

Study Shows WV Stands To Lose More Than \$1 Billion Due to Corridor H Delay

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One and a quarter billion dollars. That's how much a new study released by the Corridor H Authority said West Virginia will miss out on if the highway is completed at its current schedule in the mid-2030s, and not by 2020, like many people across the state hope.

All that money could come to the state from a few different sources.

"The economic impact's going to come from two ways: one, productivity improvement for the people that are here, and secondly the investment of new business opportunities here in the corridor once that road's completed," said authority chairman Steve Foster.

Shipping goods out of West Virginia is a big part of what will help bring the money in. When complete, the road will allow easy shipping to the inland port in Front Royal, Virginia and from there to the rest of the world, like countries in Asia looking for products from the state.

"Our hardwood lumbers are a premium, particularly in West Virginia, and so this will enable our sawmill operators and lumber marketers to expand sales overseas," said Lewis County Economic Development Director Mike Herron.

It's not just money coming in. People will too, and that's a boom for tourism across the length of the highway.

"Tourism is our second economic industry here in Lewis County. A lot of people aren't aware of that, but the completion of the corridor would also benefit our tourism industry," said Sherry Lambert, director of the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce.

There's a lot of work left to do, and Foster said that means plenty of ways to put people to work on finishing the job sooner rather than later here in West Virginia.

"There's a huge economic incentive for getting it done early, and if you're looking for shovel-ready jobs, a lot of the design work's already done, we're ready to go, it's just getting access to the money," said Foster.