

MVPC **PROGRESS UPDATE**

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Progress is ...

Meetings with local elected officials highlight Smart Government Initiative // Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone Program underway with site visits to local firms // Expressway Partnership reaches out to new Allegheny Conference CEO for Expressway support // Expressway corridor economic development/sustainability group receives briefing on solar energy concept.

PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS

Meetings with local elected officials highlight Smart Government Initiative – Progress Council staff, faculty and students from the University of Pittsburgh, and the Progress Council’s consultant PA Futures have been meeting with local governments to discuss alternative ways to promote cooperative and regional strategies in the delivery of local government services.

Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone Program underway with site visits to local firms – Following the receipt of designation for the nine-community Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone by DCED, the Progress Council has sent letters out to area manufactures and other eligible businesses in the regional enterprise zones detailing program benefits. Meetings are also underway with local firms to discuss company growth and development plans.

Expressway Partnership reaches out to the Allegheny Conference’s new CEO for Expressway support – Representatives of the Expressway Partnership Initiative, including Progress Council President John Easoz, Executive Director Joe Kirk and Monroeville Chamber CEO Chad Amond, recently met with Allegheny Conference on Community Development’s new CEO Dennis Yablonsky to discuss the potential of the Allegheny Conference support for the Expressway project.

Expressway corridor economic development group receives briefing on solar energy concept – Progress Council President and solar energy consultant John Easoz provided an overview to representatives of economic development organizations located along the Expressway corridor on development of solar power farms and the potential of developing one along the Expressway.

Meetings with local elected officials highlight Smart Government Initiative

Progress Council staff, faculty and students from the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA), and the Progress Council consultant PA Futures have been meeting with local governments to discuss alternative ways to promote cooperative and regional strategies in the delivery of local government services.

In addition to a June 15 meeting of local government representatives, the project management team spent several days meeting individually with local government officials. The GSPIA students are part of the University's Innovation Clinic that was developed to assist local governments.

"It's been a great experience to meet with local governments. There is considerable interest in looking at new ways of delivering municipal services," said Progress Council executive director Joe Kirk. Pitt students are working hard to finalize and distribute a survey of local municipal services. This data will be merged with data gathered by the Commonwealth of PA on municipalities to determine levels of local service and the extent of existing cooperative efforts. GSPIA will also research an international database they have compiled on best practices in inter-municipal cooperation and regionalization of services. The initial findings of the research will be provided at the next meeting of area elected officials scheduled for July 27.

State Representative Peter J. Daley was instrumental in developing the project and is currently seeking grants to support ongoing efforts.

Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone Program underway with site visits

Following the receipt of designation for the nine-community Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone by DCED, the Progress Council has sent letters out to manufactures and other eligible businesses in the regional enterprise zone detailing program benefits. Meetings are also underway with local firms to discuss how the Enterprise Zone Program could benefit developments of area companies.

Qualified expanding businesses or those locating into any of the nine Mid Mon Valley enterprise zones may qualify for a variety of benefits including:

1. Priority consideration for other DCED grants and loan funds.
2. Eligibility to apply for competitive low-interest loans for up to \$350,000 (loans are limited to 30% of a project and require one new job for every \$35,000 of an EZ loan).
3. Lowest statewide prevailing interest rates on other DCED business development loan programs.
4. Eligibility to apply for 25% Neighborhood Assistance Program tax credits for building and land improvements.
5. 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.

Qualifying businesses include industrial, manufacturing and technology-oriented businesses. Corporate/regional headquarters of any type firm may also qualify for assistance under the Enterprise Zone Program.

The regional enterprise zone plan also includes Special Impact Areas. These are local commercial business districts in enterprise zone communities where businesses also qualify to seek tax credits under the Neighborhood Assistance Program.

Mid Mon Valley Enterprise Zone communities include: Brownsville, Belle Vernon, California, Charleroi, Donora, City of Monongahela, City of Monessen, North Charleroi and Speers

Expressway Partnership reaches out to Allegheny Conference's new CEO

Representatives of the Expressway Partnership Initiative (EPI), including Progress Council President John Easoz, Executive Director Joe Kirk and Monroeville Chamber CEO Chad Amond, recently met with Allegheny Conference on Community Development's new CEO Dennis Yablonsky to discuss the potential of Allegheny Conference support for the Expressway project.

EPI members provided a briefing to the new Allegheny Conference CEO on the overall Expressway and Southern Beltway projects with a focus on the need to advance the PA Route 51 to I-376 Expressway project. The current

transportation priorities of the Allegheny Conference are provided below. It should be noted that the Conference's 2009-2011 priorities listing for highways and transit does not include any highway projects. The EPI is hopeful that the Conference will either consider amendment to their priority list to include the PA Route 51 to I-376 Expressway or provide some other form of endorsement for the Expressway project.

**Allegheny Conference on Community Development
Transportation and Infrastructure priorities
2009-2011**

Air Service

- Establish twice daily nonstop service to Top 30 US business Destinations
- Maintain lower-than-US average ticket prices at PIT
- Successfully implement nonstop service to Europe

Highways/Transit

- Continued support of ongoing Port Authority reform
- Advance Oakland-Downtown rapid transit connection

Public Policy

- Maximize SW PA's share of federal economic stimulus funds for Infrastructure projects (highways, locks & dams, airports, water & Sewer, etc.)

Expressway economic development group receives briefing on solar energy

Progress Council President and solar energy consultant John Easoz provided an overview to representatives of economic development organizations located along the Expressway corridor on development of solar power farms and the potential of developing one along the Expressway.

Easoz's presentation focused on the feasibility of solar power as one element of meeting energy needs. He noted that all world energy needs could be met by solar cells covering .07% of the world land area. He also cited statistics that projects up to a 32% increase per year in the use of solar energy over the next five years. The strongest growth market for solar power is in the United States.

His presentation also included examples of highway-based solar power farms in Germany, Switzerland, England and the Netherlands. Highway corridors are particularly attractive for solar power farms because solar arrays can be placed in publicly owned land in the highway corridor that generally are open areas. In some cases solar units have been incorporated into sound and visual barriers for highways.

Easoz said that a solar power farm project along the Expressway would be an exciting idea that could serve as a demonstration project for other highway corridors. The demonstration project would also broaden the appeal of the Expressway as a means to produce sustainable energy and generate additional revenue through renewable power generation. Electrical energy produced in the Expressway corridor could be fed back into the power grid that includes numerous high power wire crossings. Members of the committee agreed to seek to explore the concept of a solar energy demonstration project along the Expressway, including making a presentation to the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission on the concept.

Attendees at the Expressway corridor economic development and sustainability group meeting included: Debra Keefer of Mid Mon Valley Chamber, Joe Kirk of the Mon Valley Progress Council, Andrew French of the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority, Lue Ann Pawlick of MIDA, Inc., and Joe Grata formally of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Fayette County Chamber, Fayette Penn and Allegheny County Department of Development are also participants on the committee. Joe Grata proposed the concept of the Expressway as a "power corridor" at a January 16 roundtable meeting on the Expressway project hosted by the Mon Valley Progress Council.