

Progress Update

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MVPC/MMIDA consolidation plan reviewed at annual business meeting // Interchange named for Expressway leader Ron DeSalvo // Guest editorials published in area newspapers call for advancement of the Expressway and Busway East Extension (E/BEE)// Progress Council annual business meeting includes approval of objectives for 2016, officers, and board members // New initiative to increase corporate sponsorship announced

MVPC/MMIDA consolidation plan reviewed at annual business meeting

Progress Council president John Easoz provided an update at the January 8 meeting at the Monongahela Valley Hospital's Education Center on ongoing efforts of a joint committee of the Mon Valley Progress Council and the Middle Monongahela Industrial Development Association to consider a consolidation of the two organizations. The effort was initiated by remarks of MMIDA's president at the Progress Council's 2013 annual dinner regarding the importance of the two seeking ways of working together more closely.

Easoz noted at the January 8 annual business meeting that an initial study of the consolidation has been completed and a legal firm has been retained to develop the potential legal framework for a consolidation. He noted that a final consolidation plan should be ready by March 2016. He added that both organizations passed a resolution of interest and support for the consolidation effort; however both organizations will need to vote on any consolidation proposal.

Progress Council's action on the consolidation plan would involve a vote of all corporate sponsors that would likely include a vote via mail and a meeting of the sponsors.

Interchange named for Expressway leader Ron DeSalvo



Ron DeSalvo was recognized for his passion and commitment for the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway at a November 20 ceremony naming Exit 26 in his name. Ron DeSalvo, who was a Luzerne Township Supervisor and Fayette County Expressway Completion Organization leader, passed away in 2013.

The PA Turnpike Commission's vice chairman Bill Lieberman recognized Ron's commitment noting that in his 1994 political campaign Ron called for the completion of the Expressway by the year 2000. Ron's leadership in coordinating a community meeting in the early 1990's with then Governor Casey was crucial in putting the Expressway project between Uniontown and Brownsville back on track.

State Senator Pat Stefano introduced legislation to name the interchange for Luzerne Township as the Ronald F. DeSalvo Interchange. Ron's daughter Vanessa DeSalvo Getz was relentless in promoting the naming of the interchange to honor her late father. She also led the coordination of the November 20 commemoration.

Guest editorials published in area newspapers call for advancement of the Expressway and Busway East Extension (E/BEE)

Among the efforts to advance the Expressway and Busway East Extension (E/BEE) is the development and publication of new articles.

The following article was published in several area newspapers including the Valley Independent and Observer Reporter. Copies of the article were also forward onto select area elected officials.

Allegheny County should extend the Busway East to link with the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway

The recent decision of the PA Turnpike Commission to restart planning and design for the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway project north of PA Route 51 is to be applauded. The Expressway link from PA Route 51 to I-376 in Monroeville will complete the Expressway project and provide needed access to Mon Valley brownfield development sites, businesses, and communities.

It's worth noting that twelve communities in the PA Route 51 to I-376 Expressway corridor have passed resolutions of support for the Expressway project, including all Mon Valley communities and communities in the Penn Hill and Monroeville area.

The leadership of Chairman Sean Logan and Vice Chairman Bill Lieberman, both from southwestern Pennsylvania, was essential in the restart of the Expressway project. The support of southwestern Pennsylvania state legislators in the passage of Act 89 of 2013, that provided funding for the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway as well as needed transportation projects throughout the Commonwealth, should also be recognized.

We also agree with the PA Turnpike Commission's decision to drop the Expressway section from East Pittsburgh into the City of Pittsburgh as a part of the Expressway project restart. This expensive and controversial Expressway link would have been a barrier to progress on the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway north of PA Route 51. In 2013, the Progress Council proposed an extension of the Martin Luther King Jr. Busway from Swissvale to a planned Expressway interchange in East Pittsburgh as an option to the Expressway link into the City of Pittsburgh.

The Progress Council's proposed 2.8 mile extension of Busway East from Swissvale to the Expressway project would provide a mass transit option for commuters who now spend hours each day on the Parkway East sitting in traffic congestion. Linking the Busway East with the Expressway would also be a regional asset with the potential to serve mass transit systems in Westmorland, Washington and Fayette counties. The PA Turnpike Commission has expressed support for the Busway East extension proposal and will seek to accommodate the project in Expressway planning.

The 1995 Port Authority's Martin Luther King Jr. Busway East expansion plan called for extending the Busway East to the Mon Valley and Monroeville. Linking the Busway East with the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway would meet the goal of this twenty-year old PAT plan and Allegheny County's Chief Executive Rich Fitzgerald's expressed interest in expanding the Busway East. While funding of any project can be a challenge, the multi-modal aspect of Busway East extension should make the project highly competitive under the U.S. Department

of Transportation's TIGER discretionary grant program. The TIGER program is a funding source for innovative transportation solutions.

Parkway East commuters as well as Mon Valley local and state elected officials interested in better transit access into the City of Pittsburgh and traffic congestion relief on the Parkway East should contact Port Authority of Allegheny's CEO Ellen M. McLean and Allegheny County's Chief Executive Rich Fitzgerald to ask that the Port Authority undertake the Busway East extension in partnership with the PA Turnpike Commission.

With broad support, we can advance both the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway and Busway East extension together to promote economic redevelopment in the still economically distressed Mon Valley as well as serving daily commuters into the City of Pittsburgh.

Joe Kirk is the Executive Director of the Monessen-based Mon Valley Progress Council. The Progress Council is the leading community advocate organization for the Mon Valley/Fayette Expressway and Southern Beltway projects.

Annual business meeting includes action on strategic objectives for 2016

In speaking about the action of sponsors at the annual business meeting, re-elected Progress Council president John Easoz said, "I am pleased that the approved strategic objectives for 2016 maintain our focus on core issues in the Mid Mon Valley including advancement of the Expressway project, working directly with area businesses, improving workforce readiness and working with local government on cooperative strategies to improve governmental services and addressing community bight." He added, "Even in light of the potential consolidation of the Progress Council and MMIDA, we consider these objectives core functions crucial for the future of our region."

Mon Valley Progress Council

2016 Strategic Objectives

Mission

To be a highly responsive, proactive and innovative business-led organization that contributes toward the improvement of economic conditions and quality-of-life in the Mid Mon Valley.

Goals

Champion a local and regional transportation system that efficiently connects communities and people with employment centers and area firms with markets and supply sources

Strategic objectives

- Continue Progress Council leadership on the Expressway to muster support of the EIS update in Allegheny County as well as in the broader region
- Continue Progress Council leadership on the (E/BEE) Expressway Busway East Extension and seek it's inclusion in the EIS process

Support the development of a diverse economic base with unemployment levels lower than the national rate

Strategic objectives

- Seek to secure EZ tax credits for expanding local firms
- Advocate for an extension of EZ for a program to target tax credits or other support for firms in economically distressed areas.

- Step up efforts to understand new directions in state business financing programs, convey such information to local firms and provide support in securing state financial assistance

Provide assistance to develop a workforce that meets the requirements of local firms and is an asset for the attraction of new firms to the region

Strategic objectives

- Continue to coordinate the Workforce Readiness Roundtable in efforts to improve local workforce readiness
- Seek financial support to initiate development of a workforce readiness App
- Seek an ongoing financial sponsor for the Path to Entrepreneurship project

Foster programs that establish viable local communities that support a stable to growing population

Strategic objectives

- Continuing to serve as the coordinator for the Cooperative to engage with local governments on initiatives that promote cooperative endeavors
- Continuing to serve as the coordinator for the Fight Blight Roundtable as a way of developing specific initiatives for regional action to address community blight
- Continue to seek modifications to the NPP program to improve access to the tax credit program in smaller communities
- Diversify the Progress Council funding base through a range of actions including an increased focus on additional business sponsor

Officers and board member elected at Annual Business meeting

The slate of Executive Committee members was re-elected additional annual terms. Board members, who were elected for staggered three-year terms, were also elected at the January 8 meeting.

Executive Committee

John Easoz	President
Robert Burke	Vice President
Louis Quarto	Secretary
James Protin	Treasurer
Louis Panza	At Large
William Lee	At Large
Timothy Urda	At Large
John Lackovic	At Large

Board of Directors

Class of 2015 - Expires December 31, 2017

William Lee
 Louis Panza
 Debra Keefer
 John Easoz

MVPC joins Pennsylvania Energy Infrastructure Alliance (PEIA)



PENNSYLVANIA ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE ALLIANCE

The Mon Valley Progress Council is now a core member of the Pennsylvania Energy Infrastructure Alliance (PEIA), a unique, broad-based coalition of labor, business, economic and agriculture

interests that support private investment in pipeline and other energy infrastructure developments.

“To revive manufacturing in the Mon Valley today, it is essential that the region have access to abundant sources of low-cost energy,” Mon Valley Progress Council executive director Joseph Kirk said. “Everyone talks about the need for quality infrastructure. Without a good transportation network and good schools, it is hard to attract investment. But underlying it all is energy. That energy requires infrastructure of its own.”

Development of the Marcellus and Utica shales is going to continue. The critical link to ensuring that growth is infrastructure. Pipelines, when built safely and managed responsibly, will create thousands of construction jobs, generate millions in annual estimated tax revenue locally and statewide, and bring recurring benefits to manufacturing and consumers that rely on affordable, reliable energy supplies.

That’s the focus of PEIA, which was launched in June 2015 by the Washington County Chamber of Commerce and Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, along with the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA!) and the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 66.

The alliance now consists of more than a dozen groups working in tandem to educate lawmakers, members of their respective organizations and the public about the benefits of modernizing and creating new energy infrastructure to secure Pennsylvania’s economic future. For more information, visit www.paallianceforenergy.com.

New initiative to increase corporate sponsorship announced

The January 8th annual meeting included an announcement of a renewed effort to identify and recruit Progress Council corporate sponsors. Progress Council Executive Director Joe Kirk referred to a list of area firms at the meeting and asked attendees to review the list for business relationships. Progress Council Executive Committee member Jim Protin was the first to respond with two prospects. We’re pleased to announce one of the prospects, **Patriot One Inc.** an excavation and contracting firm located in lower Speers has become a Progress Council corporate sponsor. The firm serves the mining and Marcellus shale industry, Welcome aboard **Patriot One.**

The Mon Valley Progress Council

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