



Belomar Regioner

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Belmont, Ohio, Marshall,
and Wetzel Counties

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A Synopsis of Mall Road Connector and I70/SR331 Projects

When the transportation bill SAFETEA-LU was passed in 2005, it had earmarks for a new interchange west of Mall Road and modification of I70/SR331 Interchange in Belmont County. The Mall Road interchange project received \$6.9 million and I70/SR331 interchange received \$9.7 million. For the Mall Road interchange, efforts were underway well before this earmark. Although earmarks got the ball rolling, they were not enough to move the dirt on projects with a price tag of over \$25 million each. In Ohio, all major new projects costing over \$12 million need to go through the Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) and compete with other major projects in the state. TRAC consists of nine members. Only the Director of ODOT is the state official on the TRAC, other members are from the private and public sector. There were 35 projects statewide with a price tag of over \$686 million vying for \$120 million/year of traditional revenue.

In December 2014 TRAC included both projects in the draft list for funding. It is indeed good news for Belmont County and the region. Projects enter into the TRAC process as Tier 3 and then move to Tier 2 and finally to Tier 1. The Mall Road Connector project was accepted as a Tier 2 project and awarded \$900,000 for the right of way acquisition. The SR331 interchange project received \$5 million as a Tier 1 project. The new Mall Road interchange project was scaled down to a connector road connecting the Ohio Valley Mall south of I70 to Ohio Valley Plaza to the north and ending at National Road west of the plaza entrance. It will involve a new overpass over I70. The SR331 interchange project will modify the interchange, reduce congestion and improve accessibility of Belmont College and developments on the Hammond Road. It will improve safety, operation and accessibility. The SR331 interchange project will go to construction in FY2016. The Mall Road Connector project will need additional funds from TRAC for construction. The project will be presented to the TRAC again next year for FY2017 construction funds.

Prior to this successful trip to the TRAC, previous attempts were unsuccessful. If efforts before were unsuccessful, what made the difference this time? A coordinated effort at all levels, a private and public partnership that had significant financial commitments in place, and an unprecedented show

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of support at the TRAC meeting contributed to this outcome. Everyone who had a stake in the project showed up in support of these projects at the TRAC meeting. Developers, all three county Commissioners, the Mayor and City of St. Clairsville, Belmont County Engineer, Belmont County Transportation Improvement District (TID) representatives, financial institutions, consultants, ODOT District 11 and Bel-O-Mar made it to the TRAC meeting in Akron Ohio. This was probably the largest support contingent at the TRAC meeting that day.

A lion's share of the project cost had already been raised. For the SR331 project costing over \$25 million, only \$5 million was needed from the TRAC. For the Mall Road project, commitments were in place for building the portions of connector loop roads on the Plaza and Mall side. TID is the project sponsor. TRAC was asked to provide funding for the overpass and making connection to the roads on both sides. A joint presentation to the TRAC was made by the City of St. Clairsville/TID, Bel-O-Mar and ODOT District 11. This involved all levels - local, regional and State.

Making it to the draft list is a major achievement. It is the result of a lot of hard work, persistence, building consensus, foresight and planning. These projects have never been this close to being a reality. TRAC meeting to vote on the draft list of projects, scheduled for January 29th, was cancelled. The final vote is now scheduled for February 26th. If all goes as expected, the ground would break for the SR331 interchange project early next year and the dirt will fly for the I-70 overpass and associated work later next year or during the first half of 2017. The entire region will benefit from these developments.

Transportation Department

Transportation Improvement Program

Bel-O-Mar is currently in the process of preparing a new four year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The new program will cover the period of FY2016 - FY2019 and take affect July 1, 2015. The program area includes Belmont, Ohio and Marshall Counties. The TIP is developed in cooperation with the state transportation agencies and local transit authorities.

In general, projects utilizing federal funds must be included in the local program. Additionally, any regionally significant project to be funded with non-federal funds must be included.

The final draft TIP will be made available for review for a two week period. This is anticipated to occur in early April. The draft will be presented to the Bel-O-Mar board for approval in late April.

As part of the public involvement process, notices will be published in the local newspapers prior to the public comment period. The document will be available for review at the Bel-O-Mar office, and will also be posted to the agency website (www.belomar.org) and Transportation Facebook page (BOMTS).

After the program has been approved and is in affect, revisions can be made as needed. This typically occurs four to six times each fiscal year. Opportunities for review and comment are provided with each revision.

Following the end of the fiscal year, a document is prepared which identifies federal obligation of funds for the prior year. This report is generally prepared in September. It is available for review at the Bel-O-Mar office and the agency website.

Management Services Department

West Virginia FY 2015 Small Cities Block Grant Application Deadlines Announced

The West Virginia Development Office recently announced the Small Cities Block Grant application deadline as May 21, 2015. The State expects to have approximately \$7 million to distribute for new projects under the FY2015 Program. It is expected the WVDO will make smaller "Design Grants" for at least some of the funded projects, with the balance of the funds requested to be committed from future years, when the projects are ready to go to bid.

As has been the case for the many years now, the State's priority for these funds will be for "reliable water and sewer infrastructure projects". Additionally, the area to be served by the project must document

at least 51% benefit to low- to moderate income persons, through the use of American Community Survey (ACS) or a properly conducted income survey.

Another pre-requisite to making application for SCBG funds is the submittal of a Preliminary Application to the West Virginia Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council (WVIJDC). The WVIJDC is responsible for reviewing all state-funded water and sewer infrastructure projects and determining their feasibility. Only projects found to be technically feasible by the WVIJDC are eligible for SCBG funds. In order to meet the May 21, 2015 SCBG application deadline, an applicant

must first submit a Preliminary Application to WVIJDC by March 10, 2015. Belomar staff can assist with the Preliminary Application as well as the SCBG application for communities with feasible and competitive projects.

It should be noted that both these applications require the completion of a Preliminary Engineering Report as well as some financial reports, therefore projects without an engineering firm under contract at this point will probably not meet the deadlines above.

If your community has a potential water or sewer project, please contact our office to discuss the specifics and develop a plan of action.

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Wetzel County Commissioners – Hundred Littleton P.S.D.

On January 22, 2015, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin announced the award of a \$1,325,000 Small Cities Block Grant (SCBG) to the Wetzel County Commission for the Hundred Littleton Public Service District Rush Run Water Line Extension. The Wetzel County Commission received a \$175,000 SCBG in 2014 to complete engineering design and easement acquisition. The project will extend water service to 82 homes in the Burton area of Wetzel County.



Town of Pine Grove Awarded Small Cities Block Grant

On January 22, 2015, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin announced the award of a \$1,500,000 Small Cities Block Grant (SCBG) to the Town of Pine Grove Phase II Sewer System Project. The project consists of the installation of 6,655 LF of 8" and 6" sanitary sewer line, two 4" duplex grinder pumps and 52 lateral hook-ups to eliminate failing vacuum type sanitary sewer collection system.





GOVERNOR TOMBLIN SIGNS SENATE BILL 280, SUPPORTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN WEST VIRGINIA

Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin, joined by Senate President Bill Cole, members of the West Virginia Legislature and representatives from Southwestern Energy, today signed Senate Bill 280, supporting economic development in West Virginia.

"For years, we've worked hard to make West Virginia not only a wonderful place to call home, but a good place to do business and a great place to make an investment," Gov. Tomblin said. "Many of the changes we made have had a direct impact on the continued growth and development of our state's abundant natural resources, including the Marcellus and Utica Shale. This bill streamlines the transfer process of well work permits, not only supporting ongoing business operations and major investments, but to secure opportunities for hardworking West Virginians to find good paying jobs in this growing industry."

Prior to the passage of SB280, companies acquiring assets from existing operations in West Virginia were required to re-apply for permits. This legislation eliminates the reapplication process and authorizes the transfer of existing permits with approval from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection.

"I'm proud of our ability to pass this important legislation so quickly, and with unanimous bipartisan support," Senate President Bill Cole said. "We all want to work together to improve West Virginia's business climate."

"The bipartisan support we have seen on this bill sets a terrific example for lawmakers across the nation," Bill Way, president and COO of Southwestern Energy said. "Southwestern Energy is delighted to have more than 80 West Virginians already working on our behalf, and we are looking to bring on more as we ramp up business here."



Mark Your Calendar

**Bel-O-Mar Regional Council/BOMTS/
AAA Associate Board Meeting
February 19, 2015 - 12:00 Noon
Moundsville Country Club
Moundsville, West Virginia**

Lunch will be served to the membership only

Northwestern Area Agency on Aging



Older Americans Month Empowers Older Adults and Communities to "Get Into the Act"

Each May, the Administration for Community Living (ACL) celebrates Older Americans Month to recognize older Americans for their contributions to the nation. This May is the 50th Anniversary of the OAA. In honor of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Older Americans Act (OAA), the focus will be on how older adults are taking charge of their health, getting engaged in their communities, and making a positive impact in the lives of others. The theme for

Older Americans Month 2015 is "Get into the Act."

The OAA was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965. It provides a nationwide aging services network and funding that helps older adults live with dignity in the communities of their choice for as long as possible. These services include home-delivered and congregate meals, caregiver support, community-based assistance, preventive health services,

personal care, transportation, job training, ombudsman services, legal assistance, and elder abuse prevention. By providing a variety of resources in these areas, ACL works year-round to support the goals of the OAA. We hope to use this Older Americans Month as a vehicle for individual and community empowerment. By promoting and engaging in activity, wellness, and inclusivity, more Americans than ever before can "Get into the Act."

Older Americans Act Reauthorization Approved By Senate HELP Committee Compromise Reached on Funding Formula Issues

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4A) is pleased to announce that the Older Americans Act reauthorization has cleared a critical hurdle in the legislative process. On January 28, members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) unanimously approved S. 192 and cleared it for floor consideration.

Committee members were able to resolve long-standing dissent over the OAA funding formula that stymied progress in the last congress. Committee approval positions Older Americans Act reauthorization to be cleared by the full Senate

as one of the early pieces of legislation in the new Congress.

In a statement about the progress, n4a CEO Sandy Markwood said, "Passage of the Older Americans Act Reauthorization Act of 2015 (S. 192) by the Senate HELP Committee puts us one step closer to ensuring that older adults can age in place and remain independent in their homes and communities for as long as possible. n4a's members work on the front lines of aging every day, doing their part to realize the vision of the Older Americans Act in communities all across the country, and we appreciate this swift and sensible action early

in the new 114th Congress. We look forward to working toward full Senate passage and House consideration of this legislation."

n4a particularly thanks the leadership of Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Ranking Minority Member Patty Murray (D-WA) and Senators Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Richard Burr (R-NC), who shepherded the committee through a years-long policy process and sponsored the eventual compromise bill. Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Susan Collins (R-ME) have also signed on as co-sponsors of the current bill.

Social Security to Expand Field Office Hours Nationwide

Budget for FY 2015 Allows Agency to Restore Some Service Hours

Social Security announces as a result of Congress' approval of the fiscal year 2015 budget, the agency will expand its hours nationwide and offices will be open to the public for an additional hour on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, effective March 16, 2015. A field office that is usually open from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. will remain open until 4:00 p.m. Offices will continue to close to the public at noon every Wednesday so employees have time to complete current work and reduce backlogs.

“This expansion of office hours reaffirms our commitment to providing the people we serve the option of top-notch, face-to-face assistance in field offices even as we work to expand online services for those who prefer that flexibility,” said Carolyn W. Colvin, Acting Commissioner of Social Security. “The public expects and deserves world-class customer service and thanks to approved funding, I am pleased we will continue our tradition of exceptional service.”

In recent years, Social Security reduced public office hours due to congressional budget cuts, growing backlogs and staffing losses. The agency began recovery in fiscal year 2014 by replacing some field office staffing losses and providing overtime support to process critical work. With the commitment of resources in fiscal year 2015, the agency is able to restore some service hours to the public.

Most Social Security business does not require a visit to a local field office. Many services, including applying for retirement, disability and Medicare benefits, creating a my Social Security account, replacing a Medicare card, or reporting a change of address or telephone number are conveniently available anytime at www.socialsecurity.gov. Social Security also offers assistance via a toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213 (Voice) and 1-800-325-0778 (TTY). Representatives are available from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday thru Friday.



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