

PANEL DISCUSSION: The Future of Upper Mon Commerce

Panelists:

Dave Bruffy, MountainLine Transit Authority

David Culligan, Brookfield Power

James Guttman, Bulk Terminal Services

Charles Minton, Campbell Barge Transportation

Jim McCarville, Port of Pittsburgh Commission

Deanne Orr, CONSOL Energy

Bruffy:

- The MountainLine, one of 18 public transportation authorities operating in West Virginia, traveled a million miles last year.
- MountainLine administrators are discussing the feasibility of establishing a “water bus” on the Mon to connect Star City, Granville and downtown Morgantown to help alleviate vehicular traffic on city streets.

Culligan:

- Brookfield Power owns and operates about 160 hydroelectric power plants world-wide.
- The firm has filed over 60 preliminary permits for hydroelectric facilities in the U.S. since July 2007.
- The licensing process for a hydroelectric power generating facility requires three to four years to complete, plus time for facility construction.
- Renewable energy is the place to be.

Guttman:

- Bulk Terminal Services (BTS) is a 76-year old firm with over 40 years of barge service to the Morgantown area.
- BTS is the last such transporter operating on the Upper Mon.
- BTS operates its own tank barges and hauls 1.3 million gallons of petroleum products per month to tank storage in Star City for eventual sale and distribution.
- Although river transport historically has provided a reliable means of transport, BTS must be able to afford the cost of barging to continue its services.
- Down-time on locks will require BTS to rely on truck-serve, which is expensive and logistically difficult.

McCarville:

- Coalition building among *all* river users is important.
- The increasing price of coal means some previously marginal mines will re-open – and mine operators will be looking for new miners.
- Technical education is a growth area in North Central West Virginia.
- We *will* repair the Mon’s locks and dams.

Minton:

- Campbell Barge Transportation (CBT) owns and operates 400 barges, primarily barging coal.

- The firm anticipates a shift from far-away commodity origins to origins closer to home.
- Given Fort Martin's increasing need for limestone, CBT suggests barging it to the station.
- The firm has noted increased interest in barge transport among aggregate producers, whose commodity traditionally has been trucked.
- Alternative energy opportunities may create future business in barging ethanol and coal-to-liquids. Container-to-barge haulage offers additional opportunities, but logistical challenges must be addressed.

Orr:

- The currently undeveloped area south of Opekiska along the Mon's banks offers a unique opportunity for recreation/tourist development.
- A \$50-\$75 per-barge locking fee could add up to 46-cents per ton to river transport costs. Cost efficiencies will be the transporters' goal – but ultimately, consumers will pay for any taxes or fees that increase haulage costs.