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Corridor H: Federal Funding Key to Completion



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The long-anticipated completion of Corridor H is finally coming into view, thanks in large part to the determination of West Virginia Governor Jim Justice, West Virginia Secretary of Transportation Jimmy Wriston, and federal funding from U.S. Senators Manchin and Capito, and Congressman McKinley through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

With the passing of Governor Justice's "Roads to Prosperity" bond program, West Virginia is putting every dollar it reasonably can into the completion of Corridor H. However, to complete the long anticipated final Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) Corridor in West Virginia, it will take continued federal resources from Washington, D.C.

Corridor H has been funded from a variety of sources throughout the years. Standard federal and state highway dollars have been a main source, but Corridor H had a long



history of receiving specially appropriated funds from Senator Robert C. Byrd. Those funds always gave a nice boost to the construction schedule and would allow for larger contracts to be awarded. The last appropriation from Senator Byrd came in 2009. Specially appropriated funds would not reappear until 2018 when a \$20,000,000 BUILD grant was awarded to Corridor H.

From that point on, funding above and beyond standard federal and state highway funding has been coming in hot and heavy for Corridor H. In May 2019, Corridor H was awarded a \$100,000,000 Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects grant for the





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Kerens-to-Parsons section. In June of 2020, another \$12,000,000 was awarded. Now, the Finish the ADHS Act, which is part of IIJA, will provide nearly \$200,000,000 in funding for Corridor H, with the possibility of an additional \$157,000,000 from IIJA in the future. These totals do not include any required state matching funds.

In 2018, the anticipated schedule to complete Corridor H was 2037-2042. Prior to the IIJA funding, the timetable had been shortened to 2035. Now, the Justice Administration has set a goal of having all sections under construction by the end of 2024, with the highway completed by the end of

the decade. While they admit this is a lofty goal, they are determined to meet it. All of this is made possible by two things. First, the priority set by Governor Justice and the West Virginia Department of Transportation leadership to make Corridor H the number one new highway construction project in West Virginia. Second, the priority set by our federal delegation to financially support the completion of Corridor H in any way possible.

With the steady stream of funding coming in for Corridor H, much progress is being made. The Kerens-to-Parsons section currently has over 10 miles of roadway under construction, with an

anticipated completion date in 2024. Earlier this year, Governor Justice awarded a contract for the Cheat River Bridge, which will span 3,300 feet and be the third longest bridge in West Virginia. The state Division of Highways is set to accept bids later this year for the final segment of the Kerens-to-Parsons section. Design work is well underway for the Parsons-to-Davis section and the Wardensville-to-the-State-Line section. The goal is to have permits in hand and contracts awarded by the end of 2024 for both of these sections.

In addition to working on the completion of Corridor H, the Corridor H Highway Authority is also charged with creating and promoting economic development potential along the route. With the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel getting brighter, and state and federal grant dollars plentiful, we will be ramping up our efforts on both fronts. We have all seen the economic growth that has happened in Weston, Buckhannon, Elkins, and Moorefield. Traffic and visitor counts continue to rise in Thomas and Davis. Once the Kerens-to-Parsons section is open to traffic, Parsons will see increased activity as well. Once the GPS systems we have all come to rely on update, more and more traffic will utilize Corridor H, creating more economic development opportunities.

The goal of Corridor H is, and always has been, economic development. As we get closer and closer to the finish, we begin to see that goal come to fruition. The stars are aligned to get this long-awaited project completed and used for the greatest benefit of West Virginia and this entire region of the United States. Funding priorities like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Finish the ADHS Act, and Roads to Prosperity Bond Program are exactly what we need to bring this overdue project to completion. **W**