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SUMMER 2022

# The West Virginia Turnpike: An Infrastructure Success Story



**Jeffrey Miller**  
West Virginia  
Parkways Authority

Jeffrey Miller was appointed Executive Director of the West Virginia Parkways Authority by Governor Jim Justice in August 2020. He previously served as County Administrator for the Raleigh County Commission. Miller is a Past Chairman and current Board Member of the Beckley-Raleigh County Chamber of Commerce (BRCCC); Past Chairman and Board Member of the BRCCC Governmental Affairs Committee; Past Chairman of the United Way of Southern West Virginia; Board Member of the Raleigh County Emergency Services Authority; and Past President of the Beckley Rotary Club (Paul Harris Fellow).

In 1954, when the West Virginia Turnpike opened, the New York Times wrote: “The \$133 million engineering marvel that beat the mountains has turned the area into a tourist attraction and a motorist dream. The 88-mile West Virginia Turnpike threads its way over, under, and through mountains and affords travelers a time saving, high-speed route which, despite its practical purpose, rivals many roads that were built exclusively for scenic purposes.”

When I was appointed Executive Director of the West Virginia Parkways Authority (WVPA) by Governor Jim Justice in August 2020, I quickly learned one thing about the tolling industry: when you have seen one toll road, you’ve seen only one toll road. It is very true in the fact that each tolling agency across the country is unique to each other for many reasons. Not all toll roads are created equal. While we all share many of the same challenges and successes, we are different on

several levels: maintenance and operations, patron usage and traffic patterns, geography and terrain, toll rates, customer service and tolling technology, among others.

I am pleased to say that the WVPA operates the West Virginia Turnpike as one of the most efficient toll roadways in the entire country and one of the best maintained roads in the state of West Virginia. The men and women of the West Virginia Turnpike take great pride in the work they do daily, and safety of the patron will always remain the highest priority to the WVPA. Many improvements and enhancements have been made since the opening of this road in 1954 to provide for the best patron experience possible.

The West Virginia Turnpike is arguably one of the most unique toll roads in the country. With its highly challenging terrain and mountain cuts, it requires a tremendous amount of maintenance to keep the road at the standard





in which the WVPA and its patrons have come to expect. At its lowest point, the road is 660 feet above sea level in the Kanawha Valley, while the highest point is nearly 3,400 feet at Flat Top Mountain in Raleigh County.

We have 116 bridges on these 88 miles and, most importantly, the West Virginia Turnpike is not considered a commuter road like many toll roads in the country. Therefore, 75 percent of the transactions on the Turnpike come from out-of-state motorists and commercial truck traffic. While many have traveled our road before, we often have many each year who are not as familiar with the mountains and curves, and it can present a challenge to those drivers. Therefore, it is extremely critical that we maintain the operations in which we have worked very hard on for many years to ensure that interstate travel always remains open. With 36,500,000 transactions each year, it is one of the busiest roads in the entire state. We must always remain prepared to answer the call, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The West Virginia Turnpike is also unique in that we offer the greatest E-ZPass discount program in the entire country. Through the vision of Governor Justice, the Turnpike offers the West Virginia E-ZPass Single Fee Discount Program. For qualifying two-axle passenger vehicles, it is \$26.25 annually for unlimited use. Because of this program and the increase in




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net Turnpike toll revenue, of which 75 percent is received from out-of-state and commercial truck traffic, the WVPA has been able to issue toll revenue bonds through the Roads to Prosperity Program in the amount of \$595 million since 2018. The proceeds of these revenue bonds are issued to the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) for projects off the Turnpike in the 10 surrounding counties in Southern West Virginia.

The West Virginia Turnpike is completely self-sufficient in the fact that we fund our own operations and maintenance, renewal and replacement, and capital projects. The WVPA does not issue bonds to provide for the maintenance of our road. Essentially, the program we have in place can free up much needed WVDOH funding for other critically important

projects across the state and provide the southern part of West Virginia the necessary funding for important

transportation infrastructure projects. The Turnpike is a great asset for the Mountain State, and the Parkways Authority is excited to play an important role in the development of critical infrastructure projects.

The next time you traverse the West Virginia Turnpike, please be reminded of the role we play in helping the state of West Virginia and the challenges we are faced with daily in ensuring the road is properly maintained so patrons are provided the best experience possible. We take great pride in the work we do and, above all else, we truly appreciate your patronage of the West Virginia Turnpike. Safe travels! 