



# ***PROGRESS UPDATE***

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## ***Progress is ...***

Progress Council-led Expressway Partnership Initiative (EPI) traveled to Washington DC to meet with Specter and Casey staffers to discuss federal funding // Ground broken in West Virginia on final Expressway link to I-68 // Mon Valley Career and Technology Center and the Progress Council team up on work readiness program // Smart Government meeting features discussion of cooperative models for delivery of municipal services.

### **PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS**

**EPI delegation travels to Washington DC** – A delegation of EPI (Expressway Partnership Initiative) partners traveled to Washington DC on July 30 to meet with Specter and Casey staffers to discuss federal funding for the Expressway. Discussions focused on seeking federal funding for the PA Route 51 to I-376 northern link through pending reauthorization of federal transportation legislation.

**Groundbreaking held in West Virginia on final Expressway link to I-68** – An August 4 groundbreaking ceremony by West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin marked the beginning of construction of the final leg of the Expressway in W.Va. to connect the project with I-68.

**Mon Valley Career and Technology Center to team up on work readiness program** – A recent meeting of Progress Council president John Easoz and executive director Joe Kirk with Mon Valley Career and Technology Center executive director Brad DeiCas resulted in an agreement to pursue a joint effort to promote workforce readiness.

**Smart Government meeting features discussion of cooperative models for delivery of municipal services** - An August 31 meeting of local officials and community leaders on the Smart Government Initiative included discussion of specific cooperative measures on ways to promote more efficient and regionally based delivery of municipal services with a focus on police services.

## **EPI delegation travels to Washington DC**

A delegation of Expressway Partnership Initiative (EPI) partners traveled to Washington DC on July 30 to meet with Specter and Casey staffers to discuss federal funding for the Expressway. Discussions focused on seeking federal funding for the PA Route 51 to I-376 northern link through pending reauthorization of federal transportation legislation.

Commenting on the meeting MVPC's executive director Joe Kirk said, "The meeting provided an excellent opportunity to update the senators' representatives on the status of the Expressway and the need to focus efforts on completion of the northern section". Pending reauthorization of federal transportation legislation could provide a window for federal funding.

Kirk added, "We discussed a concept of a federal demonstration program that would fund only 20% of the total costs for major projects such as the Expressway." With more than 95% of the funding for the Expressway and Southern Beltway to date coming from Pennsylvania, the Expressway would be in a strong position to compete for funding if such a program was adopted at the federal level.

The Senator's staffers were also interested in hearing about the potential of a public/private partnership (P3) for the Expressway. The PA Turnpike Commission is currently reviewing initial responses to their request for concepts and solutions for a P3 to advance the Expressway and Southern Beltway.

Participants in the one-day trip included Joe Kirk and Bob Burke, Mon Valley Progress Council; Rich Barcaskey, Constructors Association of Western PA; Howard Carpenter, Regional Chamber Alliance; Chad Amond, Monroeville Area Chamber of Commerce; and John Cardwell, Murrysville Economic and Community Development Corp.

## **Groundbreaking held in West Virginia on final Expressway link to I-68**

An August 4 a groundbreaking ceremony by West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin marked the beginning of construction of the final leg of the Expressway in W.Va. to connect the project with I-68.

The PA Turnpike Commission's CEO Joe Brimmeier noted in remarks during the groundbreaking ceremony that with the completion of the West Virginia section, and completion of sections currently under construction in Fayette County, there will be 60 miles of the Expressway completed by late 2011 or early 2012. The Expressway will then extend from I-68 in West Virginia to PA Route 51 in Allegheny County.

West Virginia governor Joe Manchin highlighted the benefits to Pennsylvania and West Virginia, "When this is finished, I guarantee you, we will prosper, as our friends in Pennsylvania will prosper — it'll be one economic avenue and vehicle for all of us." Other Pennsylvania attendees include state senators J. Barry Stout and Richard Kasunic.

## **Mon Valley Career and Technology Center to team up on work readiness program**

A recent meeting of Progress Council president John Easoz and executive director Joe Kirk with Mon Valley Career and Technology Center executive director Brad DeiCas resulted in an agreement to pursue a joint effort to promote workforce readiness.

Workforce readiness was a major topic of the meetings Kirk has been having with local businesses as a part of the Progress Council-administered Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone Program. Many local firms noted increasing challenges in finding employees who possess appropriate skills and work ethic.

The work readiness program will likely involve 30 hours of course work over five weeks with two evening three-hour classes per week. Tuition will be \$100 per student. Classes are projected to begin in February 2010.

Progress Council president John Easoz called the initiative “A great practical local effort to address issues of workforce readiness.”

The Progress Council will be asking for the input from area firms over the next several months to ensure that we are developing a relevant program. Please let us know if you would be interested in serving on an advisory committee that will be formed in the near future.

### **Smart Government meeting features discussion on cooperative efforts and police services**

An August 31 meeting of local officials and community leaders on the Smart Government Initiative included discussion of specific cooperative measures to promote more efficient and regionally based delivery of municipal services.

The meeting included presentations by Dr. George Dougherty, assistant professor of Public and Urban Affairs Innovation Clinic Graduate School of Public and International Affairs-University of Pittsburgh and Alan Kugler, president of PA Futures.

Dr. Dougherty stated that they continue to make progress on a survey of local services and existing relationships among local governments. “What we are finding is a combination of formal contractual agreements and informal arrangements that lay a solid foundation for broad cooperative efforts,” said Dr. Dougherty. He also reviewed alternative models for contracting out police services as well as regional cooperative efforts.

Dr. Joseph DeBlassio, who is chairman of the Belle Vernon- based Southwest Regional Police Department, noted that they first use contractual relationships with local governments and then invite them to join in the regional cooperative effort.

Mayor Lignelli and others expressed interest in a panel discussion of regional policing strategies. It was agreed that a panel discussion on regional police department models would be held at the YMCA on October 1, 5:30 p.m.

PA Future president Alan Kugler also presented an initial report on the need for a much broader use of the internet for communication and development of a common website for all Mid Mon Valley communities.