

Progress is ...

PA Turnpike Commission meets with private firms to explore P3 options for the Expressway and Southern Beltway // Phase one of the Brownsville to Uniontown Expressway project opens on Oct 30 // Meeting held with local firms to explore future education initiatives for the Westmoreland County Community College (WCCC), Mon Valley Technical College Program // Progress Council lowers interest rate for the Industrial Development Assitance Program // Appointees fill vacant Executive Committee seats

PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS

PA Turnpike Commission meets with private firms to explore P3 options for the Expressway and Southern Beltway – The Progress Council was among more than 100 representatives of engineering and private toll road development firms that attended a September 17 meeting in Harrisburg held by the PA Turnpike Commission to explore a public/private partnership to complete the Expressway and Southern Beltway.

Phase one of the Brownsville to Uniontown Expressway project opens – An October 30 ribbon-cutting ceremony of the 8-mile link marks another step forward on Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway.

Meeting held with local firms to explore future education initiatives for the Mon Valley Technical College Program – A September 11 roundtable meeting of local business people provided an excellent opportunity to gain input on future directions for the Mon Valley Technical College Program operated by WCCC.

Progress Council lowers interest rate for the Industrial Development Assitance Program (IDAP) – Based on national credit issues, the Mon Valley Progress Council has lowered the interest rate to 3% on the IDAP program that provides loans for development of infrastructure and builders by manufacturing firms.

Appointees fill vacant Executive Committee seats - Larry Golashewski of PNC Bank and Randy McMahon of Handyman Matters have been appointed to fill two vacancies on the Progress Council Executive Committee.

PA Turnpike Commission explores P3 options for the Expressway and Beltway



The Progress Council was among more than 100 representatives of engineering and private toll road development firms that attended a September 17 meeting in Harrisburg held by the PA Turnpike Commission (PTC) to explore a public/private partnership to complete the Expressway and Southern Beltway.

The PA Turnpike Commission's CEO Joe Brimmeier led the meeting by noting that the PTC does not have the money to complete the 100-mile Expressway and Southern Beltway network. Brimmeier and other PTC staff then outlined a process they called Request for Concepts/Solutions in which they are asking private toll road development firms to offer ideas on how to build all or a part of the remaining toll road network. Brimmeier stated that existing and to-be-completed sections of the Expressway and Southern Beltway are "on the table". This essentially means that a firm could include the toll road sections in a P3 proposal. Tolls from the debt free completed system would be a source of revenue to support development of other toll road sections.

The Progress Council is very encouraged by this development with one cautionary note. It is essential that a priority be placed on completing the PA Route 51 to I-376 Expressway project. The core of the economic revitalization goal of the Expressway rests with completion of the Northern section. This is also the position of the Progress Council-led Expressway Partnership Initiative and is at the core of Allegheny County's Chief Executive Dan Onorato's support for the Expressway project.



And the Progress Council proposes Busway extension to Expressway Braddock interchange...

In a related Expressway development, on October 17 the Progress Council's Executive Director provided a presentation to the Port Authority of Allegheny County's Planning and Development Committee on a proposal to extend the Martin Luther King Busway to the proposed Expressway interchange on

Eighth Street in Braddock.

The idea would be to construct a 1.1-mile extension from the current terminus of the busway in Swissvale to the Expressway interchange in Braddock. The link would serve PAT buses traveling from the south and east on the Expressway. Kirk also suggested determining the feasibility of converting the busway into a tolled HOV-3 facility to serve commuters.

Funding the estimated \$50 million dollar cost of the extension would involve securing federal transit funds and including the local match in the P3 for the PA Route 51 to I-376 Expressway project. Federal funding could cover as high as 80% of the project costs. The Port Authority's Planning and Development Committee agreed to send a letter to the PTC asking for consideration of the idea.

Phase One of Brownsville to Uniontown Expressway open for traffic



An October 30 ribbon-cutting ceremony marked another step forward in the completion of the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway, Phase one of the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway Uniontown-to-Brownsville Area Project. Phase one measures some 8.2 miles and establishes a modern southeast--northwest transportation link between PA Route 51 near Uniontown and U.S. Route 40 near Brownsville. Construction costs totaled just under \$200 million. Phase two of the section passing south of Brownsville and connecting to US Route 40 in Washington County is under construction.

The ribbon cutting was well attended by PTC officials and area elected officials including Joe Brimmeier PTC's CEO, State Legislators Bill DeWeese, Pete Daley, Tim Mahoney, Deberah Kula, and State Senators J. Barry Stout and Richard Kasunic. Expressway and Southern Beltway legislative leader State Senator J. Barry Stout noted that the project injected \$2 billion into the local economy through construction and material purchases, and the second phase will result in an additional investment of \$500 million. Kasunic called the Expressway in Fayette County "the Highway of Hope."

Progress Council president Bill Worthington expressed support and excitement for progress on the Brownsville to Uniontown link. "This is another major step forward for the Expressway project and a major aid in promoting redevelopment of Fayette County."

Meeting explores future education initiatives



A September 11 roundtable meeting of local business people provided an excellent opportunity to gain input on future directions for the Mon Valley Technical College Program operated by WCCC. The meeting was hosted by the Mon Valley Career and Technology Center and included a dinner prepared by the culinary students.

The meeting was held in the Mon Valley Tech Access Room and featured a survey of attendees using individual electronic polling devices. While not a truly scientific sample, the results of the survey at the roundtable meeting are interesting to note:

- 70% felt that the skills of their employees were not adequate to meet challenges of current and future competition
- 47% do not have a training program
- 47% reported that technical skill have improved
- 53% believe job readiness has decreased in recent years
- 47% said that morale is low

Based on the results of the survey and discussion, future education efforts of the WCCC, Mon Valley Technical College Program will include:

- Computer systems program
- A job readiness program for prospective employees
- Business performance courses including improving morale in the workplace

The technical college program is currently running an associate degree program in electronics technology. State Representative Peter J. Daley has been the leader in identifying the need for broader technical education opportunities. He has secured a broad range of funding to advance the technical education initiative.

We invite your comments on the survey findings and interest in broadening technical education opportunities in the Mid Mon Valley. Please email jkirk@dp.net or just call us at 724-684-3381.

Progress Council lowers IDAP interest rate

Based on national credit issues, the Mon Valley Progress Council has lowered the interest rate to 3% on the IDAP program that provides loans for development of infrastructure and builders by manufacturing firms. Previously the interest rate was based on the PA Commonwealth's PIDA program.

The Progress Council-administered IDAP program provides up to 25% of project costs. More than one million dollars in loans have been provided under the program that secured more than three million dollars in other sources of funding. Please call the Progress Council offices (724-684-3381) if you are interest in discussing an IDAP loan.

Appointees fill vacant Executive Committee seats

Larry Golashewski of PNC Bank and Randy McMahon of Handyman Matters have been appointed to fill two vacancies on the Progress Council Executive Committee. Randy McMahon previously served on the Executive Committee. Larry Golashewski agreed was also nominated to serve as Treasurer. John Easoz of Solar Power Industries was appointed Vice President to fill the unexpired term of Al Ferrari who recently passed away.