

Progress Update

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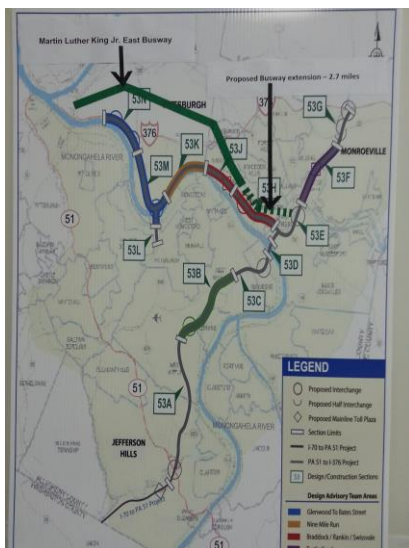
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PROGRESS HEADLINES

Exciting news on the Expressway project // Discussions begin with local officials on cooperative efforts to address issues of community blight // A Progress Council-formed Workforce Readiness Roundtable receives a presentation on an on-line program to promote workforce readiness // Local firms support student entrepreneurship // Charleroi celebrates 100 anniversary of Pyrex //

Exciting news on the Expressway project



There is truly exciting news regarding the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway north of PA Route 51. As reported in the June 18 Post-Gazette, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission approved advertising for environmental services to continue design of the highway. Commission chairman Sean Logan told a State Senate committee that the Expressway project, suspended in 2009 due to lack of funding, was being restarted.

Based on additional information we have been able to obtain, construction on the Expressway north of PA Route 51 could begin as soon as 2021. While that is six year away, actions including a review of the previously EIS for the Expressway project, final engineering and land acquisition need to occur before construction can begin. The Expressway news reports also called for dropping the Expressway section from

East Pittsburgh to the City of Pittsburgh. In his testimony Logan noted that the Expressway section into the City of Pittsburgh “had numerous environmental impacts and was unaffordable given available funding.”

The Progress Council supports the PA Turnpike decision to focus on completing the Expressway from PA Route 51 to Monroeville. Completing the 14-mile project would meet the core economic development objectives of the Expressway project. It will provide access to major Mon Valley industrial sites, businesses sites and communities.

July 2013, the Progress Council proposed replacing the Expressway section into the City of Pittsburgh with an extension of the Martin Luther King Jr. East Busway from Swissvale to the proposed alignment in East Pittsburgh. The busway extension would provide an alternative for commuters stuck on the Parkway East during rush hour. The busway extension would also

improve transit access for Mon Valley communities. Commenting on the busway extension concept, the PA Turnpike Commission's chief engineer Brad Hegel said in a June 23 Valley Independent article, "We think it's a good idea and we're making sure whatever we build can accommodate that."

The actions of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission are to be applauded. The Progress Council will continue its long-term leadership role to ensure that the Expressway project stays on target. We also encourage municipalities along the Expressway corridor to contact state elected officials and let them know how important the Expressway project, as well as busway access, is for your community.

Discussions begin with local officials on cooperative efforts to address issues of community blight

The issue of community blight is the focus of a Progress Council-formed Fight Blight Roundtable. The roundtable, which is comprised of core Mid Mon Valley communities including Monongahela, Donora, Charleroi, Monessen, California, and Brownsville, has met on three occasions thus far.

A consensus of the roundtable is that cooperative efforts could aid in efforts to seek funding for multi-municipal initiatives to address conditions of housing deterioration and abandonment. The Mid Mon Valley Fight Blight Roundtable is focused on five areas of action:

- Seek funding to support demolition when necessary
- Determine the feasibility of a regional community development corporation
- Seek to provide legal counsel targeted for blight efforts
- Seek to secure equipment and capacity sharing
- Increased incentives to locate in core communities

Workforce Readiness Roundtable receives a presentation on an on-line program to promote workforce readiness



Representatives of major Mid Mon Valley firms met on May 22 to discuss the common concerns of workforce readiness and to hear about a potential innovative strategy.

It was clear from discussion at the breakfast meeting that a broad range of local firms face very similar issues of workforce readiness.

The roundtable of local manufacturers also received a presentation on an online program developed by a regional area construction industry association to improve workforce readiness in the construction industry. Construction Association of Western PA representatives including Rich Barcaskey and Jason Koss reviewed how they are using an online App to educate potential employees about the construction industry. "We are looking at a way to educate and motivate young people in the millennial generation to consider careers in the construction industry," said Barcaskey.

The next meeting of the Mid Mon Valley Workforce Readiness Roundtable will be held on June 19, 8:00 a.m. at the offices of the Mon Valley Progress Council. The June meeting will focus on specific local issues of workforce readiness and the potential of developing an online program for use by local firms. Please give us a call if you would like to attend.

Local firms support student entrepreneurship



Two Mid Mon Valley Career and Technology Center students were recipients of \$500 grants toward their business proposal. The grants were provided by Community Bank and Guttman Oil. Brooks Gardner of Community Bank (left in photo) was on hand for the presentation of the checks to Heather Sickels for her business to develop gaming apps for smart phones and Alec Calcek received funding for his taxidermy business. Progress Council President John Easoz (right in picture) participated in the grant presentation.

The students were two of more than a dozen students who participated in the Progress Council's Path to Entrepreneurism project operated in cooperation with Mon Valley Career and Technology Center.

A century of Pyrex celebrated in Charleroi



Local and state elected officials celebrated a century of Pyrex production at the World Kitchen plant in Charleroi. The May 16 event marked the beginning of a year-long recognition of the home of a product that is found in almost every home in the United States. Company officials also recognized the numerous current and past employees who were in attendance.

Among the speakers, State Representative Peter J. Daley noted that on numerous occasions local leaders and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania stepped in to keep the plant in Charleroi. He noted one trip to Corning New York with Progress Council executive director Joe Kirk and local labor representatives that was crucial in efforts to keep the plant open. Hat's off to the employees and management of the Charleroi World Kitchen Plant for keeping Charleroi the "Home of Pyrex".

The Mon Valley Progress Council

435 Donner Avenue | Suite 410 | Monessen, PA 15062

Tel: 724-684-3381 | Fax: 724-684-5113 | email: jkirk@monvalleyprogress.org | website: www.monvalleyprogress.org