



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR ANDY BESHEAR
COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Crystal Staley
502.545.3714
Crystal.Staley@ky.gov

Scottie Ellis
502.330.1722
Scottie.Ellis@ky.gov

Gov. Beshear Announces Plans to Complete Mountain Parkway
Governor also announces Dawkins Line Rail Trail project to begin soon

Prestonsburg, Ky. (Sept. 19, 2022) – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear joined state and local officials to announce plans for the final section of the [Mountain Parkway Expansion](#) in Eastern Kentucky – delivering on a decades-old promise to complete a four-lane parkway from Winchester to far Eastern Kentucky.

While in Prestonsburg, the Governor also announced that the first phase of a \$4.1 million Dawkins Line Rail Trail project will soon begin to improve the popular recreation trail.

Mountain Parkway Expansion

Plans are now underway to build 13 additional miles of the Mountain Parkway in eastern Magoffin County through Floyd County. This will support economic development opportunities in the area and provide a safer route for motorists in the region.

“I am proud to say we are delivering on plans to complete a four-lane Mountain Parkway. Expanding the parkway to far Eastern Kentucky has been talked about since Gov. Bert Combs broke ground on the original parkway in 1963,” **Gov. Beshear** said. “Today, we are once again standing with Eastern Kentucky by building a parkway that is crucial to Appalachia’s strong economic future.”

Since the Parkway Expansion project began in 2014, nearly 32 miles of parkway widening have been completed or are under construction. The Magoffin-Floyd section would extend from U.S. Highway 460 in Salyersville to Kentucky Highway 404 in Prestonsburg along a cross-country route. This option will cause fewer disruptions and property impacts to homes and businesses versus expanding the parkway along the current Kentucky Highway 114 corridor.

To advance this final segment of the Mountain Parkway Expansion to construction, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) and its partners are collecting more detailed environmental and geotechnical information from the cross-country corridor. This includes crews performing surveys, archaeological and historical studies and biological research.

KYTC is working closely with the Federal Highway Administration to follow the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and other federal laws and policies. The cabinet will schedule a public information meeting by early 2023 to provide more details about the project.

“We are committed to seeing the Mountain Parkway completed,” **KYTC Secretary Jim Gray** said. “Once finished, the Mountain Parkway will be a safer, 90-mile corridor to prosperity from Winchester to Prestonsburg.”

“This expansion is going to help our businesses and people by creating a safer, more efficient corridor for Magoffin County,” said **Magoffin County Judge/Executive Matt Wireman**. “This is good news for our region, and we are thankful for the prioritization of this project.”

“As the final leg of the Mountain Parkway from Salyersville to Prestonsburg starts to become a reality, I would like to thank Gov. Beshear for his hard work,” said **Floyd County Judge/Executive Robbie Williams**. “This project and the confirmation of the new cross-country route will be a huge shot in the arm for Eastern Kentucky. On behalf of myself and all the residents of Eastern Kentucky, thank you Gov. Beshear.”

Gov. Beshear is committed to building a better Kentucky through transportation to improve safety, spur the economy and improve the quality of life for Kentuckians. In August, ground was broken for the \$97.1 million Wolfe County segment of the Mountain Parkway. It is expected to be completed by 2027.

Mountain Parkway Construction Timeline

- Wolfe County | 11 miles | August 2022 – under construction, anticipated completion 2027
- Morgan County | 8.2 miles | 2017-2021
- Magoffin County West | 4.6 miles | 2019 – under construction, anticipated completion 2023
- Magoffin County Central | 5.7 miles | 2015-2018
- Salyersville Restaurant Row | 2.4 miles | 2016-2019
- Magoffin-Floyd | 13 miles | Under development

For updates about the project, follow the Mountain Parkway Expansion on both [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), or visit the project website at mtnparkway.com.

\$4.1 Million Upgrades for Dawkins Line Rail Trail

While in Prestonsburg, the Governor also announced \$4,113,381 in funding to complete Phase 1 of a project that improves trail mobility for cyclists, hikers and horseback riders and stimulates tourism in Eastern Kentucky.

“While our transportation crews continue to focus on restoring flood-damaged infrastructure in Eastern Kentucky, this project will improve safe use and access to this important recreational trail, which provides residents a safe place to exercise and unwind. The improvements also will promote economic development in the area,” said **Gov. Beshear**.

The Dawkins Line Rail Trail is a former railway, constructed in the early 1900s to haul timber, then later coal. Opened in 2013, it is the longest rail-to-trail in the state. The current 36-mile trail, managed by the Kentucky Department of Parks, in cooperation with KYTC, stretches from Hagerhill in Johnson County to Evanston in Breathitt County. The rehab project is divided into two phases. Phase 1 includes paving 24 miles of gravel trail from Johnson County to Magoffin County, paving the parking lot at the Jenny’s Creek and Jane Beshear trailheads and repairing drainage structures, signs and bollards.

Former Kentucky First Lady Jane Beshear was a strong advocate for the Dawkins Line Rail Trail and was instrumental in obtaining funds for the successful completion of the trail. Working alongside community leaders, the Big Sandy Area Development District and others across Eastern Kentucky, she believed the trail would be an economic catalyst for the region and a recreational hub for guests and outdoor enthusiasts.

“By next summer, residents and tourists will enjoy the newly paved trail that expands access for more users to enjoy the scenic views,” said **KYTC Secretary Jim Gray**. “We look forward to kicking off construction next month and advancing Phase 2 in 2023 to close a gap in the trail near the Carver Tunnel.”

“We want to thank Gov. Beshear, Transportation Secretary Jim Gray and other state officials for their continued commitment to recreation and economic development in East Kentucky by announcing the paving of the Dawkins Trail,” said **Johnson County Judge/Executive Mark McKenzie**. “The paving of this 36-mile multiuse rail-to-trail will serve both residents and visitors to our region. We look forward to seeing the opportunities this project creates for development of tourism-related small businesses and other health and wellness benefits as a result of this significant investment.”

“We sincerely appreciate Gov. Beshear’s continued investments in Eastern Kentucky,” said **Magoffin County Judge/Executive Matt Wireman**. “Projects like this will not only bring in additional tourism dollars to Magoffin, Johnson and Breathitt counties, it will also provide a boost to the economic growth of the entire region.”

The small rural community of Royalton is the centerpiece of the trail. The Royalton Trail Town Tourism Planning Committee, one of the most active Friends Groups in the region, has been involved in advancing the project. Royalton Trail Town Inc., a nonprofit, received a \$1.9 million Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) grant, which will provide a 15-acre campsite and lodging. Victoria Doucette serves as president of both organizations.

Phase 2 will be awarded in spring 2023. The project will focus on constructing a trail over the Carver Tunnel (also known as Tip Top) to connect two ends of the trail in Magoffin County, as well as paving the remaining 12 miles to the end of the trail in Breathitt County.

“Paving 36 miles of the Dawkins Line Rail Trail will promote tourism in our area and make us an adventure tourism destination in and out of the state,” said Doucette. “Tourists will enjoy the Dawkins Line Rail Trail surrounded by nature and the beautiful hills of Eastern Kentucky.”

The low-bid contract for Phase 1 was awarded to Mountain Enterprises with an anticipated completion date of June 2023.

EDITORS NOTE: Click [here](#) for a map of the Magoffin-Floyd segment. Click [here](#) for a progress map of the project corridor.

###



For official news and updates from the Beshear/Coleman administration, visit governor.ky.gov/news.