

# 2024-2050 COLUMBUS AREA METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

## Chapter 6: System Development

While Chapters 4 and 5 describe system maintenance and management activities and strategies, the expected growth and development of the region as described in Chapter 2 makes system expansion necessary.

This chapter summarizes the system expansion, or development activities and strategies identified in the MTP for each mode. System development includes adding capacity to the roadway system, expansion of transit services, constructing bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and enhancing intermodal connections. Within each modal system the individual MTP strategies and projects are outlined.



## 6.a BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM

As Central Ohio continues to grow, more people are walking and bicycling as a form of transportation. Many communities within the region are investing more in higher quality facilities to accommodate the higher volumes of people walking and bicycling, but as a region we still have more work to do. The region is working to collect data on active transportation facilities and the usage of those facilities to demonstrate their importance, identify gaps that limit the mobility of people throughout the region, build more bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and ensure that educational, enforcement and encouragement programs are available to support bicycling and walking.

### BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

1. Collaborate on development strategies and regulations to implement safe and comfortable infrastructure for walking and bicycling

Most communities require developers to install appropriate bike and pedestrian facilities in new developments, but there are other strategies and tools available to local communities to advance bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure through updates to zoning codes, development regulations, and other mechanisms. The MTP includes 725 miles of stand-alone bike and/or pedestrian facilities.

#### LinkUS and insight2050

Insight2050 is one example of collaboration around land use and development regulations. The study identified the various impacts that different growth scenarios will likely have on the region. As summarized in Chapter 2, initiatives such as insight2050 and insight2050 Corridor Concepts explore how more walkable, bike-able, transit-supportive neighborhoods can positively impact transportation, infrastructure, housing, and the environment. Connected and accessible pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure links people to places, supporting better access to jobs and mobility options. High comfort bicycle and pedestrian facilities help to meet the region's growing need and preference for better connected neighborhoods.

Building on the concepts outlined in insight2050, the LinkUS initiative is incorporating an Equitable Transit Oriented Development (eTOD) framework to develop further links between development regulations and transportation. A detailed plan is currently in development to outline the eTOD strategy. More information on the LinkUS initiative is included in section 6.b.

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2. Increase the quantity and quality of volume and travel behavior data on people walking, bicycling, and using similar modes of transportation

## **Complete Streets Equipment Library**

MORPC maintains a library of equipment that includes professional measuring wheels, a radar gun, and three different types of devices for collecting data on pedestrian and bicycle traffic. This equipment is available to local jurisdictions interested in collecting data in order to provide the information needed to adequately accommodate non-motorized traffic in facility design decisions. As Central Ohio continues to grow, more people are walking and bicycling as a form of transportation. Many communities within the region are investing more in higher quality facilities to accommodate the higher volumes of people walking and bicycling, but as a region we still have more work to do. The region is working to collect data on active transportation facilities and the usage of those facilities to demonstrate their importance, identify gaps that limit the mobility of people throughout the region, build more bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and ensure that educational, enforcement and encouragement programs are available to support bicycling and walking.

## **Bikeway Inventory**

MORPC continuously updates bikeway data based on information from local jurisdictions. The updates track both regionally significant bikeways and local bikeways. These data are available to local jurisdictions and the public using an interactive online map. MORPC also shares these data with ODOT and other MPOs in Ohio.

## **Sidewalk Inventory**

In 2015, MORPC partnered with the City of Columbus and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to compile an inventory of sidewalk facilities in the MPO planning area. The inventory is available online in an interactive webmap format and includes attributes such as where sidewalks are and are not located, and the location of marked and unmarked crosswalks. The inventory is maintained collaboratively by MORPC, ODOT, and local jurisdictions are responsible for providing and updating data. The inventory is used to support transportation planning activities throughout the region.

In 2023, MORPC developed an Active Transportation Network tool that spatially joined together sidewalk, trail, and roadway data. When combined with point data, the tool provides the ability to analyze walk shed distances from points of interest such as transit stops, trail heads, and other important community amenities.

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## **Bicycle and Pedestrian Counts**

Since 2005, MORPC, together with many different volunteers and regional partners, has routinely collected bicycle and pedestrian volume counts across the Central Ohio region. This includes automated counting devices are being used to continuously collect counts at select locations across the Central Ohio Greenways trail system and are being supplemented with additional short-duration counts. These efforts allow MORPC to create a regional inventory of non-motorist activity, better understand the factors that impact activity levels, and observe trends over several years. MORPC is coordinating with local and state partners to enhance this regional nonmotorized data collection program by utilizing new technologies that will help to expand the locations and areas we are able to monitor.

## **Bicycle and Pedestrian Crash Data**

MORPC regularly evaluates data on pedestrian- and bicyclist-involved crashes and identifies priority safety locations for further study. This information helps identify areas in need of physical safety improvements as well as safety education programs.

## **Columbus Bike Plus**

Bike Plus is a plan by the City of Columbus to create a safe, connected, and comfortable network for people to bike, scooter, skate, and roll in the city. Transportation improvements like protected bike lanes, trails, and crosswalks, will make it more convenient and enjoyable to get around Columbus without a car. The development of Columbus Bike Plus is currently underway, and will utilize public engagement to collect information and identify where improvements are most needed to connect community members to the places they need and want to go. It will be an update to the 2008 Bicentennial Bikeways Plan and advance the goals of Vision Zero Columbus, Columbus ClimateAction Plan, and LinkUS.

### 3. Build safe and comfortable infrastructure for walking and bicycling

As described in section 3.b, MORPC has adopted a Complete Streets Policy. MORPC staff will continue to hold workshops and give presentations to local governments, city councils, and the public on the concepts of Complete Streets and age-friendly communities. The goal of these presentations is to encourage local communities to think differently about their community development and adopt complete streets policies and other policies that support their implementation.

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In 2010, MORPC was awarded a grant from the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) to create a Complete Streets Toolkit to supplement the regional Complete Streets Policy. MORPC is coordinated with regional stakeholders to update both the regional Complete Streets Policy and the Toolkit in 2020. This update provided clearer expectations and additional resources to aid project sponsors in meeting the requirements of the Policy.

MORPC continues to review projects that have been awarded MORPC-attributable funding to ensure that they comply with MORPC's Complete Streets Policy. A Complete Streets Review Committee consisting of MORPC staff meets regularly to review projects as they move through the project development process.

As detailed in Section 4.c, MORPC continues to facilitate efforts aimed at improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety through various safety initiatives, including road safety audits, walk and bike audits, and systemic safety improvement projects.

#### 4. Implement the Central Ohio Greenways trail vision

Since 2005, a group of cross-sector trail planners, managers, and advocates have been meeting and partnering as the Central Ohio Greenways (COG) group to develop a regional trail network to provide recreational and transportation opportunities and protect the waterways. In 2015, MORPC's board approved the formation of a 22-member COG Board with a mission to increase the number of trail miles and number of people using the trails throughout the central Ohio region.

Based on its strategic plan, the COG Board developed a community supported Regional Trail Vision Plan to add over 500 regional trail miles to the existing 230 miles of trails in its 7-county area of interest (expanding beyond the MPO planning area). The MORPC Board adopted the Regional Trail Vision in 2018. The proposed trails will extend existing trails, fill gaps in the trail corridors, connect neighborhoods to job centers and greenspace, and create a truly interconnected network useful for both transportation and recreation. To further ensure that the Regional Trail Vision was fully supported by our region's political, business, and philanthropic leaders, the COG Board conducted a study to help understand the appetite for such a bold vision among community leaders. The consultants interviewed nearly 40 community leaders and surveyed over 1,000 individuals as part of this effort, affirming that the perception and interest in trails is extremely high among leaders and residents alike. Leaders indicated that a fully connected trail network is necessary to ensure the region remains a desirable and competitive economic center supported by high quality of life amenities. They also believed that trails are something that will benefit anyone, no matter their race, social status, or political affiliation and that its values tie back to not only the environment, but also health, economic development, and social equity.

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The COG Board and its associated working groups are focused on implementing the Regional Trail Vision by addressing key regional trail issues related to trail development, operations & access, marketing, and partnerships. Working group initiatives include projects such as:

- **COG Trail and Active Transportation Prioritization Study:** This effort prioritized proposed trail project identified in the COG Regional Trail Vision as well as bike/pedestrian access from neighborhoods to the trails based on how they are expected to impact the economy, public health, social equity, and the environment. The study was completed in 2021.
- **Trail Town Framework:** A trail town embodies a community's dedication to enhancing residents' and visitors' quality of life and economic prosperity by promoting trails and welcoming trail users. These communities typically have a well-connected trail network, supportive businesses, and a vibrant community atmosphere that embraces its trails as a defining aspect. This framework lays the essential groundwork for a successful Trail Town designation program. The framework analyzed existing conditions within four sponsoring communities to understand how a trail town program would best function in Central Ohio. This framework guides COG's efforts to identify resources to launch and sustain a Trail Town program.
- **Wayfinding and Signage:** COG developed guide to support cohesive signage and wayfinding across jurisdictional boundaries. COG is exploring ways to update the signage guidelines to reflect how trails are an important piece of the regional active transportation network.

This MTP prioritizes trail projects that are part of the proposed COG trail network. Figure 6.1 shows the specific stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian projects included in the MTP, and Chapter 8 provides a list of projects.

5. Implement and update the Active Transportation Plan to create safe and comfortable infrastructure for walking and bicycling

The Active Transportation Plan (ATP) provides tools to assist Central Ohio communities in the Metropolitan Planning Area plan for and implement projects that include pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure in the region.

MORPC staff coordinates closely with communities to encourage collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries and ensure that those regional active transportation connections are being made. In 2020 MORPC led the update of the regional ATP. This update improved upon the concepts developed in the 2016 ATP for regional connectivity and implementation of best practices regarding active transportation facilities, and provide clearer guidance for local decision makers to make more informed decisions about the planning and design of their active transportation networks.

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This MTP prioritizes bicycle and pedestrian projects such as multi-use paths, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks focused along the key regional corridors identified in the Active Transportation Plan. Figure 6.1 shows the specific stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian projects included in the MTP, and Chapter 8 provides a list of projects.

6. Make neighborhoods walkable and bikeable through infrastructure projects that fill gaps and increase connectivity of safe and comfortable facilities for walking and bicycling

The non-freeway projects identified in this MTP are all assumed to include appropriate complete streets elements. The stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian projects identified are focused on the 12 key regional Active Transportation Plan corridors and proposed Central Ohio Greenways trails, which are regionally significant. The financial forecast of this MTP sets aside funding for other stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian projects that local communities identify as priorities, however most of these local priorities are not mapped or specifically listed.

7. Ensure neighborhoods and activity centers have safe and comfortable connections for walking and bicycling to transit networks

## **LinkUS Transit Supportive Infrastructure**

The LinkUS initiative will dedicate approximately \$60 million annually to the development and construction of transit supportive bike and pedestrian infrastructure. The program will focus on building sidewalks within 1/2 mile of fixed-route transit stops, and trails and protected bike lanes within 3 miles of fixed-route transit stops, increasing access to transit throughout the region.

## **Shared Micromobility**

Over the last few years, many new and innovative transportation options have expanded across the country and within our region. The first of these new technologies included bikeshare systems that allowed anyone to rent a bike for a short trip, then leave the bike for another user. The City of Columbus first introduced its “CoGo” bikeshare system in 2013, which has since grown to over 80 stations across Central Ohio.

Since then, a number of additional bikeshare providers and other new technologies such as electric scooters have become available in the region. All of these technologies provide exciting new transportation options that have been shown to replace short trips that have previously been made by automobile, but have also introduced some new challenges.

In an effort to build upon the successes of these new technologies, while mitigating the associated challenges, MORPC will be available as a resource to communities who wish to explore their options with shared micromobility. Keeping in alignment with the MTP theme of collaboration, MORPC will work with communities to help guide expansion of these systems in combination with the

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infrastructure needed to support them, in a manner that encourages sustainable transportation and is accessible to the diverse populations of Central Ohio.

## **Active Transportation Hubs**

Mobility Hubs are also being implemented by the City of Columbus, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), and Smart Columbus to support multimodal travel. These alternative transportation stations include CoGo Bike Share stations, scooter parking, transit stops, and ridehail pickup and drop off zones. MORPC staff will continue to collaborate with stakeholders as the Mobility Hub locations are identified and implements to best support community access to transportation resources that support active travel.

In 2023, COTA broke ground on its Rickenbacker Area Mobility Center. In addition to providing key transit and mobility connections in one of the region's top employment centers, it will contain a child care center, a food pantry and a shared space for workforce training and community gatherings. The mobility center is scheduled to open in 2025.

## **Active Transportation Events**

Bike to Work Week, Bike Month, and Pelotonia are among the variety of bike events happening every year within the region. The goal of these events is to encourage more commuters and residents to bike. MORPC is involved in planning and promotion of many of these events, and is continuously developing additional events to expand on the region's efforts around supporting active transportation.

8. Facilitate multi-jurisdictional dialogue to improve opportunities through collaboration

## **Active Transportation Committee (ATC)**

MORPC launched the Active Transportation Working Group (ATWG) in early 2019 with a mission of providing a forum for discussion and education in Central Ohio regarding active transportation, as well as to serve as a guide for regional project development and implementation. In 2022 the ATWG was formalized as a sub-committee of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), changing its name to the Active Transportation Committee. The ATC engages public, private, and non-profit partners all working toward the same goal of making Central Ohio more walkable and bikeable and makes quarterly reports to the TAC.

## **Host Central Ohio Greenways (COG) Forums**

Since 2005, MORPC has held COG forums three times a year to collaborate on trail planning efforts, raise awareness of the importance of the trail system, and share best practices for planning, building, and managing trails. The Forums are suited for local governments, parks and recreation groups, and local trail advocacy groups.

## **Assist in Community Active Transportation Plans and Committees**

MORPC will participate in the development of local active transportation plans to ensure regional



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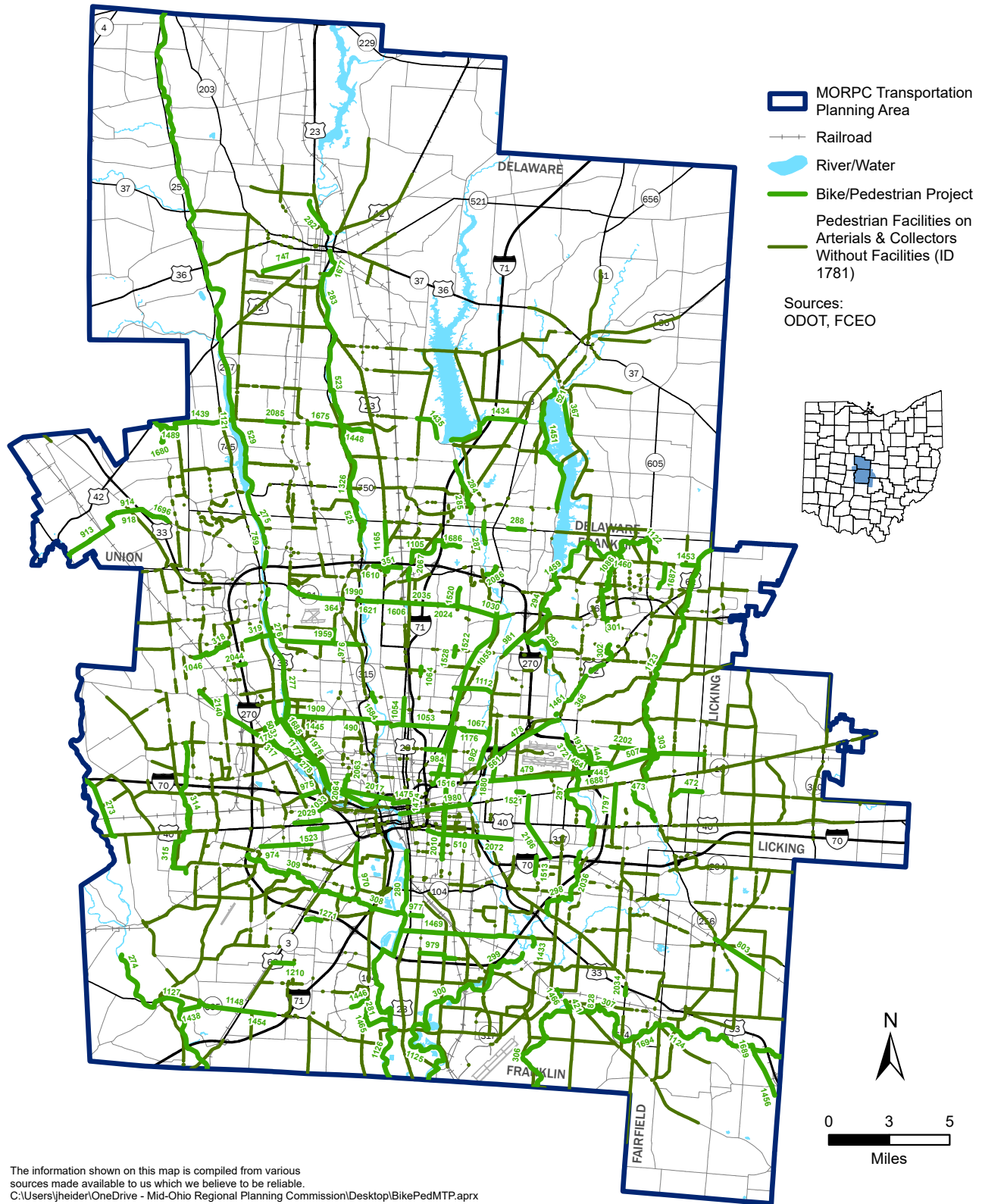
consistency and continuity. Communities within the MORPC MPO Planning Area also have the option to apply to the Technical Assistance Program for active transportation planning, which would provide them with dedicated MORPC staff assistance for their planning efforts.

MORPC's Central Ohio Greenways Program also supports state and local trail efforts by providing guidance to or serving on trail committees as the Union County Greenway Working Group, ODNR's State Trail Planning Committee, Delaware County's Trail Committee, and other similar groups.

## **Active Transportation Professional Training Opportunities**

MORPC continues to work with partners such as FHWA, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP), The League of American Bicyclists, the National Safe Routes to School Partnership, and YayBikes! – a Columbus-based bicycle advocacy group – to educate local engineers, planners and residents on bicycle- and pedestrian-related topics through a variety of webinars and trainings. Additional training opportunities are provided at conferences, such as ODOT's Ohio Transportation Engineering Conference, the Central Ohio Chapter of the American Planning Association's annual conference, and MORPC's annual Summit on Sustainability.

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The information shown on this map is compiled from various sources made available to us which we believe to be reliable.  
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## 6.b TRANSIT SYSTEM

The growth of the region cannot be accommodated by expansion of the highway system alone. As the costs of automobile ownership, fuel and congestion continue to grow, there is a need to provide alternative means of transportation to sustain the social and economic well-being of Central Ohio. Investment in new and expanded transit services can ease growing congestion while reducing harmful emissions and providing an equitable transportation system.

### LinkUS Mobility Initiative

Building upon the findings of insight2050 and COTA NextGEN study, COTA has proposed LinkUS Initiative to pursue additional funding for the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit corridors, Transit Supportive Infrastructure, Transit Oriented Development, and service expansion for the coming decades. This plan is expected to guide the future development of transit within COTA's service area.

1. Collaborate to build transit infrastructure through development regulations

MORPC has been working with the LinkUS partners to develop its plan for equitable Transit Oriented Development (eTOD) as mentioned in the previous section. This plan will be geared toward ensuring development supports the transit investments included in LinkUS with a focus on equity.

2. Increase frequency on appropriate fixed route transit routes

In May of 2017 COTA overhauled its entire bus network for the first time in 40 years. The Transit System Redesign simplified routes, increased frequency, and made connections to more people and places. The new system provided twice as many high-frequency bus routes that arrive every 15 minutes or better on major streets. These simple, frequent, easy-to-understand routes form the backbone of the new system. Routes also now operate on more consistent schedules seven days a week. Saturday service increased almost 50% and Sunday by 120%. Moving forward, it is envisioned strategically to increase frequency where appropriate to make it more convenient and meet demand.

Due to a bus operator shortage related to the COVID-19 pandemic, COTA was forced to reduce some of the operating frequency and service spans of its bus routes. As staffing levels were rebuilt and demand for bus service returned, COTA reestablished many of its routes back to schedules similar to those it had after the 2017 Transit System Redesign.

Like COTA, DCT will continue to explore opportunities to provide more frequent service through grants and potential other local funding sources. In addition, DCT will continue to monitor the growth and need in the county and will continue to modify its services to best meet the needs and desires of the county.

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### 3. Implement high-capacity, rapid transit service along additional corridors

As the primary provider of public transit services in Central Ohio, COTA underwent a long-range planning effort, NextGen, to identify public transportation needs and opportunities through 2050. NextGen comprehensively considered how changing growth and demographic trends will shape opportunities and demand for public transportation. NextGen was completed in Spring 2017.

NextGen goals:

- Lead the community in envisioning what our public transportation system needs to accomplish in the coming decades to ensure Central Ohioans have access to jobs, housing, education, and services.
- Prepare Central Ohio for future growth by identifying transit investments that integrate with regional plans and goals. Critical regional goals include maintaining regional competitiveness, minimizing sprawl, and responding to demographic preferences.
- Create transit investment options to support local and regional efforts to develop transit-oriented and multi-modal communities.
- Identify conventional and creative revenue options that offer potential to support the recommended plan and ensure the plan can be implemented.

The 2019 insight2050 Corridor Concepts study explored how more walkable, compact neighborhoods and high-capacity transit along five key routes in Central Ohio can improve quality of life by positively impacting transportation, infrastructure, housing, and the environment.

The LinkUS Mobility Initiative began in summer 2020. This initiative builds upon COTA's vision for high capacity transit identified in NextGen and the Corridor Concepts study to advance high capacity transit and other mobility improvements in specific corridors. While all of the corridors identified in the Corridor Concepts study are among the corridors to be studied in the LinkUS Mobility Initiative, four corridors were advanced first into alternatives analysis studies to identify the preferred mode alternatives and route alignments.

As a result of these studies, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was identified as the preferred mode on the first three LinkUS corridors listed below, and which are currently in design phases now:

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- East Rich St./Main St. from High St. to Taylor Rd.
- West Broad St from Washington Ave. to Westwoods Blvd.
- Northwest: Connects Downtown to Dublin via Olentangy River Rd, Bethel Rd, and Sawmill Rd. corridors

The LinkUS partners then identified the next two corridors to study and pursue as a part of the fiscally constrained MTP. After evaluating the remaining corridors included in the insight2050 Corridor Concepts, as well as those suggested by the public via the MTP Candidate Project Webmap, the two corridors identified for inclusion were:

- Northeast Corridor Study Area that would provide service from Downtown Columbus, John Glenn International Airport, Easton Transit Center, and possibly further to developments in the New Albany Area
- South Corridor Study area that would connect Downtown Columbus to either the Rickenbacker Airport area or Grove City.

Also included in this fiscally constrained MTP are premium transit improvements to service on Cleveland Ave and East Broad St. This would include enhancements to the existing CMAX service on Cleveland Ave and investing in similar premium transit services on East Broad St.

Though not included in the fiscally constrained MTP, corridors were identified for additional study of future premium transit service including connecting downtown Columbus to Polaris and City of Delaware, downtown Columbus to the Hilliard area, and recommendations coming from the ODOT Workforce Transit Study to connect communities along I-270 to workforce centers in the eastern part of the region such as New Albany Business Park, Pataskala, Etna, and Newark/Heath.

#### 4. Expand geographic coverage of fixed route transit service

In addition to the High Capacity Corridors identified in the LinkUS initiative, COTA plans to use a portion of the proceeds from the LinkUS initiative to further expand its local fixed route service. This expansion is included in the MTP as an unmapped line item as the details of this expansion are still being planned at the time of this MTP update.

One component of expanding the geographic coverage area of fixed route transit is having logical transfer points. Mobility Centers are needed to make transit connections from suburban and outlying areas to the Columbus area. Public and private partners are identifying sites for development of mobility centers. There are a growing number of employment centers in Central Ohio outside of Downtown Columbus. In an effort to connect inner-city residents to suburban job opportunities, COTA offers several reverse commute express lines that travel from Downtown Columbus to outlying

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areas. Because these lines often end at transit centers or Park & Rides, they do not directly connect employees to their job sites, but can connect to “last mile” shuttle service or other on-demand service.

Filling this need, COTA broke ground on the Rickenbacker Area Mobility Center in 2023. ODOT’s Workforce Transit Study recommended another regional Mobility Center be developed in the New Albany area.

## 5. Implement appropriate additional/innovative service to address first/last mile needs

Building of off first/last mile efforts such as the New Albany shuttle service, GREAT and COTA Plus service implementation, more of these are envisioned throughout the region. In particular COTA plans to expand COTA Plus service into more parts of its service area using a portion of the LinkUS initiative funding. COTA Plus is an on-demand service that will provide first/last mile service in partnership with local governments. The mobility option offers customers with point-to-point service at an affordable fare and connect COTA riders to fixed route service for free. COTA Plus is an on-demand, app-based rideshare service that can book multiple passengers heading in the same direction into a shared vehicle. This microtransit solution provides customers with further access to jobs, healthcare and more, while also offering a fast, convenient and comfortable transit solution. Some communities are piloting first/last mile service with a private provider for transit riders to and from their jobs as a service with the hopes of employers participating in funding the service.

COTA has mounted bike racks on all of its fixed route vehicles, enabling bicyclists to complete a part of their trips with transit. This bike-bus combination helps transit riders when their origin or destination remains far from a transit stop. Where suitable, COTA continuously seeks to add other bicycle amenities, such as racks, near transit stops to improve modal connection.

## 6. Make neighborhoods transit supportive through infrastructure projects

Walking or biking are part of all transit trips. Thus, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is vital in the support of transit. Thus, most of the strategies and projects that expand the pedestrian and bike system in areas that connect to transit stops will benefit transit. COTA’s plans also include the improvement of sidewalk connections that improve accessibility to passenger shelters and stops. The Franklin County Coordinated Plan also identifies these sidewalk deficiencies as a barrier to fixed-route transit, especially for the elderly and persons with disabilities. In response, COTA’s Mobility Advisory Board convenes a subcommittee that advocates for sidewalk improvements, and funds limited improvements through FTA Section 5310, Enhancing the Mobility of Seniors and Persons with Disabilities. MORPC’s Complete Streets Policy also encourages and, in some cases, requires the completion of such connections to transit.

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As part of the LinkUS initiative, there are plans to fund Transit Supportive Infrastructure (TSI) projects to connect people to transit service via walking or biking. MORPC is currently leading a series of regional working groups to identify priority projects that could be funded through the program.

## 7. Facilitate multi-jurisdictional dialogue to improve opportunities for collaboration

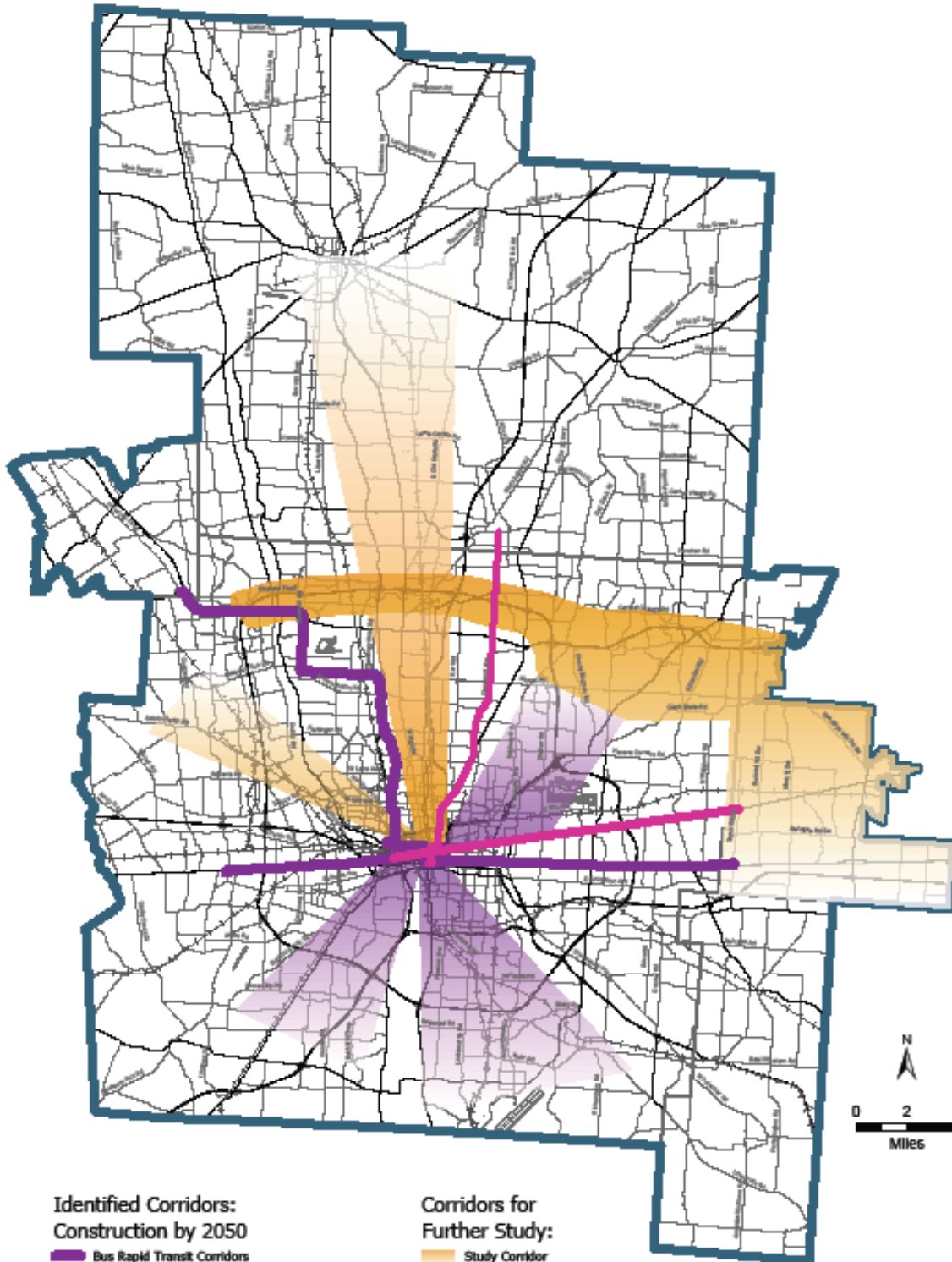
Since FFY 2013, MORPC has grown in the role of being a designated recipient for FTA Section 5310 funds. Going forward MORPC will have more connection and contact with recipients to work toward more coordination efforts. To date and going forward, public transit, private operator, and private nonprofit projects have been selected.

When MORPC updated its locally developed Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan for Franklin County 2018 MORPC included Delaware county to match the MPO planning area. As required by FTA Section 5310 funding to enhance the mobility of seniors and persons with disabilities, any program or projects selected must be included in the Coordinated Plan. In January 2018, ODOT Office of Transit completed the Justification for ODOT Human Service Transportation Coordination Regions. ODOT investigated the merits of developing a regional structure for coordinated human services transportation for the state to assess the potential financial efficiencies of service provision and enhance mobility options for the urban and rural residents of Ohio. ODOT, reviewed resources, challenges, duplications, gaps, trip types, population and budgets available for coordinated transportation and mobility management. This study recommended the regionalization of Ohio's HSTC programs in a manner that facilitates a more cost-effective use of available funding and to take advantage of regional deployment of enhanced technologies for all of Ohio's human services programs that utilize agency-sponsored and public transportation resources.

One of the outcomes of the Coordination Regions above is that most transit services would like to work regionally with out boarders COTA, DCT LFPT and LCTB participate in or host the coordinating councils or boards for their counties. Such forums provide an opportunity to identify, maintain and expand human services and public transit coordination. Each seeks to implement its county's coordinated plan. DCT, LPTS and LCTB continue to contract with human services agencies to provide transportation for human service agency clients. Such coordination eliminates potentially overlapping service and provides the transit agencies an additional source of revenue to maintain and operate their fleets.

Figure 6.2 shows the proposed High Capacity Transit projects in the MPO area. These include 5 corridors covering over 50 miles. The MTP also includes the expansion of existing COTA and DCT service by approximately 45%.

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**Identified Corridors:  
Construction by 2050**

- Bus Rapid Transit Corridors
- Northeast High Capacity Transit Corridor<sup>®</sup>
- Southeast High Capacity Transit Corridor<sup>®^</sup>
- Southwest High Capacity Transit Corridor<sup>®^</sup>
- Other Premium Transit Improvements

**Corridors for  
Further Study:**

- Study Corridor

<sup>®</sup>Mode and route alignment to be identified by separate Alternatives Analysis

<sup>^</sup>One Corridor to be constructed by 2050, to be identified by separate Alternatives Analysis





## 6.c FREIGHT RAIL & MULTIMODAL CONNECTIONS

Our region's freight planning program actively supports a number of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan's goal strategies, particularly when it comes to positioning Central Ohio to attract and retain businesses that enhance our economic prosperity and position the region to compete on a global scale.

The intermodal freight and aviation industries have an impact beyond local, regional, state, and even national borders. Global trading patterns are shifting, and a competitive advantage will belong to regions that cannot only attract high skilled workers and businesses that employ them, but places that provide affordable housing options, a high quality of life, and transportation hubs that act as gateways to the global economy. Through its work in freight planning and other activities, MORPC works to position the Central Ohio region as an attractive area to workers and businesses. However, MORPC also understands its role in the larger picture, and that freight challenges span beyond regional boundaries.

### INTERMODAL FREIGHT AND AVIATION STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

Recognizing the importance that goods movement plays in the regional, state, and national economies, Central Ohio stakeholders actively collaborate to address the needs of this important sector of our economy. Strategies presented throughout the MTP seek to improve the flow of all modes of transportation, including intermodal freight and ground access to the region's passenger airports. For example, strategies and projects that address congestion not only help the commuting traffic but also the movement of goods. However, this section directly addresses four strategies related to intermodal freight and aviation ground access, and the activities and projects that implement these strategies.

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## 1. Improve at-grade rail crossings and close or grade-separate crossings where feasible

As part of its services to our members, MORPC takes an active role in facilitating collaboration between local governments and the Ohio Railroad Development Commission (ORDC), particularly in the area of at-grade rail crossings. In 2018, MORPC worked with Prairie Township to assess the impacts of the Hillard-Rome Road south of I-70 and north of W Broad Street. This at-grade rail crossing is frequently blocked by stalled trains due to congestion at the Buckeye intermodal rail yard. To help understand the extent of the blockage issue, MORPC provided a 7-day, 24-hour video surveillance summary that informed stakeholders of the frequency of blockages, the length of each, and what times during the day the problem was at its worst. This information was shared with ORDC, ODOT and other stakeholders to facilitate discussions with Buckeye rail yard management and private railroads using this rail crossing.

In addition, MORPC participated in the Grade Crossing Adaptability Study's stakeholder workshops. This study, slated for completion in 2020, was funded by ODOT and ORDC with the purpose of providing an analysis tools for decision makers to prioritize safety around at-grade crossings across the state.

In 2023, ORDC developed a Rail Crossing Community Impact Index tool that is intended to help municipalities across the state prioritize which at-grade crossings are most important to address in future projects. The tool scored all at-grade rail crossings based on their Public Importance, Redundancy, Safety, and cause of Delay to Road Users.

## 2. Address congestion points "bottlenecks" on the rail system

In 2019, MORPC completed components of a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) study as part of the Rapid Speed Transportation Initiative (RSTI). This study yielded information on train frequency across various segments of the rail network in Central Ohio. This information, while collected for the purposes of the Chicago-Columbus-Pittsburgh passenger rail project, yielded important information on congested rail segments, including those within downtown Columbus. This information is at hand and can help identify collaboration points between rail, highway, and local stakeholders to maximize multimodal improvement investments in Central Ohio.

As the State of Ohio moves forward with partners to utilize planning funding awarded in 2023 from the Federal Railroad Administration to identify future rail corridors for passenger rail service, identifying and addressing freight bottlenecks will be a key consideration.

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Collect information on and analyze freight activity to identify developing trends and work to disseminate that information among partners and peers

4. Maximize the efficiency and provide needed capacity of rail terminals

5. Implement new technology for freight movement

As new technologies develop for moving freight, including Advanced Air Mobility, drones, hyperloop, and others, MORPC will continue to evaluate and study the potential impacts on freight movement in the region.

6. Make transportation decisions that positively impact freight movements and maximize the effectiveness of the region's integrated freight transportation system

Traditional funding for transportation projects, including rail and roadway, is becoming increasingly more and more challenging. MORPC will work with transportation funding stakeholders, such as ODOT, counties, local agencies, and the private sector to increase knowledge and use of new innovative financing strategies for Central Ohio, such as Transportation Improvement Districts (TIDs), toll financing, automated truck corridors and other public-private partnership (P3) opportunities.

7. Forge public/private partnerships to provide resources to maintain and expand key linkages between air, rail and roadway transportation modes

## **Regional Policy Roundtable**

The Regional Policy Roundtable is a group composed of representatives from diverse interest groups across the Central Ohio region, including local governments, businesses, non-profits and citizens. The Regional Policy Roundtable aims to sustain a strong, prosperous 15-county Central Ohio region by providing a voice on policy and legislative matters. The Roundtable's main task is to agree on the public policy initiatives that MORPC staff pursues.

MORPC will continue to monitor state and federal legislation for its impact on Central Ohio's freight transportation system. In the past, MORPC's Policy Committee has passed resolutions reacting to potential legislative and administrative decisions. Other resolutions have supported local partners' applications for funding under various programs, such as the US 33 and I-270 Interchange project to address congestion issues at this bottleneck that affects regular as well as freight traffic flows. MORPC will monitor federal and state policy and inform the Roundtable when applicable, and, as required, pursue the Policy Roundtable's identified freight-related priorities.

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## **Freight TIP**

MORPC will continue to refine the Freight TIP and the evaluation criteria used to identify priority freight projects while evaluating the conditions and performance of the NHS (National Highway System) connectors to move freight more effectively and efficiently through Ohio.

## **Rickenbacker Area Study**

The Rickenbacker Intermodal Yard is Central Ohio's connection to the NS Heartland Corridor. Infrastructure connections are still necessary to maximize the value of this asset. MORPC worked with stakeholders in the area to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that considered freight and workforce transportation needs, business attraction and retention strategies, resiliency in terms of preparedness for technology innovations and alternative fuel sources (such as solar, electric, and natural gas), and improvements in transportation safety. This study was completed in 2018.

8. Maximize efficiency of existing transit terminals and construct new transit terminals, mobility centers and park and rides with safe bike, pedestrian, and vehicle access where there is a convergence of transit routes or intercity rapid speed transportation modes
9. Incorporate vehicle sharing needs at transit terminals, stations and major stops
10. Improve transit, bike and pedestrian connections to airports
11. Alleviate existing or anticipated congestion at roadway and rail terminal access areas
12. Alleviate existing or anticipated congestion at roadway and air terminal access areas
13. Incorporate ground needs for flying intraregional transport such as drones for package delivery and personal transport
14. Facilitate multi-jurisdictional dialogue to improve opportunities for collaboration

## **OARC Freight Working Group**

Through the Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC), MORPC coordinates the state's metropolitan areas to facilitate a statewide freight group. This group allows the state's MPOs to assist each other on freight-related issues when needed. The freight working group also enables ODOT and FHWA staff to share information on state and federal freight activities.

## **Ohio Conference on Freight**

The Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) sponsors the Ohio Conference on Freight, which is rotated between the cities of Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati and is held once a year. MORPC continues to support OARC and participates in conference planning efforts. MORPC represents Central Ohio's freight infrastructure interests at this annual event and utilizes knowledge gained in the development of our region's freight planning activities.

## **Columbus Region Logistics Council**

The Columbus Region Logistics Council is an industry-led group, which is an initiative of the Columbus Chamber. The group also serves on MORPC's Transportation Advisory Committee. Likewise, MORPC serves as the Logistics Council's government liaison. This relationship has led to several tactical and strategic successes for the region's freight transportation system. This close partnership will continue into the future.

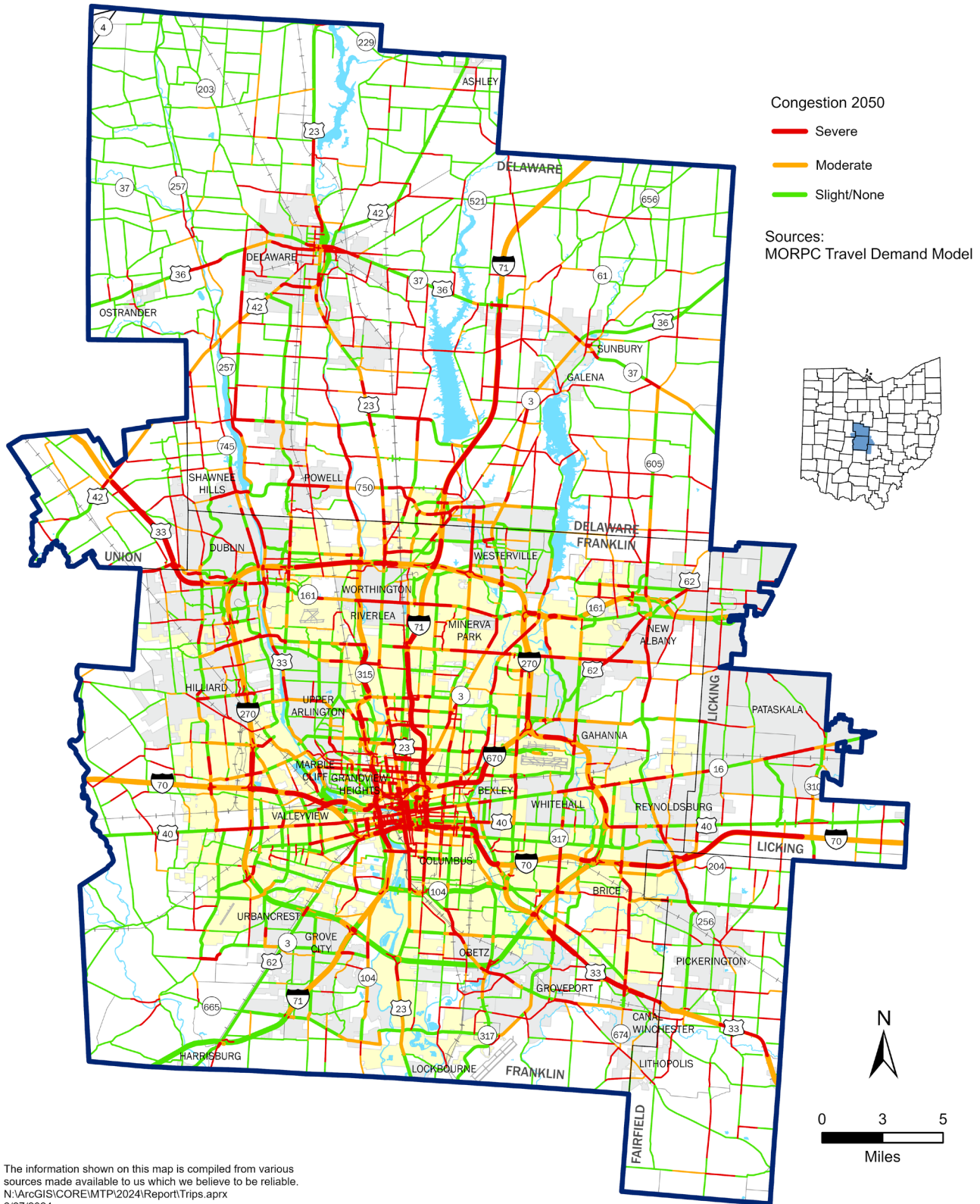
## **6.d ROADWAY SYSTEM**

As described in Chapter 3, one operational measure of how the roadway system functions is vehicle miles traveled (VMT) under congested conditions. Due to the growing travel demand resulting from the growth described in Chapter 2, it will be increasingly challenging to maintain VMT under congested conditions to no more than 5% daily and 10% during peak periods. In addition to the management strategies described in Chapters 4 and 5, it is also necessary to identify roadway capacity expansion projects to accommodate the additional travel demand. Figures 6.3 and 6.4 show expected congestion levels in 2050, should none of the projects described later in this chapter be implemented and travel behavior remains the same.

The roadway system is the primary component of the transportation system in Central Ohio. Because nearly all of the transportation systems described earlier in this chapter require access to the roadway system in order to function, MORPC's approach when identifying roadway expansion projects is to assume that the appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be included in all new roadway, roadway widening, or intersection projects. This is consistent with MORPC's Complete Streets Policy and complete street policies being adopted by communities throughout the region.

MORPC's approach when identifying roadway expansion projects is to assume that the appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be included in all new roadway, roadway widening, or intersection projects.

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## ROADWAY STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS

Recommendations presented throughout the MTP will help improve conditions on the roadway system. For instance, strategies and projects that will address travel demand will also improve roadway congestion levels. One can make the same connection for any strategies and projects that improve transit, bicycle, and pedestrian systems. However, the following strategies and projects specifically address roadway system development.

All project references in the strategies listed below remain general and describe the categories of roadway projects identified in this MTP and shown in Figures 6.5 and 6.6. More detailed project descriptions of all specific projects included in the MTP can be found in Chapter 8. While these primarily relate to expanding the roadway system, Chapter 4 addresses the importance of maintaining and managing the existing system.

1. Add capacity, where appropriate, to alleviate existing or anticipated congestion along existing freeways and at interchanges

This plan identifies 48 miles of freeway to be widened and 23 interchange modifications

### MAJOR WIDENING OF FREEWAYS

Addition of travel lanes.



BEFORE



AFTER

### INTERCHANGE MODIFICATION

Modification of existing interchange to improve operations and accommodate additional capacity, widen an overpass, and/or modify ramp intersections.



BEFORE



AFTER

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## 2. Continue conversion of key divided expressways into limited access freeways

For certain facilities, whose role and function is to provide mobility through the region and not necessarily to provide access to developed areas, converting into limited access freeways can provide safety benefits, congestion relief, and preserve capacity for future growth.

## 3. Construct new interchanges, where appropriate, to alleviate congestion or support regional development goals

This plan identifies 7 new interchanges.

### NEW INTERCHANGE

Adding a grade-separated interchange where an at-grade intersection or no intersection existed previously.



BEFORE



AFTER

Freeway system projects are implemented through ODOT's leadership and in partnering with local community stakeholders. These projects are typically the most expensive projects to build and usually take many years and project phases to complete.



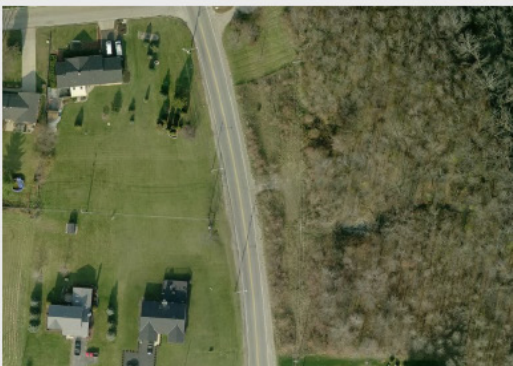
# 2024-2050 COLUMBUS AREA METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

- 4. Add capacity, where appropriate, to alleviate existing congestion that hinders economic activity along existing arterial and collector corridors

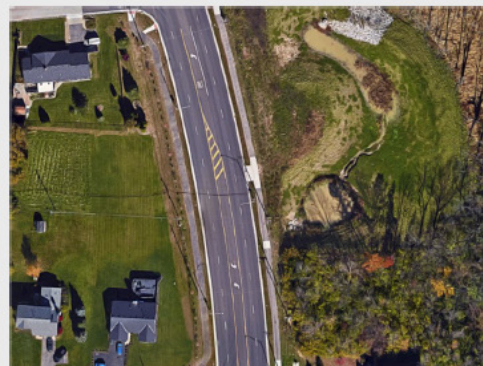
This plan identifies 94 miles of through travel lane additions and 122 miles of turn lane additions or other safety improvements along a corridor.

## MAJOR OR MINOR WIDENING OF SURFACE ROADWAYS

Addition of travel lanes and/or turn lanes along a roadway corridor.



BEFORE



AFTER

## ACCESS MANAGEMENT OF ROADWAY CORRIDOR

Limiting access points to and from a roadway by consolidating driveways and/or limiting turning movement options.



BEFORE



AFTER

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5. Add capacity, where appropriate, at locations such as intersections to alleviate existing congestion that hinders economic activity

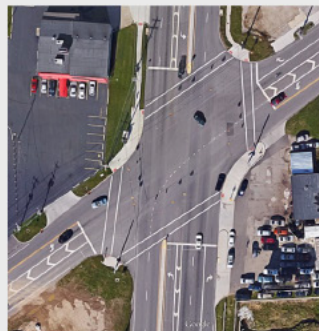
This plan identifies 117 intersection modifications.

## INTERSECTION MODIFICATIONS

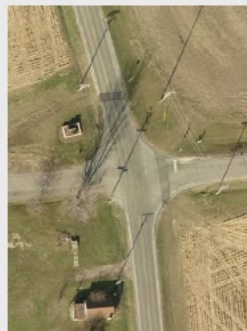
Addition of turn lanes or other reconfiguration such as a roundabout.



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

6. Construct new roadways, where appropriate, to alleviate congestion or support regional or local development goals

The MTP contains 89 new roadway projects consisting of approximately 90 new miles. Many of these will be built to support new development. However, there are also short road connections throughout the region to solve localized congestion and connectivity issues. There are also longer new road corridors to address more sub-regional travel needs.

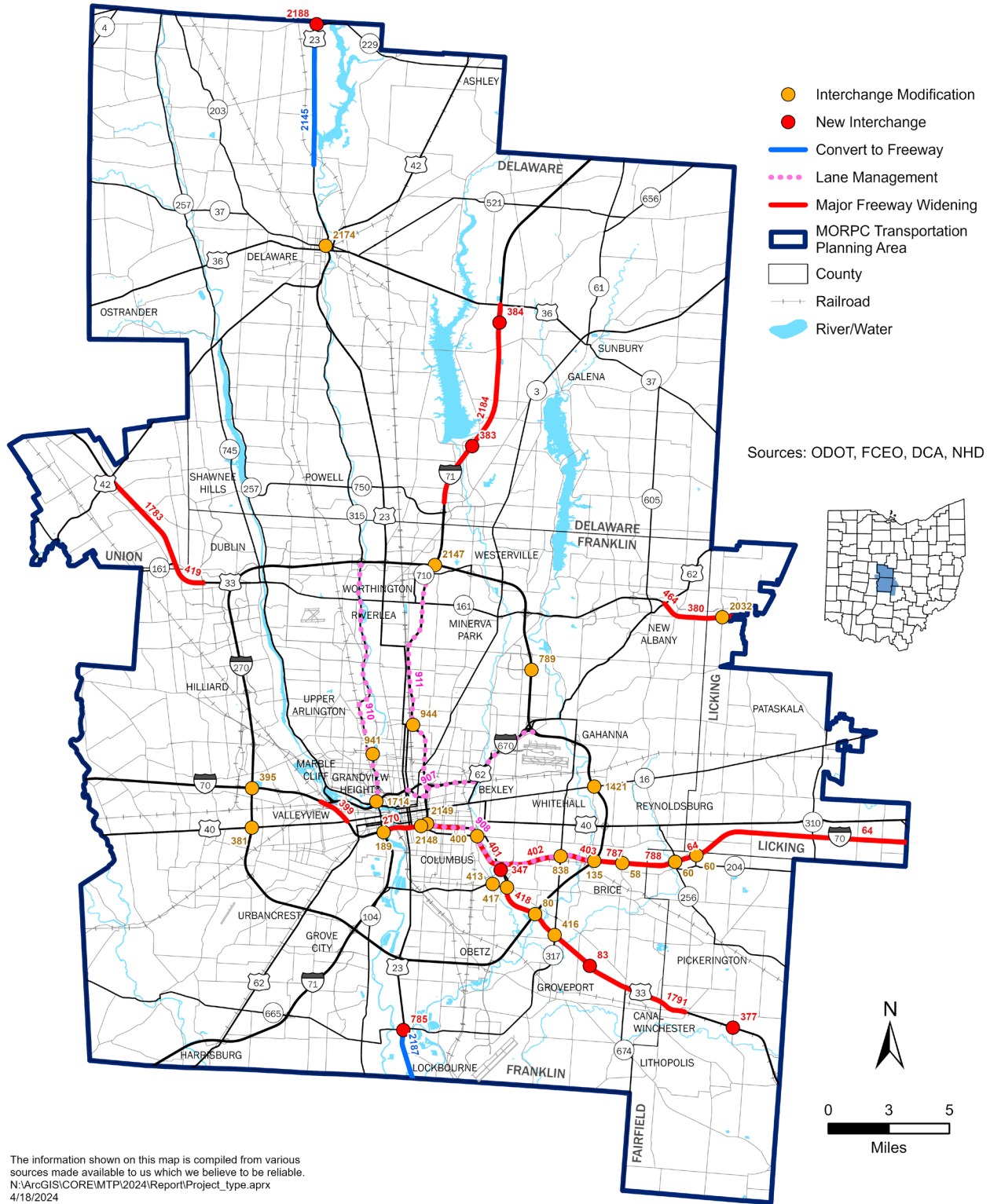
7. Provide efficient connectivity of local roads to the arterial and collector roadway system

Although local roads do not provide for regional travel, their efficient connection to the rest of the system is vital. Improper intersection spacing or lack of appropriate intersection control not only impacts those on the local road, but those utilizing the collector or arterial facility also. Access management along the collector or arterial road, proper intersection sizing and signalization and ensure redundant connectivity from local system to the larger facilities are key ways to make good connections.

8. Facilitate multi-jurisdictional dialogue to improve opportunities for collaboration

MORPC's Committee structures are key in facilitating dialog and collaboration. Beyond the committee meetings, regional collaboration meetings are held in each quadrant of the region annually, and MORPC leadership meets individually with each member. The development of the TIP, the Paving The Way program and partnering on transportation studies are additional ways that will continue to be used to facilitate multi-jurisdictional dialogue.

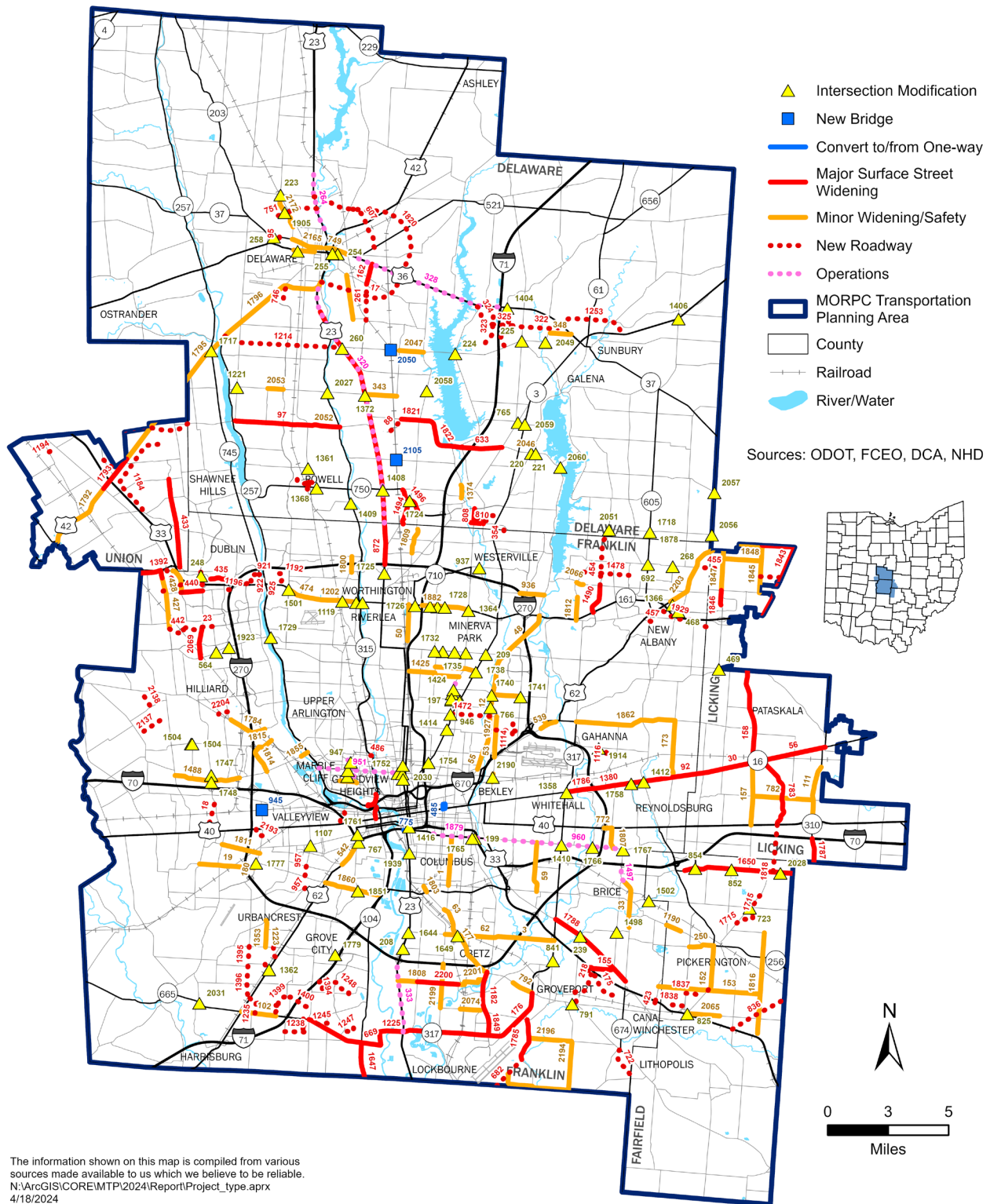
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