

Progress is ...

Progress Council and the Expressway Partnership Initiative (EPI) support Turnpike Commission's public/private partnership initiative // Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone Strategic Plan submitted for review and certification // Westmoreland County Community College starts first class of an electrical technician program // Meeting scheduled with area firms to expand the WCCC Technical College program

PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS

Progress Council and the EPI support Turnpike Commission's public/private partnership initiative - The Expressway Partnership Initiative (EPI) has offered strong support for a proposal of the PA Turnpike Commission to seek a private development partner for construction of the balance of the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway and Southern Beltway.

Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone Strategic Plan submitted for review and certification – An economic development strategic plan encompassing ten Mid Mon Valley distressed communities has been submitted to the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) for review and certification. The plan was completed through a DCED Enterprise Zone Program grant.

Westmoreland County Community College (WCCC) starts Electronic Technician Program - A WCCC sponsored associate degree program in electronics is underway at Mon Valley Career and Technology Center (MVCTC). Classes began on August 21. The program is funded under the PA Department of Education Technical College Program and represents a cooperative effort of WCCC, MVCTC and the Progress Council-coordinated Mon Valley Community Education Council.

Meeting scheduled with area firms to expand the WCCC Technical College Program - The Progress Council is sponsoring a dinner meeting of area firms at Mon Valley Career and Technology Center on September 11 to discuss additional programs for the WCCC Technical College Program. The meeting is being spearheaded by State Representative Peter J. Daley and the Westmoreland County Community College.

EPI support Turnpike Commission public/private partnership initiative

The Expressway Partnership Initiative (EPI) has offered strong support for a proposal of the PA Turnpike Commission (PTC) to seek a private development partner for construction of the balance of the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway and Southern Beltway. The PTC is seeking a private development partner for completion of the 100-mile network and is willing to provide the currently completed sections as well as all engineering work completed for other projects as an incentive.

The Progress Council's Executive Director called the PTC's strategy, "a very positive step forward". He added that it's important to keep the focus on completion of the entire highway network including the 24-mile section in Allegheny County. "We need to remember that a major goal of our efforts is to ensure access to development sites in economically distressed areas and to create a regional transportation network that serves the entire Mon Valley region and Fayette County."

The EPI plans to send a delegation to a September 17 meeting scheduled with prospective firms. The Mon Valley Progress Council serves as coordinator for the Expressway Partnership Initiative.

Economic development strategic plan for review and certification

The Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone, a plan that encompasses ten Mid Mon Valley distressed communities, has been submitted to the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) for review and certification. The plan was completed under the DCED Enterprise Zone Program.

The strategic plan includes a review of economic characteristics for the ten-community area and targeted zones within the communities that would be eligible for special state assistance to qualifying businesses and community revitalization funds for improvements to infrastructure within the enterprise zones.

Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone (MMVREZ)

Participating Communities

Belle Vernon	Brownsville	California
Carroll Township	Charleroi	Donora
Monongahela City	Monessen	North Charleroi
Speers		

Business, including expanding and new firms in areas of high technology and manufacturing that are located within the enterprise zones, would qualify for:

- Priority consideration for other DCED grants and loan funds

- Eligibility to apply for competitive low-interest grants-to-loans for Enterprise Zone firms up to \$350,000

- Lowest statewide prevailing interest rates on other DCED business development loan programs

- Eligibility to apply for 20% Neighborhood Assistance Program tax credits

- Designation of Enterprise Zone firms as Socially and Economically Restricted

- Businesses to confer advantage in bidding on state government contracts for five years after the zone exits the program.

A copy of the MMVREZ plan is posted on the Mon Valley Progress Council website www.monvalleyprogress.org.

WCCC starts Electronic Technician program

A Westmoreland County Community College (WCCC) sponsored associate degree program in electronics is underway at Mon Valley Career and Technology Center (MVCTC). Classes began on August 21.

“We are very excited that this training program is underway. The WCCC’s Electrical Technical program will help to meet a growing demand for technical skills in area firms,” said Progress Council President Bill Worthington. Bill also thanked State Representative Peter J. Daley for his leadership on this issue, “Once again Pete has brought together key groups, including Westmoreland County Community College, and directed state resources to meet a pressing local economic development need.”

The Mon Valley Career and Technology Center contributed classroom space for the project and has provided a broad range of technical support for installation of computers other equipment used in the WCCC technical college program. The program is funded under the Pennsylvania Department of Education Technical College Program and represents a cooperative effort of

WCCC, MVCTC and the Progress Council-coordinated Mon Valley Community Education Council.

Meeting of area firms seeks to expand the WCCC Technical College program

The Progress Council is sponsoring a dinner meeting of area firms at Mon Valley Career and Technology Center on September 11 to discuss additional programs for the WCCC technical college program. The meeting is being spearheaded by State Representative Peter J. Daley and the Westmoreland County Community College.

“We are pleased to coordinate this meeting of local businesses and representatives of the Westmoreland County Community College to discuss a broad range of education issues and needs,” Progress Council President Bill Worthington said. “It’s clear that we need to do more to improve the technical skills of our workforce to meet the needs of area firms.” Robert Connelly, Dean of Work Force Development sees the meeting of area Mid Mon Valley firms as the beginning of a dialogue to determine future courses for the WCCC Technical College program. “The Mon Valley Career and Technology Center is a wonderful asset that includes a broad range of technical labs that can be use to develop numerous courses. We just need to determine the top priorities of area firms.”

In commenting on the local need for the local technical college program State Representative Peter J. Daley said, "Education plays a vital role in securing our regional economy. By identifying the needs of our area firms, we will be able to collaborate and implement courses that will offer indispensable opportunities for individuals to learn skilled jobs and work close to home."

An interesting note for the September 11 event is that the dinner will be prepared and served by high school students enrolled in the Mon Valley Career and Technical Center Culinary Arts program.