



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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It's About Jobs, It's About Time

Stephen E. Foster, Chairman
Robert C. Byrd Corridor H Highway Authority

A native of Gassaway, West Virginia, Stephen E. Foster graduated from West Virginia Wesleyan College in 1970 with a bachelor's degree in chemistry and began a 23-year career with Union Carbide Corporation.

In 1989, Mr. Foster attended the TUCK Executive Program at Dartmouth College and became president of Amerchol Corporation, a UCC subsidiary with global sales to the personal care and pharmaceutical industry. In 1993, he joined Roquette America, Inc., a \$500 million producer of food and pharmaceutical intermediates, as vice president of sales, marketing, and logistics. He returned to West Virginia Wesleyan College in 2000, as the senior development officer and director of corporation/community relations.

He assumed the position of executive director for the Upshur County Development Authority in 2004. In that position he has served on the West Virginia Economic Development Council board of directors, including two years as president. He also has served in many positions with the Hardwood Alliance Zone, the West Virginia Polymer Alliance Zone and the West Virginia Manufacturers Association.

Among the community boards of directors on which he currently serves are Central West Virginia Aging Services, St. Joseph's Hospital, West Virginia Cooperative Extension Services, Buckhannon Rotary and the Robert C. Byrd Corridor H Association.

Traditional business will always have a dominant place in any culture. In this case, by traditional business, I mean the buying and/or selling of goods that must be moved from one marketplace to another. We are, of course, in a digital age that is changing the scope of business globally – but still, businesses and industries must be capable of moving product from one place to another, and that is never going to change.

In fact, one might argue that shipping and receiving are going to become even more important in the future because of the technological age in which we live. There are more markets now than ever before, inclusive of global markets, and West Virginia needs to be a player in this biggest of all markets. With that backdrop, we in West Virginia understand that we've always been at a significant disadvantage when it comes to the shipping and receiving phases of business and industry. That is because of the topography of where we live. We seldom, if ever, complain about that; we appreciate the beauty and uniqueness that our mountains give us. But our tradeoff is that finding flat land is a challenge. It is, therefore, cumbersome both to build new structures and ship products out of many West Virginia locations. That is especially true of places not close to four-lane highways or railroads.

During the past 40 years or so, the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) has been one of our state's best friends. It has moved us, slowly but steadily, toward a slightly more level playing field with the rest of the country. We have been able to better move products and promote tourism destinations because the ADHS has helped West Virginia complete some remarkable highways. In fact, five of the six planned West Virginia "Corridor" highways are completed:

- Corridor D: US 50, Cincinnati, Ohio (via Parkersburg, West Virginia) to I-79 at

Bridgeport, West Virginia

- Corridor E: Interstate 68, Morgantown, West Virginia (from I-79) to I-70 at Hancock, Maryland
- Corridor G: US 119, Charleston, West Virginia to Pikeville, Kentucky
- Corridor L: US 19, from Beckley to Sutton, West Virginia
- Corridor Q: Christiansburg, Virginia to Pikeville, Kentucky, incorporating US highways 52, 19 and 460 in West Virginia

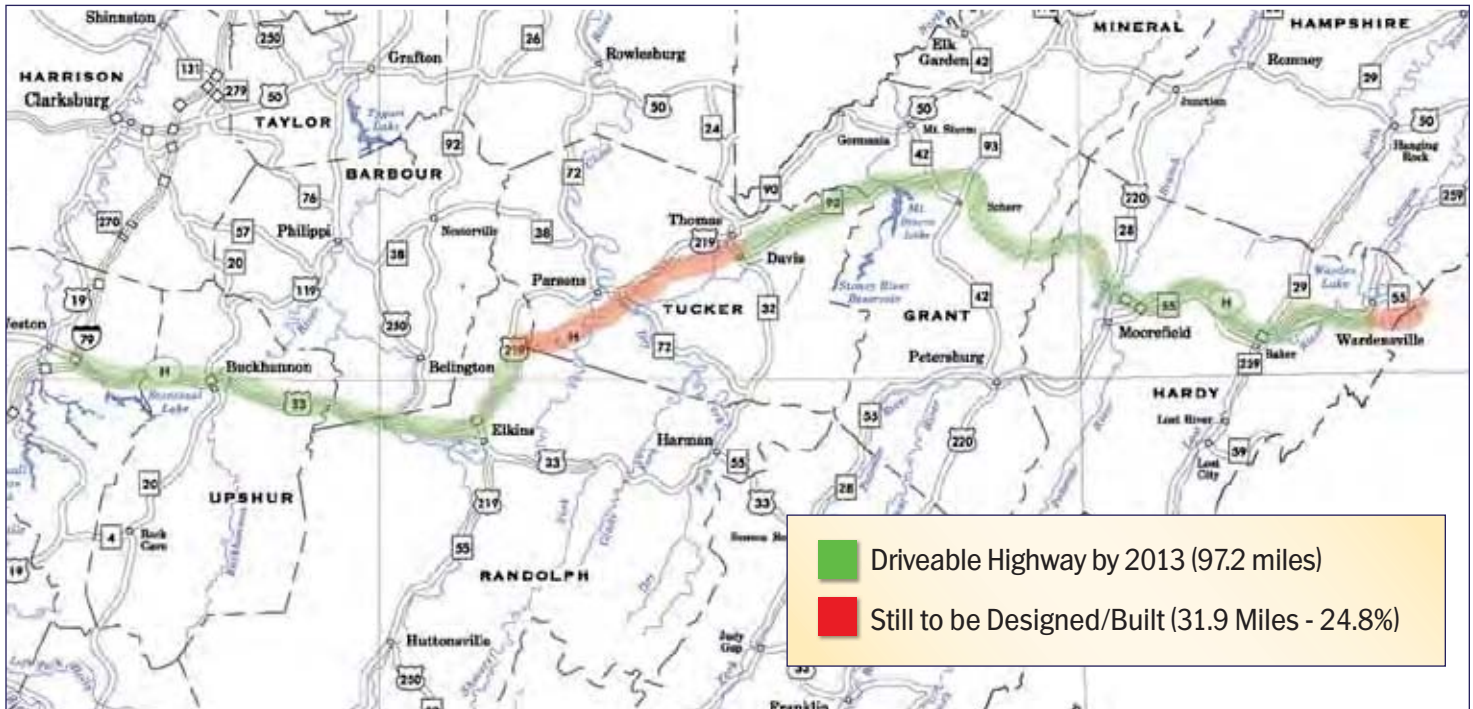
One construction project remains unfinished: Corridor H. From start to finish, Corridor H will run from the I-79 exit at Weston to the I-66/I-81 interchange near the Inland Port at Front Royal, Virginia.

Until recently, the project had been stalled almost indefinitely. Corridor H has been scheduled for completion in 2034 but, frankly, that might as well be 100 years from now when you consider the negative impact the lack of a major highway has on existing jobs, as well as attracting new businesses.

An ambitious group in north central West Virginia and the Potomac Highlands – a group that recently received the designation Corridor H Authority – is involved in a widespread effort to focus attention on Corridor H. The Authority is comprised of business leaders and state, county and municipal representatives, and the group is on a mission to keep the importance of completing Corridor H on the front-burner with Congress and the U.S. Department of Transportation, as well as officials in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Authority is making headway via a project appropriately called the "2020 Vision." The goal is to move that 2034 completion date forward to 2020.

As it stands, Corridor H will be 75 percent complete by the end of 2013 and, by the end of 2018, 87 percent of the highway will be

Corridor H Area Map



finished. Two stretches of road would remain incomplete: from Kerens, just northeast of Elkins, to Parsons; and a roughly six-mile hop from Warden to the Virginia line.

From a business and industry standpoint, completion of the remaining miles is important. Corridor H will offer our Potomac Highlands and North Central West Virginia products a much-needed lifeline. These companies will be able to utilize the Inland Port at Front Royal. Industries that now ship via the overcrowded port at Baltimore, Maryland, will have a direct route from Interstate-79 to Front Royal, Virginia, creating new, affordable access to international export markets.

For our higher education institutions, better access to our colleges in north central and eastern West Virginia will give students and their families more efficient and safer travel to Elkins (Davis & Elkins College), Buckhannon (West Virginia Wesleyan College), Phillipi (Alderson-Broaddus College), Fairmont (Fairmont State University), Glenville (Glenville State College) and Morgantown (West Virginia University).

From a tourism (and business) standpoint, Corridor H will allow travelers in the

Kanawha Valley easy access to the eastern territories in West Virginia. This extremely important highway also will have drawing power, allowing out-of-state travelers better access into our state. And, from a practical standpoint for Charleston travelers, Corridor H will cut an hour off the drive to Washington, D.C.

As with most large-scale major projects, the status of Corridor H includes some good news and bad news. The good news is that, with the help of our federal legislative delegations in the House and Senate, we have made considerable progress on Corridor H construction projects in the past few years. We also have had consistent support from Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and former governor, now United States Senator, Joe Manchin. Additionally, the West Virginia Legislature has consistently approved the matching funds needed for construction.

Also, the recently passed United States Surface Transportation bill made the Appalachian Corridor System, including Corridor H, a national priority. Further, it adjusted the portion of matching federal funds from 80 percent up to 100 percent through 2021.

The bad news is there are no concrete promises yet regarding the Kerens-to-Elkins and Warden-to-Virginia construction.

But we're working on it. Our slogan for the "2020 Vision" project is: Corridor H ... It's about Jobs, It's about Time.

I think that says it all. ♡