

# Parkways Authority



*The West Virginia Parkways Authority has statutory authority to provide for the construction, development and maintenance of 88 miles of interstate roads that constitute the West Virginia Turnpike. Its mission is to operate the West Virginia Turnpike as a modern, efficient and safe roadway.*

# WEST VIRGINIA PARKWAYS AUTHORITY

## Gregory C. Barr, General Manager



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Gregory C. Barr became the General Manager of the West Virginia Parkways Authority in June 2003. He was previously the Authority's Director of Finance. Greg is a Certified Public Accountant and a graduate of Marshall University. He joined the Authority in 1989. Prior to joining the Authority, Greg was Controller of Call Detroit Diesel Allison, Inc., a heavy industry vehicle distributorship, for twelve years and Controller of Central Enterprises Limited for one year. Greg is married to his wife Terri and is the father of two sons, Scott and Chris. They reside in St. Albans, WV.

The Parkways Authority currently employs approximately 416 full time, part time, and temporary employees.

The 88-mile West Virginia Turnpike is a \$1 billion infrastructure asset of roads, bridges, and facilities.

The Authority oversees the following functions on the Turnpike:

- provides pavement and bridge maintenance and rehabilitation of the Turnpike's 400+ lane miles of roadway, 18 interchanges and 116 bridges;
- performs snow removal and ice control during inclement weather along the entire length of the 88 mile Turnpike and the Travel Plazas, Toll Plazas, Rest Areas and Welcome Center parking lots;
- operates four toll plazas 24-hours/7-days a week collecting approximately \$81 million in tolls annually;
- provides tourist information, directions, brochures, and reservations at the three Travel Plazas, the West Virginia Welcome Center and Tamarack;
- promotes tourism destination points and events throughout the State of West Virginia;
- funds and supports State Police Troop 7, consisting of 24 State Police officers and one (1) Public Service Commission Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspector, who provide 24-hour law enforcement on the Turnpike;
- operates a 24-hour communications system that links State Police, emergency services and wrecker services and ties in the interdepartmental Turnpike toll plazas and maintenance departments as well as overseeing the 19 dynamic message signs, 26 closed circuit television cameras and a traffic management system that is integrated with the Division of Highways.
- provides an internal Courtesy Patrol/Motorist Assist Program that covers the entire length of the Turnpike and operates in coordination with Troop 7 patrol units.

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## REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES

In Fiscal Year 2011, there were approximately 34.5 million transactions on the West Virginia Turnpike. There are approximately 94,000 average daily transactions, 79% are privately owned vehicles and 21% are commercial vehicles. Approximately 16% of toll revenues come from West Virginia passenger cars and 8% from West Virginia commercial vehicles (per November 2005 Wilbur Smith Traffic Study). Out-of-state passenger and commercial vehicles account for 76% of all toll revenues on the Turnpike. Commercial traffic accounts for 50% of toll revenues.

In Fiscal Year 2011/2012, the following was budgeted for highway operations (in millions):

Operating Revenue - \$80.5 (tolls - \$78.8)  
Operating Expenses - \$37.4  
Debt Service and Equipment Finance Leasing - \$10.9  
Renewal and Replacement - \$10.1  
Net Highway Reserve Revenue - \$22.1

## TAMARACK- "THE BEST OF WEST VIRGINIA"

TAMARACK- The Best of West Virginia is a system with many different components which functions as an integrated product, producer, distribution and marketing network in West Virginia. It is designed to foster a vibrant cottage industry among the State's artisans and food producers, create jobs and strengthen and preserve West Virginia's rich cultural heritage. The most visible component of the Tamarack



System is the 81,000 square foot Caperton Center, a retail outlet and tourist facility located in Beckley, West Virginia, at Exit 45 of I-64/ I-77, which includes a 22,000 square foot conference center. Tamarack opened its doors to the public on May 13, 1996 and has since earned a reputation as a world-class, multi-faceted center housing beautifully crafted West Virginia arts, crafts and products. It features performing arts in the Hulett C. Smith Theater as well as showcasing fine arts in the center's David L. Dickirson Fine Arts Gallery. Hugely popular has been the Taste of West Virginia Food Court managed by the Greenbrier Resort and Club Management Company where visitors may dine while they experience the sights, sounds and hospitality of the center.

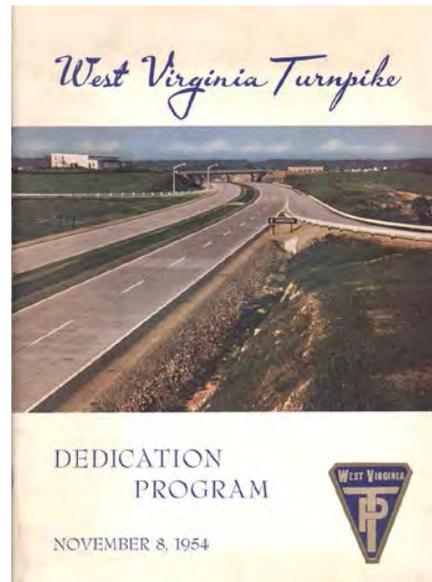
In 2011, the Parkways Authority hired a land planning and management firm to advise the Authority on the highest and best use of approximately 82 acres surrounding Tamarack. The goal is to outline a mix of land uses that serve to complement Tamarack's and West Virginia's image and also generate income to bring Tamarack to a revenue neutral or revenue positive operating condition. In total, the site contains approximately 107.29 acres which include the current Tamarack facility and parking lots and is located near Beckley, immediately west of the Authority's Beckley Travel Plaza, near the crossroads of Interstates 64 and 77 and U.S. Route 19. It is easily accessible, located just off I-77/I-64 of the West Virginia Turnpike, and served by a fully operational interchange with both north and south bound access. An estimated 45,000 vehicles pass Tamarack Exit 45 daily.

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## HISTORY

In 1947, the West Virginia State Legislature approved funds to study the feasibility of building a “superhighway” in the state. While the original plan was to build this road from Wheeling to Princeton, further studies determined the plan would be too expensive, and the route between Charleston and Princeton was chosen, based upon traffic studies. At that point in time, the trip between Charleston and Princeton was a tortuous 107 mile route, with steep grades and hazardous curves.

While the design of the new Turnpike was originally for a four-lane highway, because of cost, it was decided to begin with two lanes. Construction would cover terrain through which many thought would be an impossible barrier to build any road.



Construction began in 1952 and, within two years, the Turnpike opened for travel in November 1954. It was celebrated as an amazing feat and opened West Virginia to traffic from around the country.

By the early 1970's, the National Interstate Highway System began to put pressure on the ability of the Turnpike to accommodate the increase in traffic. Because of the 4-lane highways in surrounding states, the additional traffic flow through West Virginia made auto and truck accidents more likely. In late 1976, work began to upgrade the Turnpike to national highway standards. By 1983, 87 of the 88 miles needed to upgrade the Turnpike were completed. The Memorial Tunnel, a two-lane passageway, stood in the way of completing the upgrade. A decision was made to bypass the tunnel. A 1.72 mile extension was built to bypass the tunnel and the Stanley Bender Bridge which spanned Paint Creek. In 1988, the upgrade was completed with the opening of the I-64 interchange south of Beckley.

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In 1989, side tolls were removed throughout the Turnpike with the exception of Exit 48, the North Beckley interchange to Route 19. This converted the Turnpike to an “open system” from a “closed system”.

With the completion of Interstates 64, 77 and 79, the West Virginia Turnpike offered travelers a safe and efficient route through the Mountain State from all points of the country.

In 1989, the West Virginia Legislature dissolved the Turnpike Commission and created the West Virginia Parkways Economic Development and Tourism Authority along with a new mission of economic development and tourism.

In April 2007, at the direction of Governor Joe Manchin III, Parkways Board Chairman, the Board adopted a resolution to refocus the core mission of the Parkways to the maintenance and upkeep of the Turnpike. This required the elimination of all economic and development investments except for Tamarack.

In September 2007, the Board adopted a resolution concerning a toll tax deduction pursuant to Senate Bill #2001. West Virginia citizens who participate in the E-ZPass® non-commercial commuter pass program are able to deduct West Virginia Turnpike tolls paid from adjusted gross income up to \$1,200 per year on their state income tax return for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2007 (minimum amount eligible for deduction is \$25.00).

On July 1, 2009, the Parkways Authority Board voted to increase tolls, effective August 1, 2009, for passenger cars from \$1.25 to \$2.00 for cash and non-West Virginia E-ZPass® customers. The current commuter discount plan for high frequency users of the West Virginia Turnpike (formerly “PACC” or “PAC” Card Program) continued with no increase in fees. This plan is for the daily commuter driving to and from work, school, church, etc., and frequent users of the West Virginia Turnpike. Their cost is \$95 per year, per plaza, or \$25 per quarter, per plaza, with unlimited travel through that plaza.

A new discount program for the less frequent Turnpike traveler was also approved. Customers who drive the Turnpike occasionally, but still want to receive a discount, can sign up for a West Virginia E-ZPass® at a cost of \$5.00 per year, then pre-pay funds via credit card into their account (\$20.00 minimum account balance). Rates for these customers increased from \$1.25 to \$1.30 (a 35% savings from the \$2.00 cash rate). The toll is automatically deducted from the prepaid account as they drive through the toll plazas. The West Virginia E-ZPass is available to anyone, regardless of state or country of residence.

Rates for all classes of commercial vehicles also increased. For example, the 5-axle tractor trailer rate raised from \$4.25 to \$6.75 for cash paying customers; however, West Virginia E-ZPass® commercial account holder rates only increased to \$5.40 (a 20% savings), and the non-West Virginia E-ZPass® rate raised to \$5.87 (a 13% savings).

During the July 1, 2009 meeting, the Authority also voted to create an escrow defeasance account for the outstanding Tamarack bonds of \$6.25 million. Doing so freed up approximately \$1.44 million annually in money that was pledged to pay the Tamarack bond debt service. The funds that were pledged to the Tamarack bonds came from the Turnpike travel plaza food and fuel sales. No Turnpike tolls are or ever have been pledged to secure the Tamarack bonds. This additional \$1.44 million enabled the Parkways Authority Board to provide additional toll discounts to its customers. The defeasance was successfully completed on August 20, 2009.

The Parkways immediately began using the additional toll funds for road and bridge rehabilitation projects on the West Virginia Turnpike. Work began in Kanawha, Fayette, Raleigh and Mercer Counties and included various sections of the 88-mile Turnpike from Charleston to Princeton. The type of work performed was: full depth concrete repairs; asphalt pavement overlay; bridge deck overlays; bridge painting; culvert and drainage repairs; bridge and facilities retrofit work; and, pavement markings. Toll revenues of approximately \$335 million will be used over the next ten years for essential deferred maintenance and capital costs, including \$242 million for paving needs.

On September 10, 2009, a new 1,700 square foot Museum Shop at the Culture Center in Charleston opened to the Public. The Culture Center contracted with Tamarack: The Best of West Virginia to operate the Museum Shop and, to date, sales are exceeding projects. The shop features a wide selection of Tamarack juried art, crafts and giftware, as well as museum souvenirs.

On Friday, December 18, and Saturday, December 19, 2009, a major, historic East coast snow storm struck Southern West Virginia resulting in over two feet of wet, heavy snow falling in a very compressed time period on the West Virginia Turnpike. Complications included: multiple vehicle crashes, including 18-wheel vehicles, in the southbound lanes; lost communications with the radio tower at the Lick Knob site; could not reach the State Police or Maintenance crews by radio; heavy snow prevented access by emergency crews, and emergency shoulders were blocked by vehicles. There are few detour routes off of the Turnpike, concrete median barrier walls prevent traffic from turning around on the north end, and there are few cell towers on the north end. Following this snow storm, Parkways Authority staff met with the West Virginia Secretary of Transportation, West Virginia Division of Highways staff and an Emergency Response Review Team from the Federal Highway Administration to review the Authority's emergency response capabilities and make recommendations. The Review Team made recommendations in the following categories: Preparation and Planning: Pre-Event; Preparation, Planning and Training: Pre-Season, Public Safety; Communication- Internal; Communication- External, and Incident Management.

The Authority made the following enhancements to the Turnpike's snow removal and ice control operations:

- Four emergency gates were installed in the median walls on the north end
- When a snow storm of 6" or more or a severe ice storm is expected...
  - Extra crews and equipment are repositioned
  - Command center established
  - Extra supplies and equipment purchased to assist motorists
  - Heavy equipment tandem trucks assist with snow plowing
  - Motor grader used for snow removal
  - Participated in pre-storm conference with National Weather Service, WV Division of Highways and the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

In addition, the WV Division of Highways hired a contractor to prepare an Incident Management Plan for the Turnpike. This draft plan is currently under review and will contain procedures to maintain traffic movement in the event the Turnpike is rendered impassible by an accident, weather or any other event. It will also establish detours to bypass portions of the West Virginia Turnpike. The WV Department of Transportation used one-time Federal stimulus funds on the Turnpike for the following: 19 dynamic message signs; 22 closed circuit TV cameras; and, integrated the Turnpike's radio system with the WV Division of Highway's Traffic Management System and the 911 centers that service the Turnpike.

In April 2010, the Board awarded a \$9 million contract (\$5.6 million for the acquisition, implementation and system costs with optional maintenance costs of \$3.4 million for optional maintenance costs from years two through ten) to TransCore to upgrade and maintain the Parkways Authority electronic toll collection system, first established in 1999. As the prime contractor and toll system integrator, TransCore will be responsible for designing, installing, testing and maintaining the 5 plaza, 42-lane toll collection system which spans 88 miles of roadway from Charleston to Princeton along Interstate 77. TransCore will oversee the upgrade of the Authority's system and provide maintenance for 10 years. The upgraded toll collection system will replace the current lane software and the current lane equipment as needed. In addition, TransCore will upgrade all plaza, host and back office systems. Not only will this new system provide West Virginia E-ZPass customers with enhanced account management, such as on-line statements and renewals, it will also enable the Authority to offer this same cash-free electronic toll collection system on the Mon-Fayette Expressway near Morgantown and the proposed new U.S. Route 35 toll road in Putnam and Mason Counties.

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On April 2, 2010, Governor Manchin signed into law Senate Bill #427. The following are the highlights of this bill:

- Added two (2) Board Members from the first Congressional District by July 1, 2010, (eventually transitioning to two (2) from each Congressional District). There will be six board members, the Secretary of Transportation, the Governor or his Designee and one At Large Member for a total of nine. Newly appointed members will have maximum terms of five years instead of eight years.
- Changed the name to the West Virginia Parkways Authority (dropping the Economic Development and Tourism name and function, except for the operation of Tamarack and finalizing an agreement to develop land owned by the Authority located adjacent to Tamarack)
- Restores the ability to sell bonds for new road projects.
- The Authority will no longer charge a \$10 refundable deposit for passenger car E-ZPass® transponders and those that have already paid the \$10 will be refunded their money (approximately \$162,000).
- Staff will annually conduct informational sessions promoting E-ZPass in each of the four counties of the West Virginia Turnpike.
- Eliminated the prohibition of building motels within five miles of the WV Turnpike.
- Added new section, §17-16A-30, titled coordination with county commission in counties where a parkway project may be located. Once a parkway project is identified by the Authority, the Governor shall appoint, with the advice and consent of the Senate, two persons from each county where the parkway project is located to serve on a local committee to provide recommendations and suggestions to the Authority on all matters regarding the local identified project. The local committee shall also report any of its findings to the county commission or county commissions of the counties in which the parkway project is located. Prior to any final approval of a parkway project, the county commissions of the counties in which a parkway project is located shall by resolution approve the parkway project.

In 2011, the West Virginia Parkways Authority continued a major highway and bridge rehabilitation schedule that began in 2009 following the first across-the-board toll increase on the West Virginia Turnpike in 28 years. The Parkways Authority has been using these toll revenues to address the backlog of improvements and deferred maintenance that were needed on the Turnpike.

During the 2011 construction season, two major projects were advertised for pavement rehabilitation, paving in the Beckley area from mile marker 46.8 to 40.0, and, mill and inlay work on high priority areas over the entire Turnpike. Projects were described as follows: bridge painting; bridge deck overlays; bridge/facilities retrofit; guardrail replacement; culvert repair/replacement; sign replacement/overlays; pavement striping and markings; full depth repairs/undersealing; and, drainage pipe rehabilitation.

To summarize, during Fiscal Year 2010/2011, the Parkways Authority awarded over \$31 million in contracts for major highway, bridge and facilities construction and upgrade projects.

### **PERTINENT RESOURCES/WEB LINKS**

[www.wvturnpike.com](http://www.wvturnpike.com)

[www.ibtta.org](http://www.ibtta.org)

[www.ezpass.com](http://www.ezpass.com)

[www.tamarackwv.com](http://www.tamarackwv.com)

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