

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2016 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 327

BY SENATORS KIRKENDOLL, BEACH, FACEMIRE, HALL,
KESSLER, LAIRD, PLYMALE, PREZIOSO, ROMANO,
STOLLINGS, WOELFEL AND UNGER

[Introduced January 20, 2016;

Referred to the Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure; and then to the Committee on Government
Organization.]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,
 2 designated §17-2A-8a, relating to construction of a modern highway from Pikeville,
 3 Kentucky, to Beckley, West Virginia; requiring Commissioner of Highways to determine
 4 how the highway can be best funded and constructed; and requiring reports.

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 §17-2A-8a, to read as follows:

ARTICLE 2A. WEST VIRGINIA COMMISSIONER OF HIGHWAY.

§17-2A-8a. Mountain Parkway Expansion; additional powers, duties and responsibilities of commissioner.

1 (a) The Mountain Parkway Expansion is part of several broader initiatives aimed at
 2 revitalizing areas of Eastern Kentucky that have experienced high rates of unemployment in
 3 recent years. When completed the highway will run more than ninety miles between Interstate 64
 4 and US 23 in Eastern Kentucky. The project will complete a four-lane, high-speed route across
 5 the length of the state, from Paducah to Pikeville.

6 (b) The Kentucky project is designed to:

7 (1) Create a safe and modern parkway that will improve the connections between Eastern
 8 Kentucky and the rest of the state;

9 (2) Support tourism, businesses and economic development efforts in Eastern Kentucky;
 10 and

11 (3) Complement ongoing state and national efforts to boost economic vitality across the
 12 Appalachian region.

13 (c) The Kentucky project is the result of Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR), a bi-
 14 partisan initiative that seeks solutions to improve the economy throughout Eastern Kentucky and
 15 improve the quality of life in the region. In addition to working to improve transportation
 16 infrastructure in the region, a key SOAR initiative is to improve and expand broadband and

17 Internet services available to Eastern Kentucky homes, businesses, schools and hospitals.

18 (d) As West Virginia faces many of the same hurdles as Kentucky, the state needs to
19 improve its transportation infrastructure in order to improve its economy and create jobs for its
20 citizens. Completion of the West Virginia portion of the Mountain Parkways Expansion project
21 would open up a direct route from southern West Virginia to Lexington, Kentucky and points in
22 between. Thus, in addition to all other duties, powers and responsibilities given and assigned to
23 the commissioner in this chapter, the commissioner shall take the following steps in determining
24 how best the State of West Virginia might best extend the Mountain Parkway Expansion from the
25 border with Kentucky to Beckley:

26 (1) Determine the possible routes and the various methods of road construction best
27 adapted to the area of the state where the Mountain Parkway Expansion would be located;

28 (2) Conduct investigations and experiments, hold hearings and public meetings and attend
29 and participate in meetings and conferences within and without the state for purposes of acquiring
30 information, making findings and determining courses of action and procedure relative to the West
31 Virginia project;

32 (3) Determine the cost of the West Virginia project;

33 (4) Investigate and determine to what extent the recent federal Fixing America's Surface
34 Transportation Act (FAST Act) can be used to facilitate the West Virginia project. The FAST Act
35 is a five-year highway bill that will bring over \$2 billion in funding into the state over the next five
36 years to rebuild roads, complete highway projects, repair bridges and improve rural transit
37 programs. On December 15, 2015, at the Greyhound Bus Depot in Huntington, West Virginia
38 Congressman Evan Jenkins announced that \$420 million in funding is already trickling into the
39 state and is primarily earmarked for public transportation. However, Congressman Jenkins went
40 on to say that the second category of the money is designated just for rural areas across the
41 country, which he expects to help in a major way throughout the southern part of the state. Thus,
42 the remainder is a viable funding resource for the Mountain Parkway Expansion project from

43 Kentucky to Beckley.

44 (5) Work with other agencies and departments of the state, as well as local governments
45 and West Virginia's representatives in Congress, to determine the most cost effective manner of
46 constructing and funding the highway, including, but not limited to, additional federal funding
47 sources, state, local funds and the issuance of bonds;

48 (6) On July 1, 2016, the commissioner shall begin making quarterly reports on the status
49 and progress made on the West Virginia project to the Legislature. The commissioner shall make
50 a full report to the Legislature no later than the first day of the regular session of the 2017
51 Legislative Session, including tentative routes, costs and funding sources.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to propose the construction of a modern highway from Pikeville, Kentucky to Beckley, West Virginia. The bill requires the Commissioner of Highways to determine how the highway can be best funded and constructed. The bill requires reports.

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