



MID-OHIO REGIONAL
MORPC
PLANNING COMMISSION

111 Liberty St., Suite 100
Columbus, Ohio 43215
www.morpc.org

NOTICE OF A MEETING
SUSTAINABLE2050
HYBRID MEETING
MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
111 Liberty St., #100, Columbus, OH 43215
March 5, 2025, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions – *Brandi Whetstone, Director of Sustainability, MORPC*

MORPC Program Updates

- **Regional Sustainability Agenda** – *Brandi Whetstone, MORPC*
Brandi Whetstone provided an update on the Regional Sustainability Agenda's progress and strategic goals. The timeline for the Regional Sustainability Agenda (RSA) includes several key milestones:
 - March 2025: Monthly Sub-committee meeting on March 25 and a Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) update on March 19.
 - April 2025: Introduction of the draft for broader input, with an online information session planned for either April 23 or April 25.
 - May 2025: Another Sub-committee meeting to further discuss and refine the RSA.
 - June to August 2025: Presentation to the SAC for approval on June 18, followed by presentation to the Commission for adoption on August 14.
- **Charging Smart Funding Opportunity** – *Brian Filiatraut, MORPC*
Brian Filiatraut led the discussion on the new initiative to promote electric vehicle infrastructure:
 - **Charging Smart Funding Opportunity:** This is a program designed to facilitate the adoption of electric vehicles by providing free technical assistance and national recognition to local governments.
 - **Support for Local Governments:** This initiative aims to assist local governments in establishing policies and programs that promote electric vehicle usage and the development of EV infrastructure within their communities.
 - **Educational and Collaborative Efforts:** The initiative will include holding workshops and webinars to review criteria for designation, provide one-on-one support, and ensure that local governments have the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of EV infrastructure implementation effectively.
- **Regional Solar Co-op** – *Cassie Johnson, Sustainable Columbus*
Cassie Johnson, Sustainable Columbus, introduced the upcoming launch of the Central Ohio Solar Co-op:
 - **Group Purchasing Model:** The Solar Co-op leverages a group purchasing model to provide residents with lower prices on solar installations, making solar energy more affordable and accessible.

William Murdock, AICP
Executive Director

Chris Amorose Groomes
Chair

Michelle Crandall
Vice Chair

Ben Kessler
Secretary

- **Vetted Installers and Support:** Solar United Neighbors will vet all solar installers involved in the program, ensuring reliability and quality. The co-op also offers a comprehensive online platform and dedicated customer service to support residents throughout the process.
- **Community Engagement and Ownership:** The initiative encourages wide community participation and aims for residents across Central Ohio to take ownership of their energy future. Information sessions and promotional materials will be available to educate and engage the community ahead of the co-op's launch in early April.
- **Government Affairs & Policy – Kyle Probert, MORPC**
Kyle Probert discussed current legislative affairs affecting sustainability and public transportation initiatives:
 - **Federal and State Dynamics:** The discussion highlighted the ongoing turbulence at the federal level and significant legislative activities at the state level, particularly concerning the state transportation and operating budgets.
 - **Passenger Rail Developments:** A key focus is on restoring passenger rail services in Central Ohio for the first time in 40 years, with efforts underway to secure a \$5 million appropriation in the State Operating Budget to support the Midwest Connect line and the 3C&D line, enhancing regional connectivity.
 - **Energy Legislation:** The overview included updates on energy legislation, specifically Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 15, which aim to modify energy mandates and pricing strategies. These bills could significantly impact local energy policies and the operation of electric distribution utilities in Ohio.

Empowering Communities: Communicating Sustainability with Impact – *Tim Bates and Mindy Justis, MurphyEpson*

Tim Bates and Mindy Justis from MurphyEpson shared their expertise on effective strategies for community engagement in sustainability initiatives. The presentation emphasized the importance of clear and impactful communication to ensure community members are not only informed but also actively involved in sustainability efforts. Mindy and Tim highlighted the use of real-world examples and case studies to illustrate best practices for engaging residents, addressing common challenges such as misinformation and skepticism, and building trust within communities. They also stressed the necessity of aligning sustainability messages with the values and daily experiences of community members to foster meaningful participation and support for environmental goals.

Member Updates – All

Meeting Adjourned

Please notify Lynn Kaufman at 614-233-4189 or lkaufman@morpc.org to confirm your attendance at this meeting or if you require special assistance.

The next Sustainable2050 meeting will be May 22, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
Hybrid Meeting
Sustainable2050 Meeting

March 5, 2025

Members Present

- Erin Beck, City of Columbus
- Andrew Biesterveld, Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)
- Andrew Booker, Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio
- David Celebrezze, City of Westerville
- Sean Collins, Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio
- Elizabeth Ellman, City of Bexley
- Aaron Glanville, Franklin County Engineer's Office
- Emily Goliver, City of Dublin
- Maggie Heiser, Power a Clean Future Ohio
- Mara Hunter, City of Gahanna
- James Jewell, Prairie Township (Franklin)
- President of Council Emily Keeler, City of Grandview Heights
- Andrew Kistler, Columbus Metropolitan Library
- Joe Lombardi, Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio
- Jennie McAdams, Franklin County Public Health
- Dave Medley, Clinton Township (Franklin)
- Justin Milam, City of Upper Arlington
- John Moorehead, City of Worthington
- Chelsea Nichols, City of New Albany
- Quentin Platt, City of Mount Vernon
- Lisa Roberts, City of Delaware
- Linda Rosine, City of Grove City
- Forest Runnels, City of Hilliard
- Karen Seidel, Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio
- Mayor Matthew Starr, City of Mount Vernon

Public Present

- Andres Antequera, City of Upper Arlington
- Tim Bates, Murphy Epsilon
- Cassie Johnson, City of Columbus
- Mindy Justis, Murphy Epsilon
- Council Member Michelle Kozak, City of Grandview Heights

Staff Present

- JR Diaz-Hernandez
- Dave Dixon
- Brian Filiatraut
- Lynn Kaufman
- Jessica Kuenzli
- Karina Peggau
- Kyle Probert
- Edwina Teye
- Brandi Whetstone



SUSTAINABLE2050 QUARTERLY MEETING

March 5, 2025



MID-OHIO REGIONAL
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AGENDA



- 10:30 a.m.** **Welcome & Introductions** – *Brandi Whetstone, Director of Sustainability, MORPC*
- 10:40 a.m.** **MORPC Program Updates** – *Brandi Whetstone*
- *Government Affairs & Policy* – *Kyle Probert, MORPC*
 - *Central Ohio Residential Solar Co-op* – *Cassie Johnson, Sustainable Columbus*
 - *Regional Sustainability Agenda* – *Brandi Whetstone, MORPC*
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MORPC

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS & POLICY UPDATE

Kyle Probert
Public Policy Coordinator, MORPC

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Central Ohio Residential Solar



switch together.



Program Benefits:

- By coming together, residents get a lower price with a trusted installer
- Experts have vetted installers and handled the necessary research to get you started.
- Hassle-free process with an online platform without obligation
- Customer service for support at all stages
- City backing gives reassurance



Join Us!

Local Governments:

- Determine a staff lead
- Talk with Myria Williams, Ohio Program Director at Solar United Neighbors, to discuss level of support needed
- Set a goal for number of co-op participants and final installations you think your area can achieve
- Receive Central Ohio based resources and promotional materials
- Launch the program with us in early April!

Since our program began in 2021, we have had 621 co-op participants resulting in 78 completed rooftop solar projects.

Thank you!

For more information, please contact
Cassie Johnson, Sustainable Columbus

CJJohnson@columbus.gov

Myria Williams, Solar United Neighbors

mwilliams@solarunitedneighbors.org



**SUSTAINABLE
COLUMBUS**

ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

AGENDA



MORPC

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REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA (RSA)



MORPC

- The guiding document for MORPC's sustainability-focused programming and committees, and framework for members and regional partners to align around common goals.
- Contains goals, measurable objectives, and strategies that make Central Ohio a better place for its residents.
- Updated every 4 years. The time horizon for the next agenda is 2025-2028.

REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA 2021–2024



MID-OHIO REGIONAL
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PLANNING COMMISSION

WHO WE ARE

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is Central Ohio's regional council for more than 70 members comprised of counties, cities, villages, townships, and regional organizations. We take pride in bringing communities of all sizes and interests together to collaborate on best practices and plan for the future of our growing region.

SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) is a top-level committee of MORPC's board and serves as the voice of sustainability. The SAC weighs in on important sustainability-focused programs and policies that have an impact on air quality, water resources, trails, energy, growth, and planning.

MORPC'S SERVICE AREA





RSA DRAFT MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS



Mission

The Regional Sustainability Agenda unites Central Ohio and its communities around shared goals, fostering collaboration and innovation to ensure that sustainability benefits are accessible to all and drive lasting prosperity.

Vision

We envision a healthier, more resilient, and prosperous region – where public health is safeguarded, natural resources are preserved, communities are connected, and economic opportunities are sustainable. Our goal is a thriving future where both people and nature flourish, enhancing quality of life for all.

Goals:

1. Improve air quality and reduce climate change impacts.
2. Protect and restore natural resources.
3. Advance healthy, connected, and safe communities.
4. Advance sustainable and equitable economic growth and development.
5. Create communities that are aware, prepared, and resilient to climate impacts.

CURRENT PROGRESS



MORPC

CHECKLIST

- ✓ Reviewed goals.
- ✓ Added goal centered on climate resilience.
- ✓ Reviewed objectives.
- ✓ Reviewed **strategies** for Goal 1, Goal 2, and Goal 3.

- ☐ Review **strategies** for Goals 4-5.
- ☐ Create a mission statement.
- ☐ Clean, finalize, and present to SAC and Commission for adoption.

WHAT ARE STRATEGIES?

Strategies are the “menu” of items that MORPC members can choose from when pursuing Sustainable2050 certification. Each objective contains several strategies that help move our region closer to achieving the overarching goal.

Each strategy is reviewed closely to ensure it:

1. Addresses the goals and objectives.
2. Fills any gaps in the RSA.
3. Has ties to sustainability.
4. Is something local governments can implement.
5. Avoids repetition with other objectives or strategies.

REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA TIMELINE



MORPC

March 2025

Monthly Sub-committee meeting
3/25 and SAC
update 3/19

April 2025

Introduce draft for
broader input, host
online information
session (4/23 or
4/25)

May 2025

Sub-committee
meeting

June/August 2025

Present to SAC 6/18
for approval and
present to
Commission for
adoption 8/14



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CENTRAL OHIO AIR QUALITY END OF SEASON REPORT 2024

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
111 Liberty St. Suite 100
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P. 614.228.2663 | F. 614.228.1904
info@morpc.org | www.morpc.org



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CHARGING SMART

US Department of Energy



Charging Smart is a US DOE program that provides free technical assistance and national recognition to local governments to facilitate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) and EV charging for their community.



6 Action Categories

Planning

Government
Operations

Regulation

Education and
Incentives

Utility
Engagement

Shared Mobility

For more info, visit the energy-ready.org/charging-smart.

CHARGING SMART

US Department of Energy



MORPC is applying to lead a **cohort of local governments** through the Charging Smart designation program.

Key Cohort Highlights *(tentative)*

- Will run from ~ May 2025 – February 2026
- Hold meetings and webinars to review criteria for designation
- One-on-one calls / meetings to collect needed documentation
- Additional support from Charging Smart team and partners

Timelines + Next Steps

- March 7, 12 – 1 PM: "Office Hours" Meeting → Overview, Q&A
- March 14: Letters of Commitment Deadline
- March 21: Application Deadline



SECURING OUR ENERGY FUTURE

Informational & Workshop Forum Series



MORPC

- MORPC is developing a series of informational webinars and workshops featuring energy, regulatory, and economic development experts in Central Ohio.
- Designed for local government and community leaders, these sessions will help equip communities to plan for a more secure, resilient, and affordable energy future.

Tentative Timeline + Topics

MAY

Session One: Landscape of Energy Planning

Focus: Big Picture and Challenges & Opportunities in Central Ohio

JUNE

Session Two: Permitting, Zoning, and Economic Development

Focus: How to Set the Table & Open Your Community for Energy

JULY

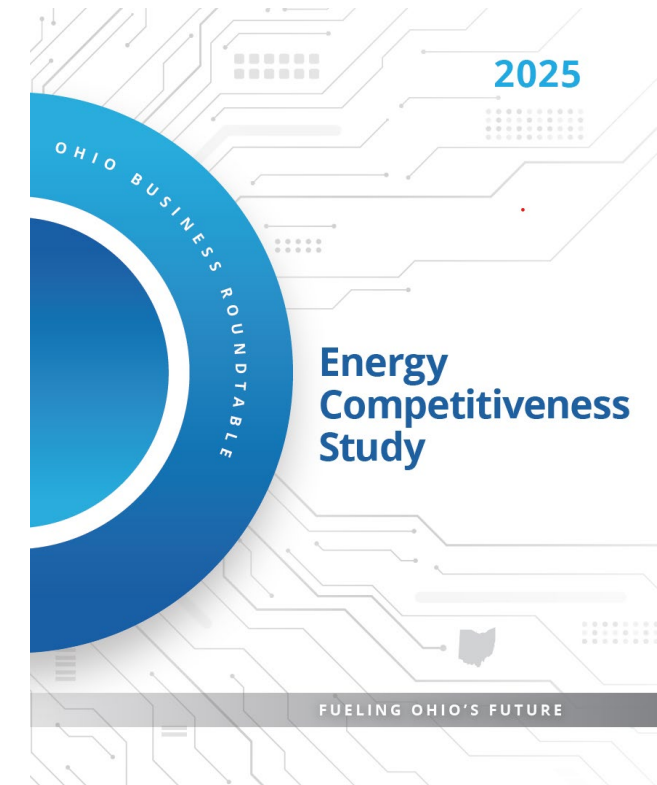
Session Three: Funding and Resource Opportunities

Focus: Building Your Energy Stack

AUGUST

Session Four: Emerging Energy Technologies and Future Proofing the Region

Focus: What's on the Energy Horizon?



BRIAN FILIATRAUT

Senior Program Manager, Energy and Sustainability
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission

T: 614.233.4137

bfiliatraut@morpc.org

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Empowering Communities: Communicating Sustainability with Impact

Mindy Justis & Tim Bates
March 5, 2025

Agenda

- Introductions
- Goals + community engagement overview
- Best practices and examples
- Interactive exercise: Guided Q&A
- Recap and takeaways
- Closing

Goals for today

- Share our best practices for engaging residents
- Offer real-world examples & case studies
- Provide practical tips & resources
- Deliver actionable takeaways for your communities

Addressing Common Challenges

- Handling misinformation & skepticism
- Protecting communication blind spots
- Establishing trust with the community and educating
 - Over a quarter of Central Ohio residents believe that their air and/ or water quality needs improvement
 - Most (70%) feel that Central Ohio leaders are “not at all” to “moderately” addressing the region’s environmental needs
 - The top investment priority for the region should be the “Conservation of Greenspaces and Waterways.”

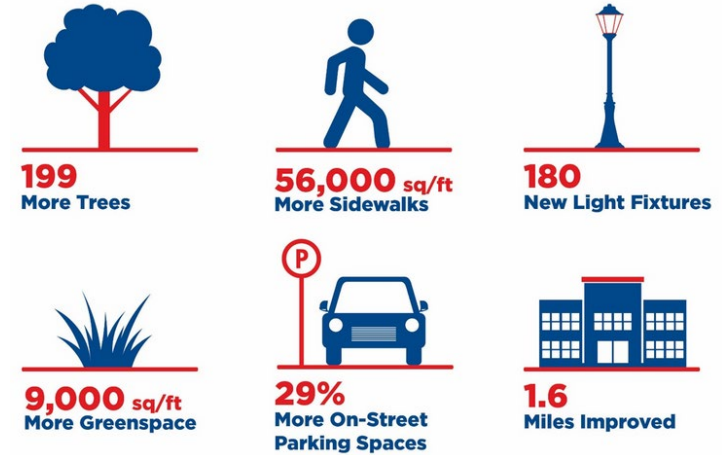
Community Engagement Defined

Community engagement: Collaborative process that involves people, organizations, stakeholders and governments working together to address community issues. It is based on the idea that everyone who is affected by an issue should have a say in how it's addressed

Best Practices & Examples

City of Columbus Streetscape: Contracted our team to manage all public and stakeholder meetings, reach outs, media and boots-on-the-ground communication with business owners and residents.

City of Westerville Streetscape: Contracted to create materials, facilitate one stakeholder and public open house and support Westerville's Communications team with strategy.



Best Practice Results

City of Columbus Streetscape: Built rapport with major stakeholders, proactively communicated to businesses and answered questions promptly. Saw mostly positive media sentiment and were awarded for communication and engagement support.

City of Westerville Streetscape: Helped set Westerville Communications team up for success at the beginning of the project so that we could, “go away” throughout.

Let's Try It - Guided Q&A

- **Common challenge:** Your municipality is planning to build a new multi-use trail system that will improve connectivity, reduce emissions and promote recreation. However, the project has received mixed feedback from the public. Residents are concerned about construction disruptions, cost and the potential for increased traffic near their homes. Public participation in meetings has been low, and there's a gap between the technical benefits of the project and what the community values.

Let's Try It - Guided Q&A

- What are the biggest barriers to public engagement in projects like this?
- How can technical information about sustainable infrastructure be communicated in ways that resonate with residents' daily lives and values?
- What innovative methods could municipalities use to involve more diverse community voices in the project planning process?
- How can engineers collaborate with non-technical partners (communications staff, community leaders, etc.) to build trust and increase participation?
- What strategies would you implement to sustain public interest and support throughout the project lifecycle?

Do's and Dont's of Public Engagement

- Invite the owner's communications representative(s) to progress meeting and technical conversations
- Take criticisms from neighbors with a smile (find the kernel of truth)
- Encourage crew members to support the local economy (coffee, lunch, etc.)
- Empower team members to be good stewards of customer service

Do's and Dont's of Public Engagement

- Err on the side of providing more technical information than you think is necessary (builds trust via transparency; allows self selection in and out of info)
- Verbalize the reality of what to expect
- Talk in terms of impact – what will neighbors see and feel next
- Under promise and over deliver
- Say “probably” and “maybe”
 - Find the words that accurately describe what is and isn't known
 - Don't wait until you “know” to say something

Thank you and stay in touch!

Contact us:

Mindy Justis, mjustis@murphyepson.com

Tim Bates, tbates@murphyepson.com

Thank you!

Brandi Whetstone, LEED Green Associate

Director of Sustainability

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission

T: 614.233.4174

bwhetstone@morpc.org

111 Liberty Street, Suite 100

Columbus, OH 43215



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