

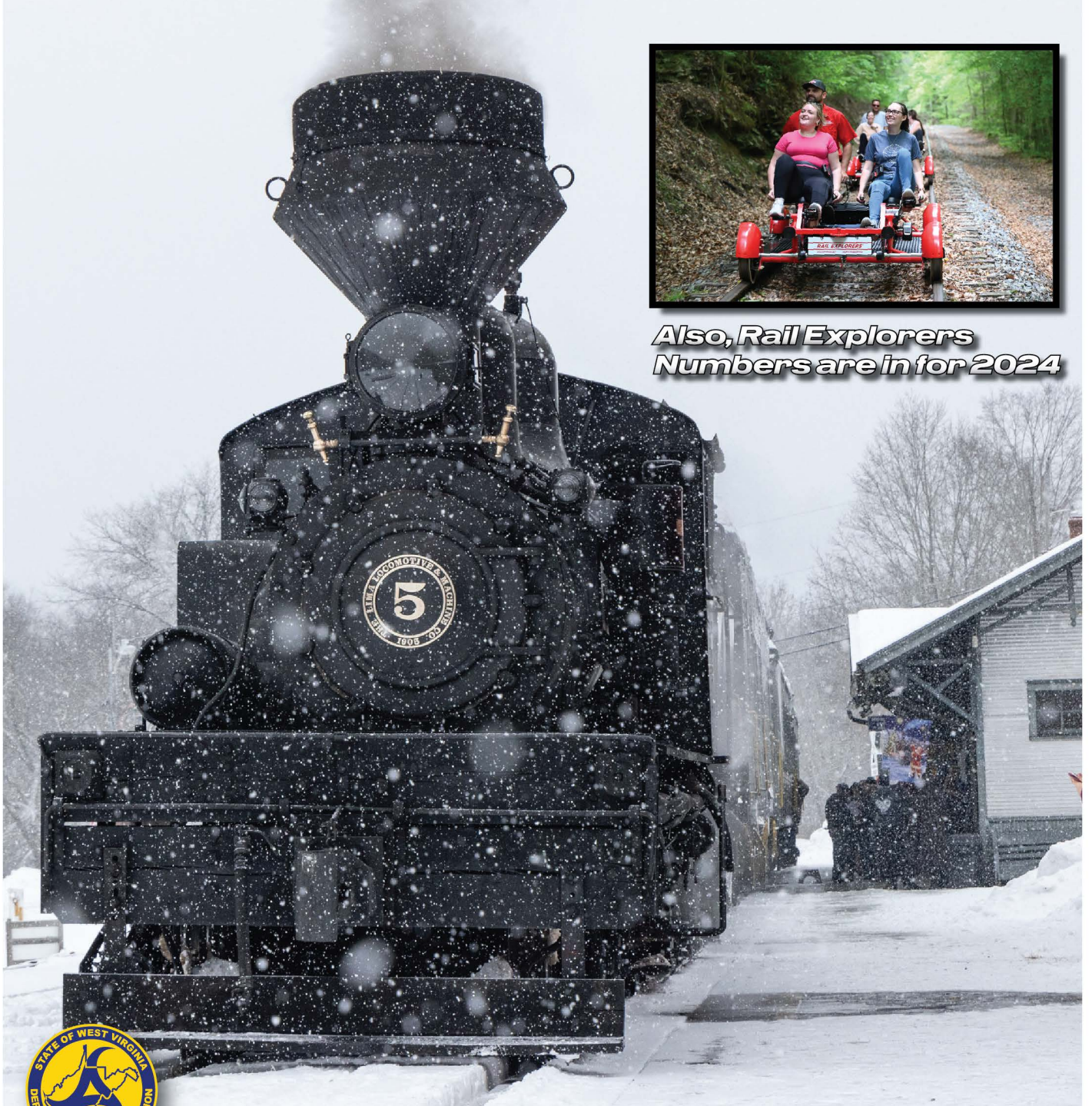
WV DOT Today!

• A Look At The In-House Design Engineering Department • Thanks To All The Plow Drivers Statewide • Pothole Patching Season Is Upon Us

West Virginia Division of Multimodal Transportation Announces Numbers for Train Rides in 2024



*Also, Rail Explorers
Numbers are in for 2024*



February 2025, Volume 7: Issue 2

West Virginia Parkways Authority Open New Travel Plaza in Bluestone

The Bluestone Travel Plaza, a new stop for motorists traveling through West Virginia, is now open. Located along Interstate 77, the plaza offers a place for drivers to rest, refuel, and take a break during their journey.

With Wendy's and Mountain State Market, Bluestone Travel Plaza provides dining options for travelers, offering both meals and quick snacks. Whether stopping for a meal or a fast bite, the plaza has a variety of choices.

The plaza offers Exxon gasoline and diesel fuel, along with a satellite diesel island for diesel vehicles. Travelers will find restroom facilities and pay-at-pump options for fueling. The plaza accepts all major credit and debit cards, and also carries motor oil and automotive accessories.

With ample parking for cars, trucks, and RVs, travelers can take a break before continuing their journey. Bluestone also provides local travel information on road conditions and nearby attractions. The plaza operates 24 hours a day, ensuring that services are available at any time. The staff is available to assist and make stops as convenient as possible.

The Bluestone Travel Plaza is designed to provide a convenient and practical stop for those traveling through West Virginia. With essential services and customer-focused staff, travelers can relax and refresh before getting back on the road.



WVDOT Today!

is a monthly newsletter published by the West Virginia Department of Transportation's Public Relations Division. The purpose of this publication is to facilitate connection across the diverse worksites and professions represented among WVDOT employees to empower us to function as **one West Virginia Department of Transportation**.

West Virginia Division of Highways
Attn: WVDOT Public Relations
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East
Building 5, Room A-137
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Editor: **Rusty Marks**
Layout and Design: **Chris Moynahan**
Submit articles, letters, suggestions, and Vision Award nominations to:
Jennifer.J.Dooley@wv.gov



West Virginia Division of Multimodal Transportation Announces Numbers for Train Riders in 2024

The Cass Scenic Railroad, Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad (West Virginia Central), and Potomac Eagle, have concluded another year of both scenic and freight operations, with total ridership numbers showing a slight dip in certain segments but a strong recovery in the fall months.

Year-End Ridership:

Cass/Durbin/WV Central: 54,619 passengers

Potomac Eagle: 41,021 passengers

Rail Explorers: 15,932 riders

Although the summer months of July and August 2024 saw a decrease in ridership compared to the previous year, the fall season brought a resurgence of passengers, bringing the total ridership numbers for the year in line with those of 2024, according to Cindy Butler, Commissioner of the West Virginia Division of Multimodal Transportation Facilities. The division oversees ports, aeronautics, rail and public transit within the state.

Beyond its popular excursion services, the South Branch Valley Railroad, which operates the Potomac Eagle, continues to provide vital freight transportation for customers in Hardy and Grant counties. Similarly, the West Virginia Central Railroad supports local economies in Randolph County with its freight services to various businesses.



Rail Explorers had its inaugural year with The Buffalo Creek Cruise railbike tour which came with great success. Mary Joy Lu, Rail Explorers CEO worked with the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) and state tourism officials to open this in June of 2024. Its state-of-the-art railbikes are pedal-powered, have hydraulic disc brakes, and feature a custom-built electric motor – the REX Propulsion System. Riders can choose a Quad Railbike that holds up to four riders or a Tandem Railbike that holds up to two riders.

The new outdoor adventure has brought more than 15,932 visitors to the small town of Clay, making it a significant new tourism attraction for the region.

Visitors from all 50 states and 25 countries traveled to Clay to experience the scenic beauty and rich history of the Buffalo Creek and Gauley Railroad, a historic line that dates back to 1904. The 2024 season was a major success for both Rail Explorers and the local community.

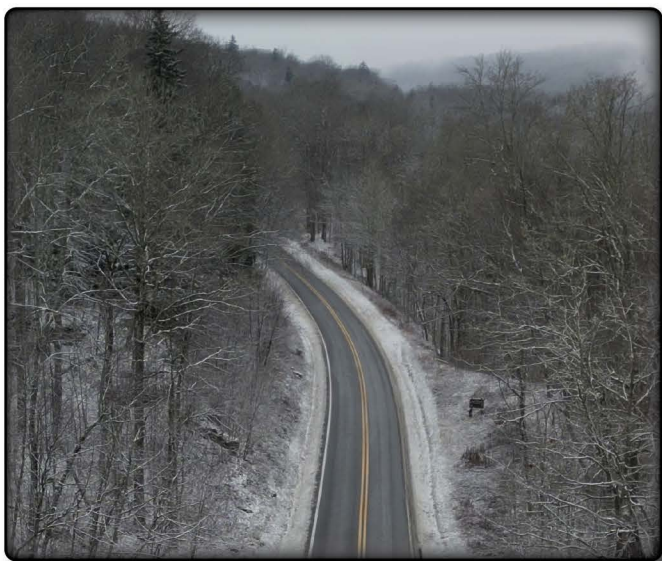
“Between tourism and the freight service, the railroads under our ownership provide economic lifelines to many parts of West Virginia.” Butler said.

For more information, visit mountainrailwv.com.

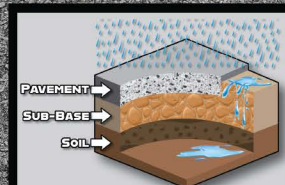
WVDOH Prepared to Patch Potholes After Winter Storms

After working around the clock to treat and clear the state's highway system in the midst of a winter storm, the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) is aggressively patching potholes that formed as a result of the freeze-thaw cycles.

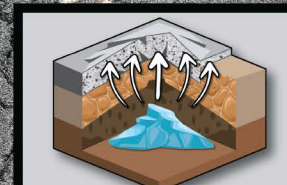
The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) will first address primary roadways, then move to secondary and tertiary roads as the winter storm gives way to milder weather in many parts of the state.



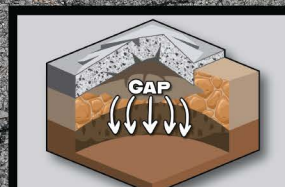
HOW POTHOLES FORM



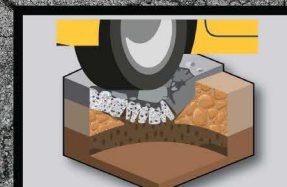
1 POTHOLES BEGIN AFTER SNOW OR RAIN SEEPS INTO THE SOIL BELOW THE ROAD SURFACE.



2 THE MOISTURE FREEZES WHEN TEMPERATURES DROP, CAUSING THE GROUND TO EXPAND & PUSH THE PAVEMENT UP.



3 AS TEMPERATURES RISE, THE GROUND RETURNS TO NORMAL LEVEL, BUT THE PAVEMENT REMAINS RAISED. THIS CREATES A GAP BETWEEN THE PAVEMENT & THE GROUND BELOW IT.



4 WHEN VEHICLES DRIVE OVER THIS CAVITY, THE PAVEMENT SURFACE CRACKS & FALLS INTO HOLLOW SPACE, CREATING ANOTHER POT HOLE.



"When we start to put together our action plan for potholes or damage to the roadway, we start with the highest priority roads and the ones that have the most amount of people on the roads," said Jake Bumgarner, Chief Engineer of Operations. "If there are potholes that are dangerous or damaging vehicles, we will then prioritize that to a higher level and get those completed and fixed first"

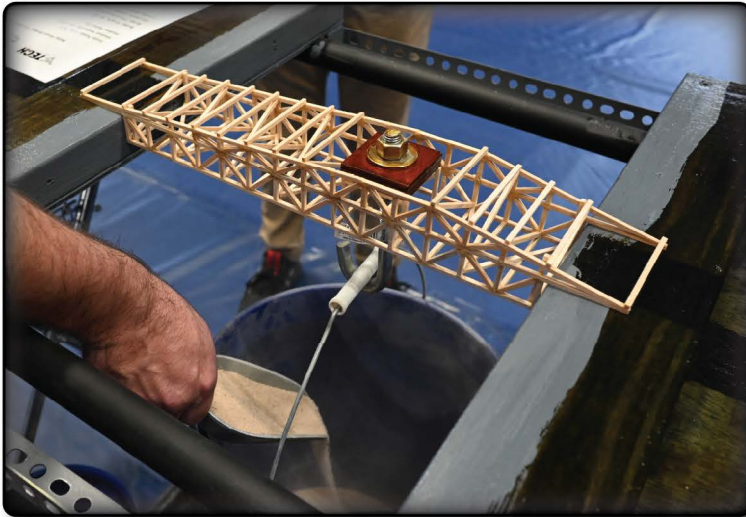
Although potholes can occur year-round, most crop up during the cold winter months when the WVDOH has the fewest options for repairs.

Crews can make temporary pothole repairs using a mixture of cold asphalt. Potholes are milled out square and filled in the same manner as hot asphalt, but the cold mixture is less durable and intended to prevent damage to cars until permanent repairs can be made when asphalt plants reopen in spring.

28 Days Remaining – Free STEM Activity for Schools: WVDOT's West Virginia Bridge Design & Build Contest Now Underway

CHARLESTON – Students in West Virginia middle schools and high schools have until Friday, February 28, 2025, to enter the 2025 West Virginia Bridge Design & Build Contest. Hosted by the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) for more than 25 years, registration is entirely free and available on the website wvbridgedesignandbuildcontest.com.

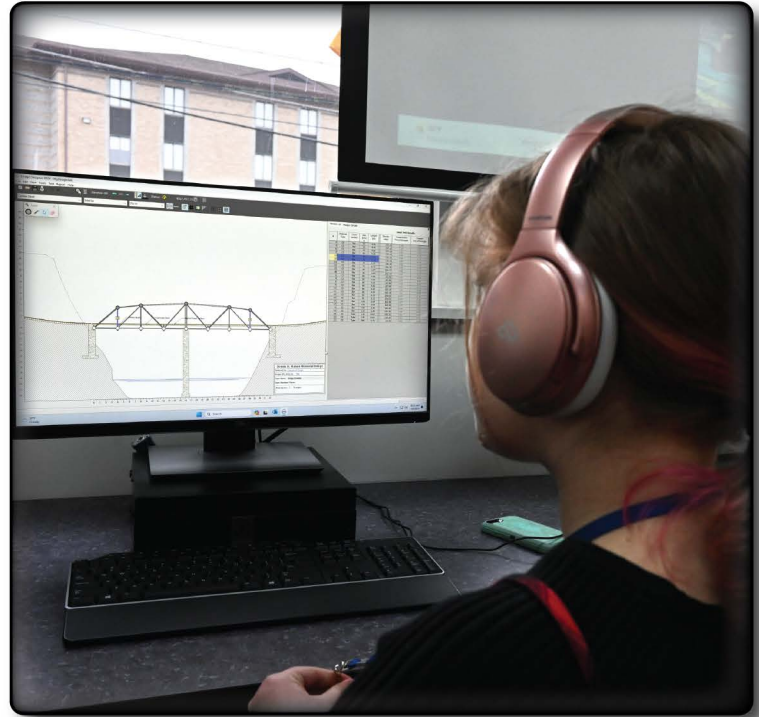
The West Virginia Bridge Design & Build Contest (WVBDB) is a statewide contest intended to conduct outreach to middle school and high school students considering a career track in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) occupations. Students work independently or in teams of two to design the lowest cost bridge using bridge design software updated by WVDOT each year. Students who progress to the final competition also design a balsa bridge.



"It has been wonderful to watch students try their hand at engineering bridges and stay with the contest throughout their middle and high school years," said Jennifer Dooley, of WVDOT's Public Relations Division. "We have witnessed students tell us they went to college because of the contest, and that's very rewarding."

The qualifying round of the 2025 WVBDB ends on Friday, February 28, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. EST. All individuals/teams must register at wvbridgedesignandbuildcontest.com/register/. This will ensure that the correct information is available to contact the finalists. All bridge design files must be uploaded to this website to officially enter the contest. All contest and event updates will also be provided on the website.

This ready-to-go STEM activity is entirely free to middle and high school students statewide. All materials needed to participate in the contest are available online.



The top 25 (approximate) individuals and teams with the lowest cost designs will be invited to participate in the finals (with at least five middle school individuals and teams) that will be held at the West Virginia University Institute of Technology Campus in Beckley. Finalists will be notified by email on Monday, March 3, 2025, with invitation and details of the finals event.

Students in grades 6-12 attending a West Virginia public, private, or home school may enter individually or in teams of one or two. For teams of two, the team captain should be the only one to register. You must include the contact information for you, your parents, and your teacher.



Canopy Clearing Underway in the Mountain State

Now that the first round of winter storms are past, West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) work crews can take a break from fighting snow and ice to concentrate on canopy clearing operations.

Canopy clearing is the act of cutting branches and brush that overhang the Mountain State's roadways, and it's a vital part of WVDOH's data-driven approach to long term highway maintenance and management. Eliminating shady areas along roads helps ice thaw more quickly in winter, and rainfall dry more quickly from the road surface, thus prolonging the life of the pavement on West Virginia's 39,000 miles of road.

"Water is the main enemy to prolonging the life of a highway," said Jake Bumgarner, P.E., WVDOH Chief Engineer of Operations. "Tree canopy can hold a lot of moisture on the ground. Canopy cutting helps to allow the sunlight to get to our roads which in turn helps remove the moisture."

By federal law, maintenance crews are only allowed to clear canopy between November 15 and March 31. The restriction is in place to protect endangered bat populations, which don't typically use trees during those months.

"During the winter, tree canopy can create cold spots and trap moisture causing the potential for black ice," Bumgarner said. "Cutting the canopy helps us clear the roads during SRIC by getting the sunlight down to the pavements."



In the past, the WVDOH was restricted to cutting a total of 140 acres of canopy a year, or 14 acres for each of the state's 10 highway districts. In 2022, that restriction was lifted, allowing districts to clear as much canopy as possible, provided they stay between the November - March time restriction.

The first year the restriction was lifted, WVDOH crews cut over 500 acres of canopy by focusing on cutting during winter days when they were not actively clearing snow and ice. In 2023, the WVDOH cleared 573.40 acres of canopy; the goal was raised to 600 acres in 2024.



That's about 500 miles – about the distance from Charleston to Nashville.

"We utilize contractors, rental equipment and our own crews to complete the work," Bumgarner said. "Our work is slowed significantly when it snows because our crews will switch over to driving the plow trucks. Plus, we don't like to have active work zones when road conditions are slick."



WVDOT Wants to Thank All Snowplow Drivers for Their Hard Work!

The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) wants to extend a huge thank you to all the hard working West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) workers who help to keep our roadways clear during the winter months. This year has been a very snowy winter in the Mountain State, so these snowplow drivers have been working around the clock in harsh conditions to keep roadways clear and treated. Working 12 hour shifts can be tiring but these dedicated workers push through for all the citizens of West Virginia, so we at the WVDOT just want to say thanks for all your hard work.



thank you



WVDOT Stresses Safety in Winter Work Zones



The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) wants to remind motorists that even when the temperatures are down this winter, work zones remain up.

West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) crews work on projects throughout the cold winter months, and the same caution should be taken through those work zones as throughout the rest of the year.

Drivers should always reduce speed through a work zone, especially in the winter when the roadway could be slippery due to ice and snow. Drivers should also avoid sudden movements in the vehicle while driving through work zones.

Remember, a snowplow is just a moving work zone. Give snowplows space, allowing the room to operate.

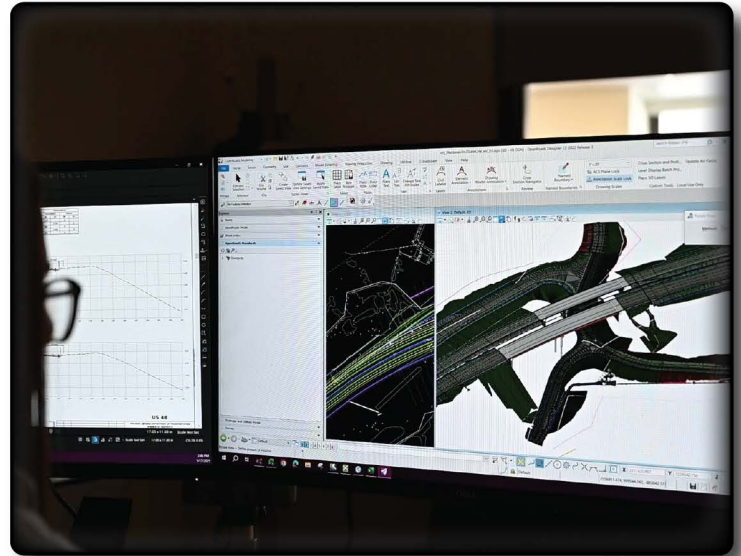
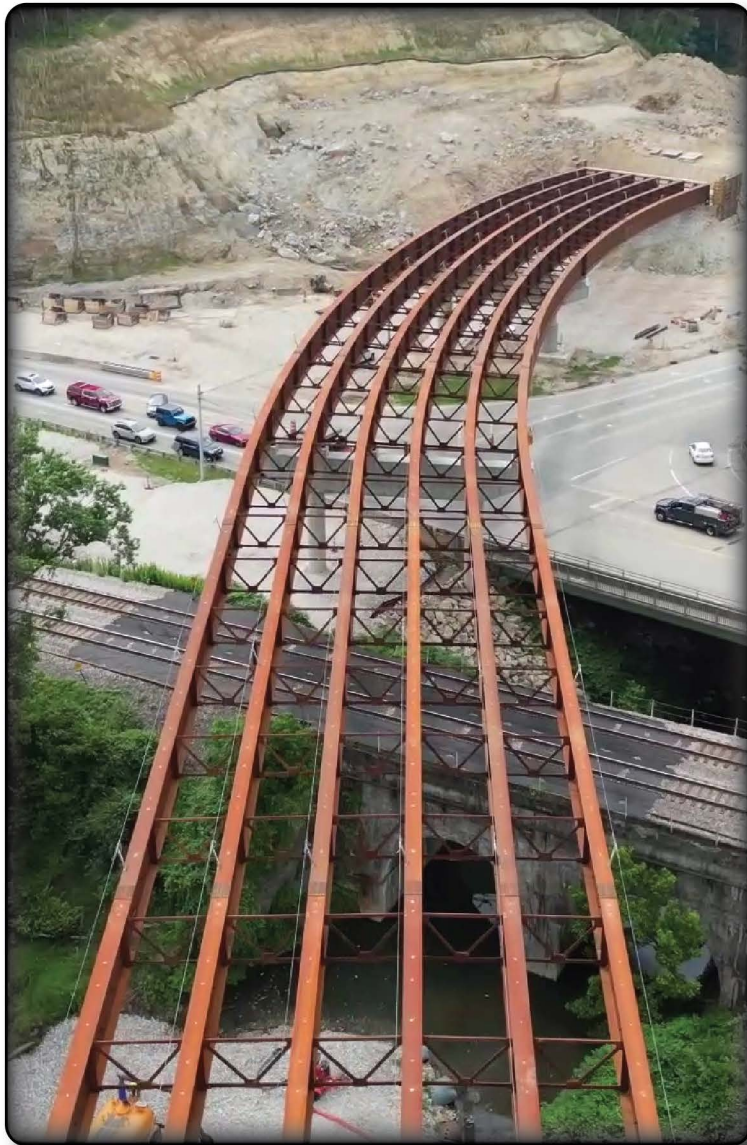
For more winter weather driving tips, follow the WVDOT on Facebook, X and Instagram.



WVDOH Engineering Department In-House Design

The West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) Engineering Division comprises five sections and is responsible for the review and approval of plans and specifications for the construction, reconstruction, and relocation of all roadways and bridges within the state highway system.

One of those sections – In-House Design – plays a key role in every WVDOH project from the initial design phase until completion. By using state-of-the-art software, the In-House Design Division is able to make detailed plans for roads and other structures throughout West Virginia long before the public sees the finished product.



“We’re starting from the beginning,” said Katie Hastings, P.E., section head of roadways in the In-House Design Division. “We have a group here that does the initial design work that lays out the options of what we could do with a project and then gives the best option. We get the project after that. Once it’s decided what is best in terms of price, sustainability and all of that, then it comes to us. Start to finish, we design the whole project.”

That means being involved in the right-of-way acquisition, the purchasing of property and plotting deeds long before the first load of dirt is ever moved. Some engineers are involved in both roadway and structural design.

“We have structural design groups but a lot of our people do both roadway and structure so they are designing the road and they are designing the structure,” Hastings said. “We are a full circle, doing a little bit of everything and we take that project from start to finish. Until it gets bid on and has a contractor, it’s in our hands.”

The WVDOH Engineering Division works every day to protect the citizens of West Virginia by ensuring safe roadways and structures across more than 39,000 miles of roadways in the state and play a major role in shaping the future by developing new technologies and solutions to problems.

To view or apply for open positions, visit <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/wvdot>.

Doddridge Employees Honored at Local School Board Meeting

On Tuesday January 21, 2025, the Doddridge County Board of Education recognized West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) Doddridge County Administrator Robert Cornell, his staff and all of District 4 for the WVDOH's exceptional dedication and ongoing efforts in supporting the Doddridge County community.

WVDOH workers were honored at a regularly scheduled board meeting as Cornell and District 4 were awarded with a certificate of appreciation.

"The recent actions by the Doddridge County B.O.E. is a small reminder of what a vital role the WVDOH plays in the safety of our communities," said District 4 Manager Earl Gaskins. "The commitment and dedication of men and women who go out and fight these storms, coupled with strong leadership, is what makes our Agency so great to work for."

The certificate further thanks the WVDOH staff for its unwavering commitment to maintaining safe and accessible roadways which is "instrumental in ensuring the success and well-being of the students, staff, and residents of Doddridge County."

"The Herculean effort that our folks put forward fighting the most recent storms is not only commendable but noticed by all of the residents of this great state," Gaskins said. "People like Robert 'Bob' Cornell and his staff stand as a testament for what all of us at the WVDOH stand for."



"The struggles and sacrifices we face every day are never for personal gain but for the betterment of our families and neighbors that travel the highway systems of West Virginia," Gaskins said. "It is a privilege for me to be given the opportunity to lead people like Bob and his staff as well as all of our folks in District 4. We are very proud to call Bob and his team part of the District 4 family. Thank you Bob, your efforts are greatly appreciated."



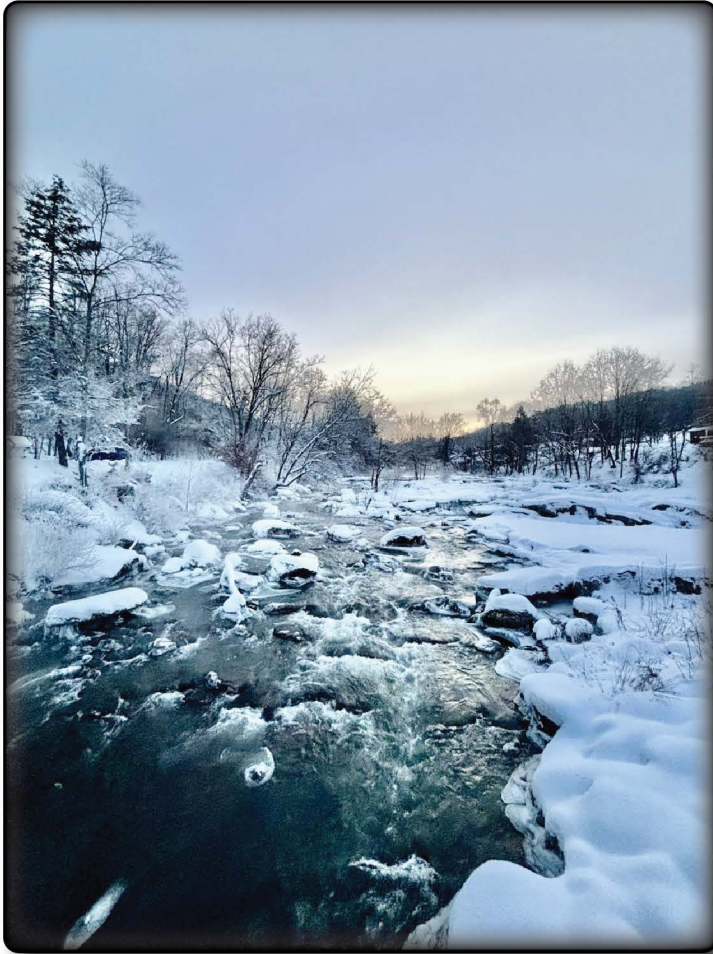
New Guests Each Week!



Follow us on SoundCloud & Apple Podcasts. Listen at: transportation.wv.gov * Click on Podcast



Great Employee Photos From Around the State



Teter Creek in Moatsville, standing on bridge on County Route 10 in Barbour County.



District 8, Jonathan Run Road, Tucker County.



District 9, Greenbrier County.

VISION AWARDS

Congratulations to the following individuals being recognized this month by the Secretary for their dedication to The Vision.

Kristen Brinkley -

Princeton Regional DMV Office

Jack McNeely - GHSP

The Vision is simple; to be the best DOT in the country, for the purpose of giving our West Virginia the chance it should have - a place of prosperity and joy, where citizens have the best chance to build the lives they hope for. To be the best DOT in the country based on the quality of our work and motivation. To be the safest place for our employees to work. To be the best trained, and most educated. To go Above and Beyond, every day.



A Look Back at Past and Present Transportation Secretaries

