



REGIONAL REVIEW

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**Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson
Metropolitan Planning Commission**

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BROWNFIELD GRANTS ESSENTIAL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Transportation projects are what people usually associate with BHJ; however, that is just one segment of our role in the tri-county area. Over the course of the past several months, BHJ staff has been busy applying for state and federal grants that will further the cause of economic development in Brooke and Hancock counties. In addition, while OMEGA (Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association), located in Cambridge, is the federally designated job creation agency for Jefferson County (the Ohio portion of the region), due to distance and work load, these responsibilities frequently default to BHJ.

BHJ applied for and received a **FLEX-E** Grant from the West Virginia Development Office to fund a “Vision to Action Revitalization Planning Project” for \$9,300.00. Funding for the project, which has a match amount of \$1,000.00 from the Brooke Hancock Regional Planning and Development Council, is provided through a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission’s (ARC) enhanced Distressed Counties program and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation.

BHJ staff explained in the project narrative of the grant application that the Brooke-Hancock Regional Planning and Development Council (BH) has taken the lead in redevelopment of brownfields sites. Since October 2003, BH has secured \$400,000 to implement the Brooke-Hancock Brownfields Redevelopment Program. Of the 38 sites identified through the program, a Master Development Brief was developed for two sites in Weirton, one in Follansbee and one in Beech Bottom. These sites have moderate-to-high redevelopment potential with possible uses ranging from recreational to mixed-use housing to industrial and/or commercial development.

The entire \$10,300 is intended to develop a community vision for Brooke and Hancock counties that will encourage redevelopment and revitalization of brownfield properties by bringing together regional stakeholders, community leaders, business owners and redevelopers to create a “multi-vision integration tool.” BH will invite community members to participate in a one-day “Vision to Action” workshop to gather individual ideas to become common themes that will lead to dedicated action by both individuals and community leaders.

Following the workshop, the Northern West Virginia Brownfields Assistance Center will hold three two-hour “Share the

Vision” focus group meetings at three different locations within the Brooke-Hancock area. Stakeholders, community leaders, business owners and potential redevelopers will learn more about how brownfields affect the region and better understand “what is going on around them” and how they can be part of the process of rejuvenation in their own communities.



Brownfield Site in Newell, WV

The project will begin immediately upon approval by ARC, with the workshop in the first quarter of 2009 and the three focus meetings within 60 days of the workshop. The exact dates will depend upon the availability of the presenters.

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PLANNING COMMISSION
OFFICERS—2008**

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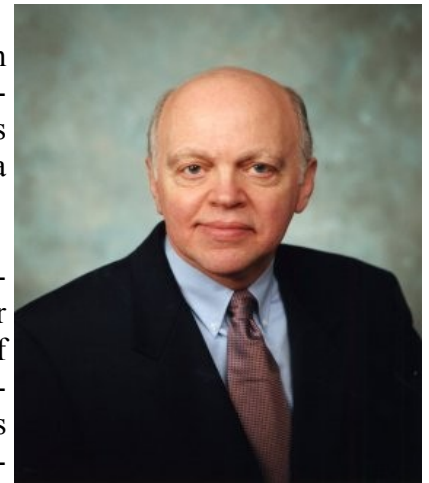
In early December, the Downtown Weirton Business and Civic Association held its first regional economic development forum to discuss our regional future. This event continued a search for economic truth and leadership.

In April, Senator Rockefeller initiated an economic roundtable at the Serbian Cultural Center to discuss strategies for the future growth of Weirton's economy. He called for a regional investment approach with long-term implications and consensus. He highlighted the proposed divestment of ArcelorMittal property and how optimal use of assets such as the Ohio River will produce benefits. The subsequent event summary stated "a regional effort to encourage growth is key, a clear and common vision or plan for development with a local person or entity to lead this effort is critical."

In May, BHJ held a regional brownfield forum at the West Virginia Northern Weirton Campus. Sponsored by Bowles, Rice, McDavid Graff & Love, attendees targeted Cove School, the Weirton Rail Yard, and Weirton's North End as future economic brownfield generators. Led by representatives from the American Planning Association, a call for community-based thoughts and direction was solicited.

In Spring 09, BHJ, through a grant from the West Virginia Development Office, will hold three focus group sessions to better prepare a strategic plan for brownfield divestment.

While beneficial and consensus building, these events have not created an all seeking and dynamic economic formula for economic recovery. They have created a dialogue. They have created a self-perspective. They have created momentum. They are all part of a vision. As stated by Pearl Bailey, "*change does not necessarily assure progress, but progress implacably requires change.*" At BHJ, we look forward to achieving progress with our partners.



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VISUALIZING A FUTURE: A FORUM FOR DISCUSSION

BY DR. JOHN C. BROWN



Co-sponsored by Progress Alliance and the Weirton Downtown Business and Civic Association (WDBCA), the first Regional Economic Outlook Forum was held in Weirton at the Millsop Community Center on December 2nd. Panelist from right to left were Lou Stein (Valley Venture), Bill D'Alesio (Business Development Corporation of the Northern Panhandle), John Brown (Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission), Ed Looman (Progress Alliance), Eli Dragisich (WDBCA), Eric Minor (WTOV 9), Gus Monezis (WDBCA), Dan Guida (WDBCA), Brian James (Not Pictured. ArcelorMittal), and Robert Griffin (Mountaineer Casino Race Track & Resort).

On December 2nd, through the co-sponsorship of Progress Alliance and the Weirton Downtown Business and Civic Association (WDBCA), the first Regional Economic Outlook Forum was held in Weirton. Led by WTOV 9 Moderator, Eric Minor, the panel in front of a 100+ attendee audience walked through our changing economy and future options for the Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson region.

Robert Griffin, CEO for Mountaineer Casino Race Track & Resort and the #1 employer in Hancock County, emphasized the recent demands of the credit market and how Mountaineer functions as a “supply-demand” resort with increasing competitors.

Brian James, General Manager for Weirton ArcelorMittal, noted the stability of tin plate (Weirton’s prominent steel product) in the changing global market and looked forward to a structured public-private divestment plan for non-essential ArcelorMittal properties in the region.

Eli Dragisich, a board member of the WDBCA and original member of Catch 22, a driving force for the construction of US 22 and the Veterans Bridge in the 1990’s, outlined how infrastructure sets the ground for job creation.

Ed Looman, Executive Director for Progress Alliance, proposed tourism as a key economic regional driver and illustrated the impact of destination properties such as Mountaineer and locally restored landmarks such as the Fort Steuben Museum.

FEELING THE HOLIDAY PINCH?

*H*igher food prices. Increased health care costs. Utility bills on the rise. Where does it end? We are all experiencing the effects of rising costs. And, although gas prices appear to be dropping, we don't know how long before they will be on the upward move again. Added to all that - **Christmas**. From where do we get the extra cash?

How about saving money on your work commute by Ride-sharing? The money saved on gas, parking and wear and tear on your vehicle can help with all the additional expenses that come at this time of year.

As part of its partnership with CommuteInfo of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, BHJ has initiated a year-long advertising campaign to encourage local commuters traveling to the Pittsburgh area for work to participate in ridesharing.



Lisa Kay Schweyer, the program developer for the SPC CommuteInfo program says: "Our partnership with BHJ has allowed us to help many commuters over the years. The new advertising promotion is exciting and should help even more people know about the service and help them save money."

The "Gas Grinch" is coming! In fact, you may have already seen him. The first in a series of seasonal billboards, drivers coming into the Steubenville-Weirton area and headed for Pittsburgh are greeted with the message

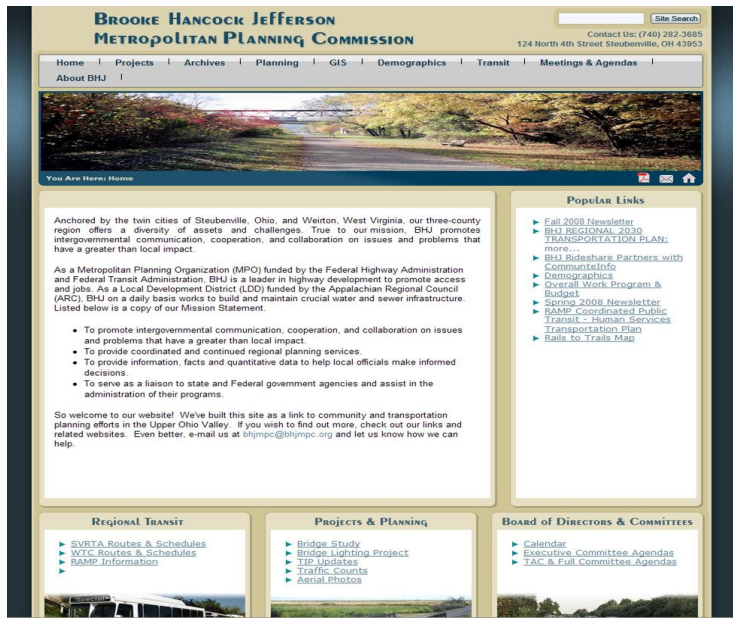
that you have a choice of where to spend your holiday cash – at the gas pump or on gifts.

In addition to the Lamar billboards, BHJ has partnered with WTOV's *Going Green Campaign*. The commercials began airing in early November and focus on the benefit of ridesharing not only to the commuter, but also to the environment. The current ads actually feature participants in the vanpool side of the program.

For more information on the Rideshare program, contact CommuteInfo at (412) 391-5590 or visit their website at www.commuteinfo.org.

Top 10 Reasons to Rideshare

10. Fewer vehicles on the road means less congested highways and better air quality.
9. Drive less and put fewer miles on your car.
8. Get to actually enjoy the view.
7. Relax while someone else drives.
6. Catch up on your sleep.
5. More time to play the "license plate" game.
4. Meet new & interesting people.
3. Finally have time to finish that book you started last summer.
2. Arrive at work feeling more relaxed, not having to "fight" through traffic.
1. Save all that gas, maintenance and parking money for a really nice vacation!!



COMING IN JANUARY.....

The BHJ website is getting a makeover! The website will have a new look as well as some new features. Current news, notices and events will be posted on the front page in abbreviated form and linked to an easily accessed “rest of the story.”

One brand new segment is the “Community Profile.” This section will feature a short history of each of the municipalities that BHJ serves. In addition, a contact list of each community’s elected officials, council meeting dates and times and community events will be posted.

Check it out at www.bhjmpc.org.

GRANTScontinued from page one

On November 24, 2008, staff submitted an application to the Northern WV Brownfields Assistance Center for a \$5,000 **FOCUS GRANT** on behalf of the Brooke-Hancock Regional Planning and Development Council.

If awarded, the funds will address brownfield redevelopment barriers at the Weirton Rail Yard, a 70 acre industrial site located at 100 Main Street, Weirton. The rail yard was once an active transport/loading facility for steel. In June 2008, the West Virginia Public Port Authority targeted this site as a potential intermodal freight site. The FOCUS Grant would help substantiate the environmental and financial validity of this site.

The site is part of an RCRA (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act) agreement with the West Virginia Department of Development and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Given the past industrial use, the site has expected ground petroleum tank issues and documented hazardous waste issues.

Several community stakeholders, including the City of Weirton, are impacted by the site. As the gateway property to the City, it sets the first visual impression. It also affects a neighborhood of approximately 3,000 senior citizens located adjacent to the rail yard. The Weirton Downtown Business District, composed of 85 retail/commercial businesses would immediately benefit from redevelopment.

Perhaps, the most beneficial aspect of the project is the proposed intermodal centers. It is estimated it could gen-

erate an estimated 200 to 2,000 new jobs with a medium to above wage scale.

Due to the shutdown of hot end production, the rail yard currently operates at 10% of capacity and is owned by ArcelorMittal Steel. It is being offered for sale as a divestment property through CB Richard Ellis Commercial Realtors. The owners concur with BH’s further evaluation of this site.

If awarded, the grant will be managed by BH staff. The existing 20-member Brooke-Hancock Brownfield Task Force will serve as the community advisory group. BH expects a grant funding decision by March 2009.



Weirton Rail Yard

HANCOCK COUNTY'S ROUTE 8 SEWER PROJECT: PERSEVERANCE AND DILIGENCE PAYS OFF



On October 27, in New Manchester, Hancock County, the Hancock County Public Service District, Hancock County Commissioners and others held a long-awaited groundbreaking for the Route 8 Sewer Project.

The project will expand public sewage to 660 residents in the rural portions of Hancock County. The total project cost is \$18 million.

Thank you to those who committed their valuable time and resources to this project.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 24	BHJ Office Closes at Noon	
December 25	<i>Merry Christmas</i>	
December 31	BHJ Office Closes at Noon	
January 1	<i>Happy New Year</i>	
January 5	Executive Committee, BHJ Office	Noon
January 19	BHJ Office Closed—Martin Luther King Day	
January 28	TAC Full Commission Organizational Meeting, BHJ Office	10:30 Noon

NEW AND IMPROVED COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION

What do the elderly and/or those with disabilities or low income have in common? One is transportation – or lack of. Finding reliable transportation to get to the doctor or the grocery store can sometimes be a lesson in frustration. And, this is not unique just to the tri-county region. It is, in fact, nationwide.

The U.S. Congress recognized that fact, and in August 2005 passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) as public law authorizing federal highway and transit programs for a five-year period from 2005-2009 in August of 2005. Included in this legislation was a new provision for a “human services transportation coordination” program aimed to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, older adults and individuals with lower incomes. The provision provides the means to ensure that communities coordinate transportation resources provided through multiple federal programs by minimizing duplication of services and facilitate the most appropriate-cost-effective transportation system possible. In addition, the SAFETEA-LU requires that all public, non-profit and private transportation stakeholders, as well as members of the general public develop the “Coordinated Transit Transportation” plans as a pre-requisite for all Federal Transit Administration (FTA) human service programs.

Over the course of the past year, a committee organized by Mike Paprocki, BHJ transportation study director, has been meeting monthly to explore ways to coordinate public transportation within the three counties. The group, known as the Regional Access Mobility Partnership (RAMP), is comprised of representatives from local public transit, human service and privately-owned organizations that provide transportation. Their initial goal is to eventually provide a single-access point for the public to call when they need public transportation.

In December 2006, a “steering committee” selected Wilbur – Smith & Associates to complete a “Coordinated Transit Transportation” plan. From there, public meetings were held, and monthly meetings continued to evaluate and further plan. RAMP is now at the point of working on a memorandum of understanding that will be signed by the various representative groups.

RAMP is also planning to purchase a management software package that will provide the means to ensure more efficient transportation trip planning. Eventually, they plan to hire a transportation coordinator. Before that can happen, though, legalities must be worked out to allow the various groups to share local money to match to federal grants or other funds.

Mr. Paprocki is currently in the process of preparing the necessary documents. He says the trip planning software will cost between \$40,000 and \$60,000. He further explained that the local agencies will have to provide a sum totaling a 20 percent match for the software.

In the meantime, he is working to complete the memorandum of understanding and determine the requirements of a single-point call center. Several members of RAMP will be working with him to develop the draft proposal including Frank Bovina (Steel Valley Regional Transit Authority), Becky Stout (Weirton Transit Corporation), Amy Mihalyo, director of Prime Time and Bob Herceg of Checker Transportation/Ambulance Service, Inc.

Once completed, Brooke, Hancock and Jefferson counties will have a “leg-up” and begin moving into a coordinated, more efficient transportation system.

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE BHJ STAFF

Mike Paprocki
Dave Snelting
Shawn Price
Dr. John Brown



Barb Zimmon
Linda Taylor
Joan Cresap
Mary Moore

Related Web Sites

Appalachian Regional Commission
www.arc.gov

Brooke County Economic Development Authority
www.brookewv.org

Brooke Pioneer Trail Assoc. Inc
www.brookepioneertrail.org

**Business Development Corporation of the
Northern Panhandle**
www.bhbdc.org

CHANGE, Inc.
www.changeinc.org

City of Steubenville
www.ci.steubenville.oh.us

Hancock County Convention and Visitors Bureau
www.hancockcvb.com

Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce
www.jeffersoncountychamber.com

Ohio Department of Transportation
www.dot.state.oh.us

Progress Alliance
www.progressalliance.com

State of Ohio Government Information
www.state.oh.us

State of West Virginia Government Info.
www.state.wv.us

State Route 2 & Interstate 68 Authority
www.route2andi68.com

U.S. Census Bureau
www.census.gov

U.S. Department of Transportation
www.dot.gov

U.S. Economic Development
www.commerce.gov

Village of Wintersville
www.wintersville.net

Weirton Chamber of Commerce
www.weirtonchamber.com

West Virginia Department of Transportation
www.wvdot.com

West Virginia Development Office
www.wvdo.org

Northern West Virginia Workforce Investment Board
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