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

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### **PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS**

**Follow-up underway with area congressmen on a federal funding concept for the Expressway project -** The Progress Council staff recently met with Congressman Jason Altmire as part of the effort to seek the inclusion language in the pending reauthorization of federal transportation legislation that would target funding to major highway projects such as the Expressway and Southern Beltway.

**Joint effort with Mon Valley Career and Technology Center to develop a work readiness program continues** A second meeting was recently held with local businesses and organizations on a joint Progress Council/MVCTC effort to develop a locally based work readiness program.

**Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone supports two applications for business tax credits -** Designation of a nine-community enterprise zone in the Mid Mon Valley is beginning to yield results for area firms. The Progress Council administrated program supported the submittal of two applications for Pennsylvania tax credits of up to 25% for planned capital projects. The two applications total over \$1.2 million in capital improvements. Action on the applications should occur before the end of the year.

**Smart Government Initiative to sponsor forum on regional policing** – A November 19 forum on regional policing will bring together representatives of regional police forces from the Mid Mon Valley and western Pennsylvania to discuss options for regional cooperation. The Progress Council's Smart Government Initiative sponsored the forum.

**Solar energy presentation to PA Turnpike CEO receives positive reception -** PA Turnpike Commission CEO Joe Brimmeier was so impressed with a Progress Council's forum last spring on economic development and environmental cooperative efforts in the Expressway corridor that he is embarking on the hiring of an alternative energy coordinator. Brimmeier was equally pleased to receive a presentation on solar energy concepts on September 17 from the Progress Council's president and energy consultant, John Easoz, on ways to incorporate solar energy strategies in highway corridors.

## **Follow-up underway on federal funding concept for the Expressway project**

The Progress Council staff recent met with Congressman Jason Altmire as part of the effort to seek the inclusion of language in the pending reauthorization of federal transportation legislation that would target funding to major highway projects such as the Expressway and Southern Beltway.

Congressman Altmire expressed support for the Expressway project and offered to work with the Progress Council and the Expressway Partnership. Progress Council executive director Joe Kirk was impressed with the congressman's grasp of issues regarding the Expressway, "While he noted the challenges in securing additional federal funds Congressman Altmire clearly understood that federal funding would help to advance a public/private partnership for the Expressway and Southern Beltway projects."

Congressman Altmire is a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee that is currently considering legislation to reauthorize the federal transportation program.

The Progress Council extends a special thanks to the Constructors Association of Western Pennsylvania for arranging the meeting with Congressman Altmire.

## **Joint effort with MVCTC to develop a work readiness program continues**

A second meeting was recently held with local businesses and organizations on a joint Mon Valley Progress Council/Mon Valley Career and Technology Center effort to develop a locally based work readiness program.

The committee includes representatives of World Kitchen, Solar Power Industries, Handyman Matters, Westmoreland County Community College, and Monongahela Area Chamber of Commerce.

Progress Council president John Easoz is pleased with the progress on the initiative, "I believe the partnership with the Mon Valley Career and Technology Center combined with the input of local business leaders will result in an effective educational program to begin to address work readiness issues in the Mid Mon Valley."

Work readiness courses, that are targeted to begin in early 2010, will be held in the Mon Valley Tech Access site at MVCTC. The tech access site is a business seminar facility that combines flexible classroom design with web-based video conferencing and a high-speed Internet access.

## **Mid Mon Valley Regional Enterprise Zone supports two applications for business tax credits**

Designation of a nine-community enterprise zone in the Mid Mon Valley is beginning to yield results for area firms. The Progress Council administrated program supported the submittal of two applications for Pennsylvania tax credits of up to 25% for planned capital projects. The two applications total over \$1.2 million in capital improvements. Action on the applications should occur before the end of the year.

Meetings continue with businesses located in the enterprise zones to discuss financing and training needs. “We see the Enterprise Program as an additional effort to support the growth of area businesses,” said Mid Mon Valley Enterprise Zone coordinator, Joe Kirk.

Participating communities include: Brownsville, Belle Vernon, California, Charleroi, Donora, Monongahela, Monessen, North Charleroi, and Speers.

### **Smart Government Initiative to sponsor forum on regional policing**

A November 19 forum on regional policing will bring together representatives of regional police forces from the Mid Mon Valley and western Pennsylvania to discuss options for regional cooperation. The forum is sponsored by the Progress Council’s Smart Government Initiative.

The joint effort with the Tri-County Borough’s Association promises to be an informative discussion of how regional police services can be cost effective while maintaining local service. Panelists will include: Bill Gamble, Police testing/Police personnel Mgt. Consultant; Michael Foreman, PA Dept. of Comm. Economic Development; Joe DeBlassio and Chief John Dale Hartman, Southwest Regional Police Department; Tom Wilkinson, R.E.S.A.; Northern Regional Police Department; and Thomas Tulip, Southwest Mercer County Regional Police

### **Solar energy presentation receives positive reception from PA Turnpike CEO**

The PA Turnpike Commission’s CEO, Joe Brimmeier, was so impressed with a Progress Council forum last spring on economic development and environmental cooperative efforts in the Expressway corridor that he is embarking on the hiring of an alternative energy coordinator. Brimmeier was equally pleased to receive a presentation on solar energy concepts on September 17 from the Progress Council’s president and solar energy consultant, John Easoz, on ways to incorporate solar energy strategies in highway corridors.

In his presentation, Easoz noted that solar panels have been install along highway corridors in Europe, as a way to supplement their energy needs. Based on current technology, solar panels placed along highway corridors in the United State would meet current US power needs.

The Progress Council has proposed that the PA Turnpike Commission consider a demonstration project to place solar panels along completed sections of the Expressway project. The PA Turnpike Commission is currently evaluating the proposal.

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