

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2018 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 4283

BY DELEGATES MARCUM, HICKS, LOVE, PHILLIPS,
THOMPSON, HAMILTON, R. ROMINE, A. EVANS, HAMRICK,
GEARHEART AND E. EVANS

[Introduced January 24, 2018; Referred
to the Committee on Roads and Transportation then
Finance.]

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 eastern
 3 Kentucky to Beckley, West Virginia; requiring the Commissioner of Highways to determine
 4 how the highway can be best funded and constructed; and requiring regular submission
 5 of reports.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2A. WEST VIRGINIA COMMISSIONER OF HIGHWAYS.

§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
 4 64 and US Route 23 in eastern Kentucky. The project will complete a four-lane, high-speed route
 5 across the length of the state, from Paducah to Prestonsburg and Pikeville.

6 (b) The Kentucky project is already underway and 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 lead by Kentucky Speaker of the House Greg Stumbo that seeks solutions to
 15 improve the economy throughout eastern Kentucky and improve the quality of life in the region.
 16 U.S. Senator Rand Paul and Congressman Hal Rogers support the Parkway Expansion. In
 17 addition to working to improve transportation infrastructure in the region, a key SOAR initiative is

18 to improve and expand broadband and Internet services available to eastern Kentucky homes,
19 businesses, schools and hospitals.

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

28 (1) Determine the possible routes and the various methods of road construction best
29 adapted to the area of the state where the Mountain Parkway Expansion would be located,
30 including using existing portions of the King Coal Highway and the Coalfields Expressway;

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

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

36 (4) Investigate and determine to what extent the recent federal Fixing America's Surface
37 Transportation Act (FAST Act) can be used to facilitate the West Virginia project. The FAST Act
38 is a five-year highway bill that will bring over \$2 billion in funding into the state over the next five
39 years to rebuild roads, complete highway projects, repair bridges and improve rural transit
40 programs;

41 (5) Work with other agencies and departments of the state, as well as local governments
42 and West Virginia's representatives in Congress, to determine the most cost-effective manner of
43 constructing and funding the highway, including, but not limited to, additional federal funding

44 sources, state, local funds, and the issuance of bonds; and
45 (6) Beginning July 1, 2018, the commissioner shall submit quarterly reports on the status
46 and progress made on the West Virginia project to the Legislature's Joint Committee on
47 Government and Finance. The commissioner shall make a full report to the Legislature no later
48 than the first day of the regular session of the 2019 Legislative Session, including tentative routes,
49 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 also requires regular reports to be submitted to the Legislature.

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