

Q & A with John Vataavuk

Q: How did you get involved with Continental 1?

A: In 1990, I ran for the Pennsylvania State House of Representatives. My number one campaign issue was the completion of Route 219 from Somerset to Route 68 in Maryland. At that time, there was no Meyersdale Bypass. In the spring of 1990, Congressman Murtha secured \$60 million to do the Meyersdale Bypass which was completed several years later. I have watched and followed Continental 1 since I was involved in 1990. I have attended every PennDot hearing held in our county concerning this project since 1990. I am convinced a north-south highway through western PA would bring many economic benefits to the area, as well as make traveling for tourists easier along the coast. When I ran for commissioner in 2007, Route 219 was my major issue again. Since then, Route 219 was removed from the Southern Alleghenies TIP. In the summer of 2008, the commissioners, with the help of our state legislators and the governor, had \$35 million placed in a bond issue to match the federal ARC monies to get the project back on the TIP. Our state is now in the process of buying rights-of-way and moving utilities. We expect actual construction to begin in late 2010 or early 2011. We still have a lot of work to do to complete the Somerset County section. Then we must start on the section north of Cambria County to Bradford and New York.

Q: How do you think the efforts of Continental 1 will benefit Somerset County?

A: The economic benefits to Somerset and Cambria Counties would be the number one reason for the completion. We are also excited about the tourism industry and getting folks to our county from Washington D.C.

Q: What are you currently doing to help get funding for Route 219 construction in Pennsylvania?

A: In March, we three Commissioners traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with our legislators in hopes of getting the next federal transportation bill changed to once again include the use of toll credits as a match for the federal ARC monies. If that legislation is passed, we will be able to use toll credits from the PA Turnpike as the cash match, and there is enough ARC money to complete the two sections of highway in Somerset County.

Q: What do you see as the biggest challenge to get the funding needed for Route 219 construction?

A: The two biggest challenges are the down-turn in the economy and the repair of bridges in our state. With gasoline and other tax revenues decreasing, it is difficult to get money for many projects. We are working every angle that we felt could help us get this project completed.

John Vataavuk is a Continental 1 Board Member and a Somerset County Commissioner in Pennsylvania



-Upcoming Events-

May 3-5, 2009

Can/Am BTA Conference
"Corridors, Gateways & Economics"
Ottawa, Ontario
www.canambta.org

For information contact:
Jim Phillips, President & CEO
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-Continental 1 Presentations-

May 11, 2009

DuBois Chamber of Commerce
11 am
www.duboispatchamber.com

May 12, 2009

DuBois Rotary Club
11:30 am
www.duboisrotary.org

June 18, 2009

Springville Chamber of Commerce
Noon
www.springvillechamber.com

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Project Manager Update

As part of our DOT funding grant, Continental 1 is required to compile a major research study that touches on all aspects of the Continental 1 Trade and Travel Corridor from safety benefits to trade corridor history to the economic impacts. We are starting to release some of the findings that will be included in that report due to the DOT in May of 2009. Our economic impact research was done by Associate Professor of Economics at University of Pittsburgh-Bradford Dr. Shailendra Gajanan.

According to Dr. Gajanan's research, more than 2,900 new jobs will be created. His study estimates that 1,735 new jobs will be added in Erie and Cattaraugus counties in New York and in Clearfield, Jefferson and McKean counties in Pennsylvania related to construction. And an estimated 1,200 additional new jobs will be created due to direct and indirect effects of the expansion.

The study also suggests that over 20 years the completion of Continental 1 will increase the Gross Regional Product in New York and Pennsylvania by \$200 million. As with the increased jobs, the five counties through which Continental 1 passes will see the most impact financially with \$123 million.

Other major benefits detailed in the study include Travel Time Savings, Vehicle Operating Cost Savings, and Emission Reductions. With respect to Travel Time Savings, over a 16-year period, 433 billion hours would be saved on delay time totaling about a \$1.4 billion savings in total travel time.

We look forward to sharing more of the research that comes out of the report in the coming months.

Meg Lauerman
Project Manager

The mission of Continental 1 is to foster awareness of the value and significance of the Continental 1 Trade and Travel Corridor. The corridor's construction would create a safe, sound, and efficient four-lane limited access highway between Toronto, Ontario and Miami, Florida.

Did You Know...?

-The Buffalo/Niagara region ranks 9th in the top 10 foreign freight gateways, exporting \$36.2 billion of freight and importing \$33.9 billion of freight by land alone.

-Pennsylvania exports \$6,609,000 worth of merchandise to Canada and imports \$7,371,000 worth of merchandise from Canada annually.

-New York ships \$207,308,000 worth of cargo, by trucking alone, to other states within the United States.

-Pennsylvania ships \$220,639,000 worth of cargo, by trucking alone, to other states within the United States.

-Florida ships \$4,119,000 worth of pharmaceutical products by trucks annually.

*All statistics courtesy of U.S. Department of Transportation

