



**~~ Mike Whitt Testimony ~~**

**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's  
"Improving and Reforming Our Nation's Surface Transportation Programs"**

**Monday, February 14, 2011**

**Theater at Tamarack, Beckley, West Virginia**

My name is Mike Whitt, and I'm the executive director of the Mingo County Redevelopment Authority in Williamson, West Virginia.

I'd like to, first, take this opportunity to thank Chairman Mica and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for holding this very important hearing in southern West Virginia.

I'd like to talk about public/private partnerships in regards to construction of new roads.

Currently in Mingo County, we have a 15 mile section of the I-73/74 King Coal Highway under construction. Twelve miles of this highway are being constructed as a public/private partnership between Nicewonder Contracting, Inc., WV Department of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration. The remaining three miles are being constructed as a post mine land use project in accordance with my agency's Land Use Master Plan. The projected cost of building this road as a publicly funded project was approximately \$400 million. However, by constructing the same highway as public/private project, it's projected to result in a savings to the tax payers of approximately \$270 million, once construction is complete.

We have an additional section of King Coal Highway, approximately six miles, that has been committed by a coal company and a land company to be constructed to rough grade, as a 100% post mine land use project. Once the initial construction is complete, the right of way will be donated to the Department of Transportation, and there won't be any public money involved in this project until the final grading, drainage and paving are underway. The cost of building this six mile section as a public/private partnership is approximately \$4 million per mile, in comparison to \$28 million per mile if we had to do all of the construction. The only thing holding this project up is a mining permit that the EPA has held up.

We have other sections similar to what I'm discussing with you that we could get a number of miles of this road constructed for approximately \$0.30 on the dollar; however, we have to have this reauthorization of the Highway Trust Fund Bill, and there has to be the ability to have earmarks for certain sections of these roads so that you can get the biggest bang for your buck for what few federal dollars flows into West Virginia for projects like this.

I appreciate the time allotted me to speak to you about the projects that are under construction in my area of West Virginia, and I personally invite you and the committee to see how we're getting things accomplished in the steep, rugged terrain of Mingo County, West Virginia. Our Congressional team does a tremendous job obtaining funds to do projects such as this in the southern part of our great state.

Mike Whitt  
Executive Director  
Mingo County Redevelopment Authority