

Progress Update



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Progress Council dinner set for April 23 and will feature a keynote address by U.S. House Transportation Committee Chairman Bill Shuster // Federal Transportation legislation reauthorization could provide an opportunity for the Expressway project // Progress Council meets with Allegheny County state legislators on Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway north of PA Route 51 // Cooperative meets to elect officers and set course for 2014 // DCED cites creation or retention of 505 jobs from Progress Council Enterprise Zone program

PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS

Progress Council dinner set for April 23 and will feature a keynote address by U.S. House Transportation Committee Chairman Bill Shuster



The Progress Council is pleased to announce that U.S. House Transportation Committee Chairman Bill Shuster will be the keynote speaker at the Progress Council's 49th annual dinner. The dinner will be held on April 23 at the Willow Room on Route 51 in Belle Vernon. Reservations are \$65 per person. Please look for invitations via email or contact the Progress Council at 724-684-3381 to make reservations for the dinner.

Congressman Shuster is a six-term congressman representing the 9th district that includes a large part of the Mid Mon Valley.

“We are very excited to have Chairman Shuster as the keynote speaker for our 49th annual dinner. The pending renewal of federal transportation legislation on September 30, 2014 marks an especially important time for the future of federal transportation funding and the important projects here in our area,” said Progress Council president John Easoz.

Federal Transportation legislation reauthorization could provide an opportunity for the Expressway project

Pending renewal of federal transportation in September 2014 marks an especially important time for the future of federal transportation funding, including the potential of federal support for the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway,” said Progress Council executive director Joe Kirk. To date, less than 5% of the cost of the Expressway project has been supported through federal transportation funds.

Current federal transportation legislation (MAP-21) includes a section that has the potential to target funding to major projects such as the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway. The section entitled Projects of National and Regional Significance (PONRS) first made its way into federal transportation legislation in part from a Progress Council presentation to the past Chairman of the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee congressman, Don Young from Alaska. Unfortunately, funding was very limited and was used for congressional earmark projects.

The Progress Council will be pressing for inclusion of the PONRS language in transportation reauthorization legislation and funding is targeted to major transportation projects such as the Expressway.

Progress Council meets with state legislators from the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway north of PA Route 51 corridor

A January 31, 2014 meeting with state legislators from the PA Route 51 to Monroeville Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway corridor who voted yes on the recently passed transportation legislation (Act 89) provided an opportunity to discuss the status of the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway and the potential of advancing the Expressway project through funding made available through the Act.

On November 25, 2013, in a ceremony held under the Liberty Bridge in Pittsburgh, Governor Corbett signed Act 89 that appropriates \$2.3 billion a year for the state's transportation system until 2017-18. Of that money, about \$1.65 billion will go to highways and bridges while \$476 to \$497 million is earmarked for the state's mass transit. Of particular interest to the Progress Council are sections of the bill that by year five will provide \$86 million to the PA Turnpike Commission for projects like the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway.

In year eight of Act 89 the PA Turnpike Commission will receive \$400 million of relief from a \$450 million dollar annual payment to PennDOT. The \$450 million annual payment, authorized under Act 44 (passed in 2009), has been criticized as a threat to the financial stability of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission. The Progress Council sees the opportunity to include a portion of projected funding sources in Act 89 for a public/private partnership, or P3, that could advance the Expressway north of PA Route 51.

In July of 2013 the Progress Council proposed an Expressway alternative that would include construction of a toll road from the current end of the Expressway at Large PA to I-376 in Monroeville. The concept also included an extension of the Martin Luther King Jr. Busway from Swissvale to the Expressway alignment in East Pittsburgh.

Cooperative meets to elect officers and set course for 2014

The February 11 meeting of the Mid Mon Valley Intergovernmental Cooperative including the election of officers for 2014 and initial planning of actions including capacity building forums for staff of Mid Mon Valley municipalities.

The current officers of the Cooperative were voted in for a second term including:

- Dennis Martinak, Chairman
- Ken Kulak, Vice Chairman and Secretary
- Donn Henderson, Treasurer

In addition to election of officers, the first municipal staff capacity session was set for March 14, 11:30 a.m. at the Mon Valley YMCA and will feature a presentation on the state joint purchasing program COSTARS. Please contact the Progress Council at 724-684-3381 to register for the training session.

Discussion at the first meeting of the Cooperative in 2014 also focused on considering a joint municipal officials training session with the Tri-County Boroughs Association.

DCED cites creation or retention of 505 jobs from the Progress Council Enterprise Zone program

A January 28 press release of the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) cited successful projects of the Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone, managed by the Mon Valley Progress Council, which contributed toward an investment of nearly \$65 million and the retention or creation of 505 jobs in the Mid Mon Valley.

The DCED press release also noted that the Progress Council will receive a \$50,000 grant for ongoing operation of the nine-community Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone.

The Progress Council assisted three Mid Mon Valley firms, Alumisource, Brownsville Marine and ArcelorMittal in securing tax credits on Pennsylvania business taxes. Please contact the Progress Council if your firm is planning an expansion or a facility improvement project. Your firm may be eligible for up to a 25% tax credit on the cost of such improvements.

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