



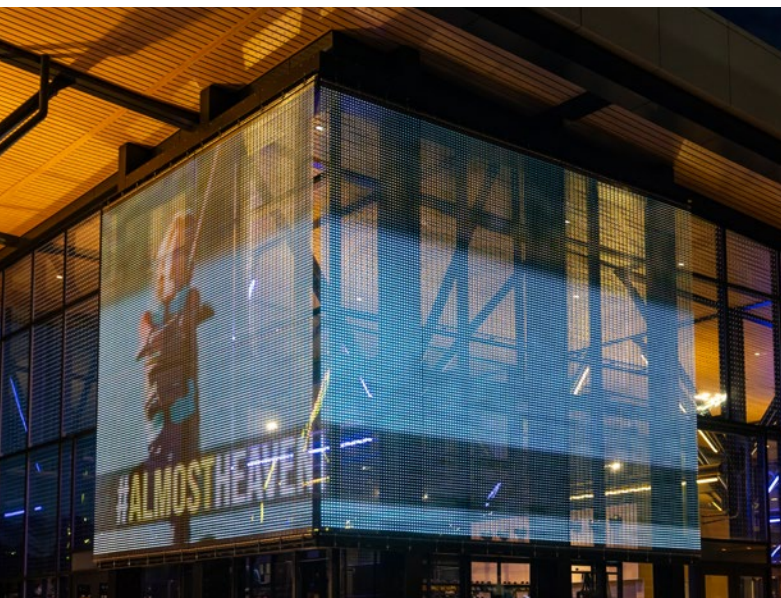
Case study

WEST VIRGINIA TRAVEL PLAZAS



HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

Lyrics from a classic John Denver song exclaim, “Almost heaven, West Virginia...take me home, country roads.” Today, travelers making their way on I-77 down those heavenly West Virginia roads are discovering a unique, eye-catching sight at new travel plazas recently built as part of a project to replace older facilities that had stood for more than 30 years. At two of the plazas, Beckley and Bluestone, innovative architectural LED displays share information and show images promoting the state’s natural beauty in a way that stands out in a sea of static billboards.



Architecture firm HNTB was tapped to bring this new vision to reality. “The owners’ primary objective was to provide a new, much higher standard of travel plaza for motorists and commercial truckers,” recalls Taylore Keller, NCIDQ LEED GA, HNTB design principal. “The facilities would feature the highest quality services and amenities, while promoting West Virginia’s natural beauty, art, and culture.”



Each of the plazas employs GKD Mediamesh, a system that incorporates graphics into metal fabrics through integrated LEDs to deliver controlled multimedia display. The installations feature a 40mm vertical by 42.5mm horizontal pixel pitch with a resolution of 312 x 156 pixels, delivering bright, large-format content visible from considerable distances. This configuration ensures maximum impact for high-speed highway viewing while maintaining visual clarity and readability. The strategic positioning of the lightweight, 50% transparent screens maximizes exposure to passing traffic, creating a visual experience that captures attention without compromising safety or overwhelming drivers.

PROJECT DETAILS

Owner

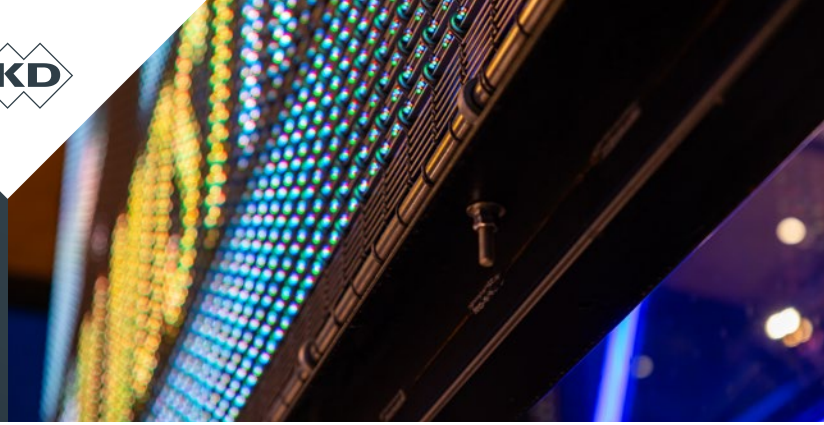
West Virginia

Architect

HNTB

Mesh Type

Mediamesh



“Our choice for GKD Mediamesh was driven by a desire to promote and showcase West Virginia’s Department of Tourism and its new branding efforts,” says Keller. “Because it is not a solid, opaque surface and is an open mesh, we were able to work without the concern of blocking daylight and views. This increased our design flexibility and allowed us to dedicate large areas of the buildings glass skin to focus on branding.”

“Mediamesh is a marriage of art, architecture and digital signage, and both travel plazas really highlight the abilities of the product,” explains Mike Leonard, manager of Expromo US, the vendor for the LED technology that is integrated with the GKD Mediamesh. “The displays don’t

detract from the architecture or create the eyesore of a large black LED display. West Virginia has lots of things to see and do and this is a wonderful way to share these experiences with the tens of thousands of travelers that pass these plazas daily.” The displays are also vibrant enough that images are still visible during the day and especially luminous come sundown. Because the screens are partially transparent, they also provide sun shading to the glass façade behind them, without obstructing interior views of the surrounding wilderness.

Going from initial concepts to final installation took approximately one year and moved forward without significant challenges, thanks in large part to careful coordination between the architects, product manufacturer, and installation teams. GKD-USA handled structural design and fabrication, while Expromo supplied LED technology, cabling, and on-site installation support. This collaborative approach ensured that the complex technical requirements and quality standards were met while maintaining the project schedule.

Successful installations at these two highly visible travel plazas establishes a new standard for highway digital signage. The thoughtful integration of technology and architecture can support the delivery of public information and tourism promotion while enhancing building aesthetics. They stand as examples to future architectural media façade projects seeking to balance functionality with aesthetic appeal.

“We love the look of the system whether it’s on or off,” Keller says. “This is a huge benefit to the owners and allows the system to look great all the time.”

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