



Easier travel equals economic boost

FRONT PAGE

Research touts benefits of Mon-Fayette Expressway extension

By Gideon Bradshaw, staff writer



A transportation research group projected in a report it issued Tuesday that a proposed 13-mile extension of the Mon-Fayette Expressway will cut down on travel times in the Mon Valley corridor while boosting economic development.

Washington, D.C.-based TRIP, a national transportation nonprofit, said in the report the additional toll road through part of Allegheny County – which would cost an estimated \$1.7 billion – would add thousands of new jobs in a corridor still reeling from the collapse of the steel industry.

Under the latest version of plans, the expressway would join Route 51 in Jefferson Hills with the Parkway East in Monroeville. This proposal replaces a previous, more ambitious plan that included a west leg running from Duquesne to the Parkway East in the Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

The project would form the last leg of the Mon-Fayette Expressway, which starts at Interstate 68 in West Virginia. A portion of the existing expressway, administered by the state Turnpike Commission, is in eastern Washington County. It ends to the north in Jefferson Hills, Allegheny County.

TRIP also examined a separate, \$100 million proposal to extend the East Busway in Allegheny County by an additional 2.8 miles so it would end in East Pittsburgh. Together, the group projected the busway and completed

expressway would result in 20,880 new long-term jobs, with 19,720 of those coming from the expressway extension.

“The expressway extension would increase access and mobility in the economically distressed Mon Valley, including industrial brownfield sites in Duquesne, McKeesport and Keystone Commons in East Pittsburgh, resulting in increased economic development opportunities in the corridor,” the report stated.

The proposal isn’t without its skeptics.

“There are significant long-term risks and disruptions to homes and businesses to weigh when considering this massive infrastructure project. The public has yet to be convinced that the Mon-Fayette Expressway is a sound investment and not, as many say, ‘a road to nowhere,’” said Larry Schweiger, president and chief executive officer of Citizens for Pennsylvania’s Future, or PennFuture, in an emailed statement. “We’re waiting on the final environmental assessment – this latest report isn’t enough to address existing concerns.”

The plans for the toll road include interchanges in Dravosburg, Duquesne and Turtle Creek.

According to a table in the report, the project would shave the 30-minute travel time for drivers going from Duquesne to the Monroeville Convention Center, in the suburb’s main business district, from 30 minutes to 10.

“It essentially reduces the travel time between Duquesne and Monroeville by half,” said Joe Kirk, an advocate for the project. “More than that.”

SERVING WASHINGTON & GREEN COUNTIES

PIGSKIN PREVIEW FOOTBALL

Everything you need to know about area high school and college teams for the upcoming season. INSIDE TODAY

OUR 209TH YEAR, WASHINGTON, PA

www.observer-reporter.com

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 24, 2016

75 CENTS

Easier travel equals economic boost

Research touts benefits of Mon-Fayette Expressway extension

by Gideon Bradshaw, staff writer

A transportation research group projected in a report it issued Tuesday that a proposed 13-mile extension of the Mon-Fayette Expressway will cut down on travel times in the Mon Valley corridor while boosting economic development.

Washington, D.C.-based TRIP, a national transportation nonprofit, said in the report the additional toll road through part of Allegheny County – which would cost an estimated \$1.7 billion – would add thousands of new jobs in a corridor still reeling from the collapse of the steel industry.

Under the latest version of plans, the expressway would join Route 51 in Jefferson Hills with the Parkway East in Monroeville. This proposal replaces a previous, more ambitious plan that included a west leg running from Duquesne to the Parkway East in the Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

The project would form the last leg of the Mon-Fayette Expressway, which starts at Interstate 68 in West Virginia. A portion of the existing expressway, administered by the state Turnpike Commission, is in eastern Washington County. It ends to the north in Jefferson Hills, Allegheny County.

TRIP also examined a separate, \$100 million proposal to extend the East Busway in Allegheny County by an additional 2.8 miles so it would end in East Pittsburgh. Together, the group projected the busway and completed

expressway would result in 20,880 new long-term jobs, with 19,720 of those coming from the expressway extension.

“The expressway extension would increase access and mobility in the economically distressed Mon Valley, including industrial brownfield sites in Duquesne, McKeesport and Keystone Commons in East Pittsburgh, resulting in increased economic development opportunities in the corridor,” the report stated.

The proposal isn’t without its skeptics.

“There are significant long-term risks and disruptions to homes and businesses to weigh when considering this massive infrastructure project. The public has yet to be convinced that the Mon-Fayette Expressway is a sound investment and not, as many say, ‘a road to nowhere,’” said Larry Schweiger, president and chief executive officer of Citizens for Pennsylvania’s Future, or PennFuture, in an emailed statement. “We’re waiting on the final environmental assessment – this latest report isn’t enough to address existing concerns.”

The plans for the toll road include interchanges in Dravosburg, Duquesne and Turtle Creek.

According to a table in the report, the project would shave the 30-minute travel time for drivers going from Duquesne to the Monroeville Convention Center, in the suburb’s main business district, from 30 minutes to 10.

“It essentially reduces the travel time between Duquesne and Monroeville by half,” said Joe Kirk, an advocate for the project. “More than that.”

Please see Box, Page A2

Homeless, addicted, suicidal

Dems listen to testimony at hearing on opioid epidemic

by Kim Antoniazzi, staff writer

JEFFERSON - A House Democratic Policy Committee hearing on the opioid epidemic in Jefferson County Tuesday afternoon at Jefferson City Hall.

Sen. Stephen Roth and colleagues with the House Democratic Policy Committee listen to testimony from Jefferson County social workers on the front lines of the heroin and opioid epidemic during a hearing Tuesday afternoon at Jefferson City Hall.

Sen. Stephen Roth and colleagues with the House Democratic Policy Committee listen to testimony from Jefferson County social workers on the front lines of the heroin and opioid epidemic during a hearing Tuesday afternoon at Jefferson City Hall.

Clarksville driver dies

A Clarksville man died Tuesday evening after a multi-car pile-up on Interstate 76 in Duquesne Borough.

James L. Smith, 56, died in Monroeville Valley Hospital after a 3.5-mile crash in the 1899 block of Henry Road. According to a report from Washington County Coroner Dr. Tom Lutz, the man was traveling south when he was involved in a multi-car pile-up on Interstate 76. The cause and manner of death are pending. The police are investigating.

Judge continues Cecil memorial proceeding

Attorneys for the township and Jennifer Andrews, Manager, who is seeking to have the statue removed from the grounds of the township, are presenting evidence to the judge. The judge is expected to rule on the matter by the end of the year.

The disputed memorial to Gary A. Andrews Sr. is the subject of a hearing in the township.

Andrews Sr. was a well-known figure in the community and his death was a tragedy for many. The memorial was erected in his honor and has become a place of reflection for the community.

The township is seeking to have the memorial removed from its grounds, citing concerns over safety and maintenance. The manager, Jennifer Andrews, is also seeking to have the memorial removed.

The judge is expected to rule on the matter by the end of the year.

Business A6 | Horoscope D3 | Opinion A7
 Classified CDDT 6 | Local news B3 | Sports C4
 Comics C6 | Lottery A4 | Television C6
 Entertainment C6,7 | Obituaries B4

Times of clouds and sunshine
 High 85, Low 68
 Complete weather, PAGE B2

facebook
 @observerreporter
 Complete weather, PAGE B2

twitter
 @observerreporter

The former executive director of the Mon Valley Progress Council – which consolidated with another nonprofit this year to form the Mon Valley Alliance – has touted the completion of the Mon-Fayette Extension as a way to bring jobs to the region.

He said the project will “address a long-term deficiency in highway access in the Mon Valley that has severely limited its economic recovery.”