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Kris Warner

West Virginia Economic Development Authority

Kris Warner is Executive Director of the West Virginia Economic Development Authority. The Authority provides financial assistance in the form of loans and operating leases to industrial development agencies and enterprises for the promotion and retention of new and existing commercial and industrial development. Warner serves as a board member on the West Virginia Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council and the West Virginia Public Energy Authority. He previously served as State Director of USDA Rural Development – West Virginia after being appointed by President Trump in 2017.

Strengthening the Foundation: West Virginia’s Commitment to Infrastructure Improvements

The West Virginia Economic Development Authority (WVEDA) is on a mission to advance infrastructure and build a solid foundation for the Mountain State’s economic and business development. Under the leadership of Governor Justice, the WVEDA continually rises to this challenge. Through a dual focus on business retention and development, the WVEDA provides the framework for continued growth and improvement.

The WVEDA provides loans, direct financing, and loan guarantees to new and existing businesses across industries. Combining this development power with the funding secured by the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021 – which provides the economic support to advance far-reaching infrastructure improvements – creates long-lasting change in the state’s business landscape.

invest in new facilities. In conjunction with the IIJA of 2021, Governor Justice has announced his strategy to improve broadband to unserved and underserved communities across West Virginia. That state initiative has four award programs to disburse broadband funding through a competitive application process. Federal agencies, such as the USDA Rural Development and the Federal Communications Commission, have also created new programs or reinvested in existing programs with funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 to support similar efforts.

Clean Water and Wastewater Improvements

The WVEDA is diligently working to remove the remaining debris and remediate environmental hazards on the former Century Aluminum smelter facility near Ravenswood. Our goal is to prepare the nearly 2,200-acre

“When the infrastructure exists, the businesses continue to build and grow.”

West Virginia’s Commitment to Broadband Expansion

Through close collaboration with the West Virginia Office of Broadband and the West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council, the WVEDA supports expanding and improving broadband internet service throughout the state. The WVEDA has an existing Broadband Loan Insurance program designed to mitigate credit risks and to encourage the participation of the commercial banking industry in the provision of loans and other credit enhancements to broadband service providers to expand existing facilities and

site for new economic development projects and return a significant number of employment opportunities to the area that was lost with the facility’s 2009 closure. Through that process, it has been discovered that there is no public water or sewer service provided to that specific property or the neighboring Constellium Rolled Products facility, another major West Virginia employer. Funding is being sought via the IIJA of 2021 to remedy that deficiency.

Efforts are underway with engineering firms Dunn Engineers, Inc. and Thrasher Engineering, Inc. and Constellium Rolled

Products, the town of Ravenswood and the Cottageville Public Service District to provide new public water and sewer service to Constellium and the rehabilitated Century Aluminum property. Further, these efforts will attempt to simultaneously extend and connect existing residential public services along Route 2 from Ravenswood to the Millwood and Cottageville areas.

significant economic damage from a past downturn in the thermal coal market, exacerbated by the diminishing availability of marketable coal reserves. Funding from the IIJA will support the installation of a new interchange to Corridor G/Route 119, an access road to the site, and the installation of water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure for the development of a new business park –

supports these initiatives by providing companion financing to develop manufacturing buildings, hangars, and equipment financing for these and other like-kind locations.

When the infrastructure exists, the businesses continue to build and grow. Outside trust in West Virginia is already evident, with companies like Nucor;



From the Ground to the Sky: Improvements to Roads, Bridges, and Airports

Several years ago, the WVEDA received thousands of donated acres at the former Hobet mining operation along the Boone-Lincoln County line. That property has been unused due to the lack of adequate site access and public infrastructure. In 2019, Governor Justice recognized the usefulness of that site, which is within an easy drive to Charleston. The site can serve as a possible economic generator for an area that has suffered

creating sites for economic development and employment opportunities for residents of that area.

The IIJA is providing funds for numerous improvements to airports throughout the state, including locations in Berkeley, Harrison, Jackson, Kanawha, Monongalia, Randolph, and Upshur Counties. These airports support economic growth by providing manufacturing and aerospace service sites, business traveler services, and tourism development. The WVEDA also

Omnis Network, and GreenPower Motor Company recently announcing investments in West Virginia. As the state's broadband, water, sewer, roads, bridges, airports, and other infrastructure continue to improve, these investment announcements will transition from major statewide celebrations to common occurrences – and our fellow West Virginians will reap the benefits. ▾