

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2016 REGULAR SESSION

Originating

House Bill 4733

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LYNCH, CAPUTO, SPONAUGLE, ELDRIDGE, IHLE, BLAIR

AND KURCABA

[Originating in the Committee on Government

Organization; Reported on February 20, 2016]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,
 2 designated §17-4-55, relating to requiring the Commissioner of Highways to develop a
 3 statewide communications plan known as the Comprehensive Public Involvement Plan;
 4 requiring that the plan utilize multimedia outlets to inform the public of known or anticipated
 5 disruptions in traffic patterns; requiring that the plan include a mechanism to receive and
 6 respond to communications from the public in a timely manner; requiring that the plan
 7 include a mechanism for collecting feedback from the public on the division's response to
 8 public communications; requiring the division to designate a communications specialist in
 9 each maintenance district; and requiring the division to submit the plan to the Legislature
 10 for approval as a legislative rule.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

1 That the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, be amended by adding thereto a new
 2 section, designated §17-4-55, to read as follows:

ARTICLE 4. STATE ROAD SYSTEM.

§17-4-55. Highways communications plan.

1 (a) Findings.-- The Legislature finds that:

2 (1) Widespread notice to the public of known or anticipated disruptions to traffic patterns
 3 would allow motorists to plan for conditions on the roads that may cause delays in travel or safety
 4 hazards;

5 (2) An improved procedure for collecting and promptly responding to communications from
 6 the public would allow the West Virginia Division of Highways to address concerns more efficiently
 7 and would promote greater public confidence in the agency; and

8 (3) Modern technology makes it possible for the West Virginia Division of Highways to
 9 announce traffic disruptions in advance and respond to communications from the public in a timely
 10 manner.

11 (b) Comprehensive Public Involvement Plan (PLAN).--

12 (1) On or before October 1, 2016, the commissioner shall develop a communications plan
13 that will utilize social media outlets in addition to traditional outlets to communicate to the public
14 any known projects for the coming year and any public comment opportunities, including
15 development of new projects and transportation improvement programs; receive feedback from
16 the public; and report public feedback to the appropriate district supervisor. The program shall be
17 referred to as the “Comprehensive Public Involvement Plan.”

18 (2) The Comprehensive Public Involvement Plan shall meet the following criteria:

19 (A) The plan must facilitate announcement, through social media outlets in addition to
20 traditional outlets, of any known or anticipated disruption to regular traffic patterns as soon as
21 possible after the disruption is known or anticipated by the division;

22 (B) The plan must enable members of the public to communicate information and
23 concerns to the division;

24 (C) The plan must include a procedure for the division to acknowledge, in a timely manner
25 and within two weeks whenever possible, the receipt of each communication from a member of
26 the public and to inform the member of the public of the division’s plans to address the information
27 or concern; and

28 (D) The plan must include a mechanism for collecting customer feedback from the public
29 and tracking the division’s performance in providing responses to the public.

30 (c) District communications specialists.--

31 (1) Effective July 1, 2016, the commissioner shall designate an individual in each
32 maintenance district to serve as the district’s communications specialist. If necessary, the
33 commissioner shall provide the requisite training needed for this designee to obtain the needed
34 skillset.

35 (2) A district communications specialist will have, at a minimum, the following duties:

36 (A) To facilitate the operation of the Comprehensive Public Improvement Plan at the
37 district and county level;

38 (B) To ensure that the Comprehensive Public Improvement Plan adequately serves the
39 local population in the specialist's district;

40 (C) To review and respond to all communications from the public regarding roads located
41 within the specialist's district; and

42 (D) To regularly report to the Director of Communications for the Division of Highways and
43 the appropriate district supervisor regarding the efficacy of the Comprehensive Public
44 Improvement Plan at the district and county level.

45 (d) Legislative Rule.--

46 On or before July 1, 2016, the commissioner shall submit the Comprehensive Public
47 Involvement Plan to the Legislature for approval as a legislative rule, in accordance with the
48 requirements of article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to require the Commissioner of Highways to develop a statewide communications plan known as the Comprehensive Public Involvement Plan; to require that the plan utilize multimedia outlets to inform the public of known or anticipated disruptions in traffic patterns; to require that the plan include a mechanism to receive and respond to communications from the public in a timely manner; to require that the plan include a mechanism for collecting feedback from the public on the division's response to public communications; to require that the division to designate a communications specialist in each maintenance district; and to require that the division submit the plan to the Legislature for approval as a legislative rule.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.