Randy, who publish this newsletter, everyone, just everyone, stepped up their game and made the DOT successful. Thank you.

As you go forward in life, do the right thing, treat others with respect. Everyone has problems; you never know theirs.

Every person has what they consider to be obstacles. Turn them into opportunities. Every problem has inside of it an opportunity. Find it. Use it.



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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Route 35: Photo Feature by Rusty



Rock Creek Contract Awarded

Gov. Jim Justice and West Virginia Division of Highways have awarded a construction contract to build an interchange to serve a massive economic development project in Boone County.

Triton Construction, Inc., was the lowest of three bidders on a project to build a new interchange on Corridor G at Rock Creek to provide access into the Rock Creek Development Park in Boone County. Triton bid \$19,547,500 for the project, which was significantly lower than the Engineer's Estimate for construction.

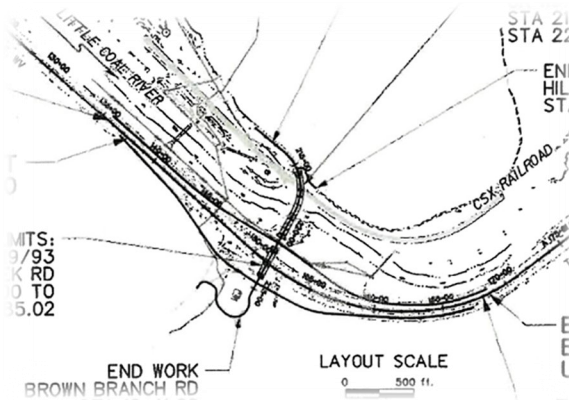
Plans call for a diamond intersection at Corridor G and Rock Creek. A bridge will be built over Corridor G and a second bridge will be built crossing the CSX rail line and the Little Coal River to connect with the access road into the development.

In August, WVDOH awarded a contract for \$4,295,709.65 to S&E Clearing & Hydroseeding, Inc. to build the three-mile access road that will run from the new interchange, up the mountain, and into the development site.

Rock Creek Development Park is located on the former Hobet mine site. Opening the 12,000-acre site for economic development has been one of Justice's primary goals.

"This project will absolutely bring the business community into this part of southern West Virginia," Gov. Justice has said. "We're going to create opportunity and jobs beyond belief."

Construction is expected to take two to three years.



Somebody Scheduled Winter? We Got This!

It's still October, but West Virginia Division of Highways is thinking ahead to keep drivers safe in snow and ice.

Drivers in WVDOH District 1 just finished their dry runs for winter snowplow routes.

"We want to make sure that our trucks are well-maintained, greased, and that all the equipment is working properly," said District 1 Maintenance Engineer Kathy Rushworth, P.E. Running snowplow routes early also allows drivers to familiarize themselves with their routes and get used to driving the snowplows, which handle differently with plows on the front than they do during their summer job as dump trucks.

District 1 has 215 drivers assigned to drive plows in the snow and ice. They're the same men and women responsible



for cutting grass, trimming trees, cutting ditches and doing other maintenance work during the spring, summer, and fall. For DOH, taking care of the roadways is a year-round job.

The district has 10 plows dedicated to Boone County, 10 to cover Clay County, 39 for Kanawha County, 14 for Mason County, and 13 for Putnam County. Another 38 snowplows are responsible

for clearing snow and ice on US 35 and interstates 64, 77, and 79.

While District 1 has plenty of snowplows available, Rushworth said there is still room for more drivers. She said the district could use about two dozen more drivers this winter.

We ~~Just~~ Work Here.



PR Division Welcomes New Employees



Courtney Crabtree



Rose Walker



Randy Damron

District Engineer/Managers have already spent about an hour on the phone with Courtney Crabtree, who has been with the Public Relations Division less than a week. Courtney's role with the Division is to provide organization and structure to the mass of information our agencies could share. She will be reaching out to District press release writers in the coming week.

Rose Walker steps in as a new SWAT operator in Central Office. This is the month SWAT makes it to zero late cases; the most obvious goal, so she is here just in the nick of time. You'll be hearing from Rose, as well as Sharonnia — it's easier now to just be on time than it is to be late; be forewarned.

Public Relations Division also congratulates Randy Damron on his official promotion to Assistant Director. If you are not familiar with Randy's work, check out the recent news coverage of our grand Route 35 Ribbon Cutting ceremony. That's Randy's work — from concept to completed event.

ACEC Joint Forum

The ACEC Joint Forum, cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19, was held in Charleston on October 21. Teamwork and accountability were common themes, as Secretary Wriston, State Highway Engineer Reed, and others spoke to the crowd of consulting engineers who do business with WVDOH. In doing so, they set the tone for another successful year.

"We have over 3.6 billion dollars of active construction projects going on now in the state of West Virginia," said Wriston. "3.6 billion dollars. I don't think that number has ever been matched in our history." Among the listeners was former

Secretary Mattox, shaking his head in agreement and smiling from ear to ear.



"If you think about the monumental program that we've worked on," said Reed. "If you think about it for a minute, of all the people involved, there's no way you can accomplish that without being a team."

Aggressive, fair, proactive, and accountable were themes that set the stage and raised the bar — the same themes we are seeing throughout WVDOH.



What's the HUB... and Why

Ask the people who worked on it about the HUB, and they'll tell you it's the culmination of more than two years of dedicated, hard work.

But to the men and women in the field in DOH's 10 highways districts, the HUB will mean fewer headaches and a lot less paperwork.

"It's streamlining a lot of our project setup processes," said Carla Rotsch, West Virginia Department of Transportation Business Manager.

The HUB went live on Oct. 19, 2021, greatly simplifying the way WVDOH will keep track of projects.

Prior to the HUB, any project approved by DOH generated a stream of paperwork between the highway district where the project was located and the central office in Charleston. Any little change required another sheet of paper.

But the HUB allows projects to be generated and managed

electronically. "It replaces a lot of our paper processes," Rotsch said. "For people in the districts, they no longer have to fill out a bunch of forms."

Response to the HUB in the districts has been encouraging.

"Based on what I see, it coordinates a lot of documents and things we used to have to do into one system," said District 6 Engineer Tony Clark, P.E. "Everything's electronic. It's way more modern than the way we were doing it."

The HUB does another very important thing. Prior to its creation, DOH's billing and financial software didn't speak the same language as the Federal Highway Administration, which could cause delays in getting money or reimbursements for federally-funded projects.

"The HUB allows us to integrate with the federal highways system itself," Rotsch said.

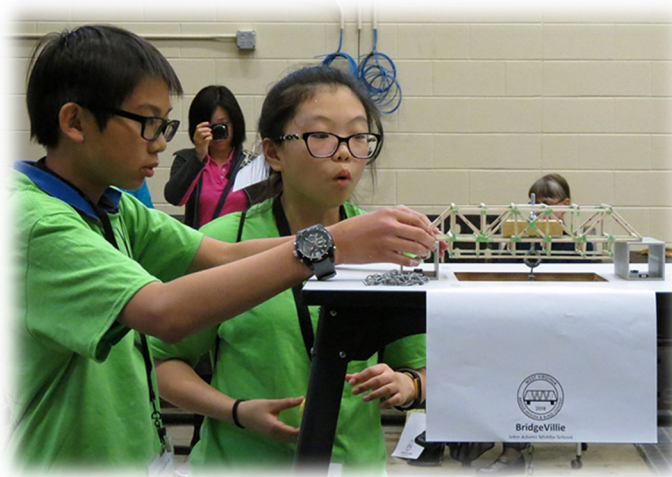


Bridge Design Contest Kicks-Off 21st Year

Registration is now open for the 2022 West Virginia Bridge Design & Build Contest. winners take home \$500, second place winners receive \$400, and third place winners get \$300.

The contest, sponsored by the West Virginia Division of Highways, BridgeWalk, and West Virginia Department of Education, pits middle school and high school students against one another to see who can design the best bridge, using standardized design software. Students also have the option to build a scale model of their bridge to see how much force the model will stand before collapsing.

In its 21st year, the contest is designed to encourage STEM education and inspire tomorrow's engineers, today. Every student who makes it to the finals receives \$100. First place



Every student who participates in the contest gets a free BridgeWalk tour for themselves and their families.

Students have until Feb. 27, 2022 to register, download their bridge design software and submit their bridge design.

Contest finals will be held Saturday, March 26, 2022. Finalists will be notified no later than March 4, 2022.

To register, download bridge design software, or find out more about the contest, visit <https://wvbridgedesignandbuildcontest.com>.



Secretary Wriston Visits Route 60



One of the cornerstones in the West Virginia Division of Highways' new way of doing business is to remove barriers and blocks between Districts, Divisions, the folks in Charleston and the rest of the state, and the folks on the ground and in the office, so when District 1 Manager Arlie Matney reached out to Secretary Wriston bragging about his Disforce crew and their work on a major pile wall to correct a long-standing rough patch

of road near the gas station along Route 60 near Cedar Grove — yes, that one, the one where you always have both hands on the wheel — the Secretary was happy to jump in the District Manager's Jeep with him and hop over there to see for himself. What he found was what we're seeing all over the state; a whole lot of pride in a job well done and one more problem that might have been there for all time, now — solved.

Recruiting Efforts Pay Off

West Virginia Division of Highways District 3 Engineer Justin Smith, P.E., needed to hire about 30 transportation workers.

In years past, that would have been a real problem.

"Normally, when we post a job, we don't get much response," Smith said. But thanks to a hiring event hosted by the West Virginia Department of Transportation's personnel recruiting team on Sept. 21, 2021, Smith was able to get many of the employees he needed.

"Fifty-three people showed up, and we offered jobs to 21," Smith said.

As part of Gov. Jim Justice's \$2.8 billion Roads To Prosperity highway construction and maintenance program, the West Virginia Legislature passed a bill that was signed into law by the Governor, allowing WVDOT to hire workers independent of normal state personnel procedures. The move was made to expedite the hiring of the thousands of employees who would be needed to pull off the largest highways program in the history of the state of West Virginia.

Since the passage of the bill, the WVDOT has hired hundreds of engineers, attorneys, bridge safety inspectors, county administrators, crew chiefs, equipment operators, resource specialists, supply specialists, and transportation workers needed to bring Gov. Justice's vision to fruition.

"In my 21 years with Transportation, it has never been this easy to hire employees," said Natasha White, director of the WVDOT Human Resources Division. "We are making sure the correct people are in the correct jobs, just not putting behinds in seats."

But being able to hire employees quickly doesn't make much difference if you can't find suitable applicants. That's why WVDOT has developed an aggressive recruiting program.

By the end of 2021, WVDOT will have participated in 35 job and career fairs at colleges, universities, technical centers, and WorkForce West Virginia sites all over the Mountain State, and will have held eight different hiring events.

Since Jan. 1, 2021, WVDOT has hired 326 new employees.



EZPass Update

Three years ago, Governor Jim Justice gave drivers of the West Virginia Turnpike the opportunity to save on the cost of tolls through the E-ZPass program.

Not only has the governor's revolutionary program saved West Virginians money, it has also provided funding for other road projects in the 10 counties the Turnpike touches.

Three years into the program, West Virginia is reaping the economic rewards. With over 75% of tolls paid by out-of-state and commercial drivers, the program has funded \$595 million in highway projects in West Virginia.

In 2017, West Virginia voters approved the sale of \$1.6 billion in highway bonds as part of Governor Justice's Roads To Prosperity highway construction and maintenance program. As part of that program, tolls on the Turnpike were raised from \$2 to \$4 per passenger car. But the E-ZPass allows drivers unlimited use of the Turnpike for one low fee.

"The cost versus the benefits of the E-ZPass program far exceeds any other national program that exists," said West Virginia Parkways Authority Executive Director Jeff Miller. "After just two trips up and back on the Turnpike, the E-ZPass essentially pays for itself."

In 2018, the Parkways Authority approved an initial bond sale of \$172 million to help the West Virginia Division of Highways pay for projects in Fayette, Greenbrier, Kanawha, McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Nicholas, Raleigh, Summers, and Wyoming counties, through which the Turnpike runs.

"We are beyond thrilled to partner with the Division of Highways to pay for these projects, which free up taxpayer dollars for use elsewhere," Miller said. "75 percent of these tolls are paid for by drivers from out of state or commercial vehicles. Those drivers use West Virginia roads too."

In June 2021, the Parkways Authority sold its second issue of road bonds. Investor response was so good that the sale was able to generate \$423 million in revenue, \$90 more than had originally been planned.

That money is now being used to pay for 23 separate projects in the 10 counties surrounding the Turnpike. Those projects include the complete replacement of 15 different bridges, construction of the four-lane Coalfields Expressway, and reconstruction of MacCorkle Avenue in Kanawha City.

VISION AWARDS

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

Jeff Adams—District 8

Sasha Danberry—Contract Administration

Tom Erwin—District 4

Deanna Giles—District 4

William Hartwell—Civil Rights

Alex Hoy—District 4

Zach Murphy—District 4

Lori Suite—Public Relations

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.



Division of Public Transit: Why it Matters

When the Mountain Transit Authority expanded operations into rural Pocahontas County in August 2021, it opened up major job and travel opportunities for the isolated county. This would not have been possible without the West Virginia Division of Public Transit.

"I've been able to get a job here in Marlinton, which I would never have been able to get to," said citizen Melanie Cosner. "It's five days a week, making good money, and that's hard here."

MTA operates bus services in Nicholas, Webster and Greenbrier counties. The addition of Pocahontas County has, in a short span of time, meant development, growth, potential and opportunity for the community, and to allow all of West Virginia to pull the rope in the same direction, for the good of all West Virginians.



Melanie Cosner, Pocahontas County

Allen Sisler, operations manager for Inter-State Hardwoods Co. in the Pocahontas County town of Bartow, said the new bus lines have made it possible for inmates to work at his business, easing the burden on his own employees, and helping him hire additional staff. Sisler describes the inmates as excellent workers, "I talk to them and let them know, when they get out, I hope they settle here in Pocahontas County and come work with us," Sisler said

"The Division of Public Transit wanted us to become general public transportation agency, which we are," said MTA Manager Tim Thomas. "We have several

people tell us, if it weren't for MTA, they would not be able to go to jobs. They would not be able to go to medical appointments. They would not be able to go to school."

Meet Your Public Relations Director



Note from Rusty: *Each month, I feature an introduction to one of our leadership team members. This month, I turn the typewriter on my boss. She always says that if she wanted to fire me, she wouldn't have hired me; so let's see how this goes.*

Jennifer Dooley is Director of the West

Virginia Department of Transportation Public Relations Division, where she is responsible for shaping the public persona of the WVDOT and just as importantly, the way the agency sees itself. She oversees a staff of 10.

A native of Nicholas County, Dooley graduated from Nicholas

County High School, then Concord College, with a Bachelor's Degree in Communication Arts—Broadcasting and Journalism specialization, and Marshall University Graduate College with a Master's Degree in Humanities—Cultural Studies focus.

At home, Dooley is outnumbered on every front. A single woman with an adult daughter (Maria) and teenage son (Emmett.) Two dogs. Five cats. The cats do try to help with household decorating, but most of their ideas are just not good.

Dooley oversees the production and distribution of themes and messages into tubes; "WV on the DOT" podcast, where she is honored to be Randy Damron's co-host; social media; video production; telling me how to change my press releases seven different times before we send them out; SWAT and Central Correspondence; events; responses to media inquires; and all the stuff that connects us.

Dooley spends her weekends with her family, critters and Jeep; at the Omelete Shoppe and Cathedral Café. She is a failure as a songwriter, so if you were hoping she might quit her day job, don't hold your breath. She actually loves this place and our network of over 5,000 employees across the state who are making a real difference in West Virginia's recovery.



Scooby Doo Can't Solve Insurance Mystery: (You Need to Talk to HR for That!)

Another common request we receive in regard to employee benefits is the request for more information about Optional and/or Dependent Optional Life Insurance. In this article, we hope to shed some light on the topic, and hopefully share some information that is beneficial to you.

Let us start by reviewing New Hire Life Insurance Enrollment.

At the time an individual comes on board as a permanent status new hire, Guaranteed Issue amounts of Optional and Dependent Life Insurance are available to them for enrollment selection. Maybe, though, you have been with us for a while and you are now contemplating the need for carrying a greater amount of Optional or Dependent Life Insurance.

If this is you, and you want to know how to go about adding more Optional Life Insurance, or Dependent Life Insurance, then this article is for you!

If you are no longer considered a new hire, you can opt to apply for an increase to your Optional Life and/or Dependent Life Insurance at any time. Or, if you didn't enroll in any Optional or Dependent Life when you hired in and now want to add those coverages—you can. There is no special enrollment period to request an increase (or the addition of) Optional/Dependent Life. However, it is important to be aware that any request to add or increase that is not within a specified New Hire Eligibility timeframe, or a specified Life Insurance Open Enrollment period, will be subject to the Evidence of Insurability (aka Statement of Health) process.

So, if you have determined that you do want to request an increase, despite it having to go through the review process, then here is what to do next:

- Determine the amount to which you wish to increase.
- Complete the Optional/Dependent Optional Life Insurance Enrollment Form.
- Be sure to plainly mark the Plan to which you want to increase.
- Be sure to sign and date your form.
- If you are submitting a request to add or increase Dependent Life Insurance, remember to include the marriage certificate for your spouse and the birth certificate for each dependent child you're enrolling.

- Submit the form, and any accompanying marriage or birth certificates, to your designated HR associate who handles benefits within your District or Division.

If you prefer web-based options, this process can also be handled online using the PEIA Manage My Benefits online enrollment system.

The link to Manage My Benefits is at www.peia.wv.gov. There is a box on the home page of the site labeled Manage My Benefits. Click that box, and you'll be directed to log in with your existing credentials, or to register if you have not previously registered to use the MMB site. If you use the MMB site to submit your Optional and/or Dependent Life change request, the site also has the functionality to allow you to upload your documentation online as well, such as the marriage and/or birth certificates, if applicable.

Need more information? Have more questions? Contact your local HR office, or the Central HR Benefits Section.



APPLY NOW! HIGHWAY BUSINESS OPERATIONS ASSISTANT SENIOR

Kanawha County

Will assist the Contract Procurement Section Manager serving as the Lead Contract Procurement Specialist. Responsibilities include but are not limited to, advertisement of upcoming Highway contracts; coordinating with Regional Engineers to ensure adherence of all relative contract policies and procedures. See posting [DOH22CA104](#) for a complete overview of this position and to apply.

Are you looking for career advancement?

Contract Administration has several positions open for application.

Apply Today
www.transportation.wv.gov

Click on WVDOT Careers and scroll to Internal Postings

Know someone seeking a career working for a great organization?
Interested applicants can email DOHCareers@wv.gov or call (304) 558-3111 for more information!



Thanksgiving Travel: Be Safe!

This Thanksgiving holiday, the West Virginia Governor's Highway Safety Program (GHSP) is reminding everyone to be safe during your travels. Whether you stay local for your holiday celebrations or travel to visit family you haven't seen since before the pandemic, the GHSP wants to remind you to: Buckle Up and Don't Drive Impaired.

Thanksgiving is one of the busiest holidays for Americans, with more drivers being on the roads than usual. With higher traffic volume, the risk of being in a crash increases. That's why we are reminding everyone to *Buckle Up. Every Trip. Every Time.*

"We want everyone to arrive at the Thanksgiving table safely," said Bob Tipton, GHSP Director. "A key ingredient to being safe on the roads during holiday travel is buckling up. Using your seat belt increases your chances of surviving should you be in a crash."

During the Thanksgiving holiday weekend in 2019 (6 p.m. on Wednesday, November 27, to 5:59 a.m. on Monday, December 2), there were 279 passenger vehicle occupants killed in traffic crashes across the nation. More than half (54%) were unrestrained. Nighttime proved even more deadly, with 52% of Thanksgiving weekend crashes occurring at night. These deaths represent needless tragedies for families across America and may have been prevented with the simple click of a seat belt.

Drunk-driving-related crashes spike during the Thanksgiving holiday season. According to NHTSA, from 2015 to 2019, 135 drivers involved in fatal crashes on Thanksgiving Eve (6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.) were alcohol-impaired, and over the entire holiday period (6 p.m. the Wednesday before Thanksgiving through 5:59 a.m. the Monday after Thanksgiving), nearly 800 people died in alcohol-impaired crashes. In fact, during the 2019

Thanksgiving holiday period, more than four times as many drivers involved in fatal crashes were alcohol-impaired during nighttime hours than during the day.

Once you have arrived at your destination, please remember to continue making smart choices. If holiday gatherings will include alcoholic beverages, hosts should make sure that there are non-alcoholic options for designated drivers. Travelers need to plan ahead. If you know you'll be consuming even one alcoholic beverage, make sure you have a sober driver or use public transportation or a ride service to get home safely.

The bottom line is this: If you know you're headed out for a night of drinking, make sure you plan for a sober ride home. It is never safe to get behind the wheel of a vehicle while drunk or otherwise impaired. Remember: *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving.*

"By making smart choices like buckling up and not driving impaired, drivers and passengers will be able to focus on the celebrations and enjoy themselves rather than facing preventable tragedies," concluded Tipton.

A little background on us: 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 ultimate goal is to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities on WV'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 dmv.wv.gov/ghsp or visit the GHSP's social media channels at facebook.com/wvghsp or twitter.com/WVhighwaysafety.

