

Smart Region Playbook

Background

MORPC convened a Smart Region Task Force to focus on advancing and leveraging “smart mobility” and data-enabled infrastructure initiatives – including Smart Columbus, the US 33 Smart Mobility Corridor, and the Intelligent Communities Forum – to provide benefits and foster innovation throughout Central Ohio. The task force brought together local leaders from the public sector and technical experts to define what it means for Central Ohio to be a “Smart Region” and work to encourage and empower all communities in the region to advance proven approaches and best practices within their planning activities and infrastructure investment.

This Smart Region Playbook is one of three primary deliverables of the task force. It sets forth a shared definition and vision of a “smart region” and a set of goals and recommendations to make progress toward achieving that vision. The other deliverables are a Smart Streets Policy to ensure MORPC’s infrastructure investments are aligned with advancing a Smart Region and a Smart Region Resource Guide to help local agencies implement their vision of a smart community and successfully participate in advancing a Smart Region.

Definition of Smart Region

A Smart Region collaborates across communities to leverage emerging technologies and data to provide services more effectively and improve the quality of life of all residents.

Vision for a Smart Region

To be a connected, inclusive, prosperous and resilient region, effectively providing services to support a high quality of life.

Purpose of the Playbook

This playbook will guide MORPC, local governments, and other stakeholders in executing the mission and vision of the Smart Region Task Force. It serves as a robust guideline for MORPC’s own work and recommends policies, strategies and actions to be considered for incorporation into MORPC’s existing and future efforts, allowing the Task Force’s recommendations to permeate the agency’s work. In order to realize the vision, the playbook includes recommendations that extend beyond MORPC’s purview, into the activities of local governments, other public agencies, advocacy groups, as well as private sector partners such as utility companies.

Smart Region Goals

These are goals for the region to achieve to progress toward the Vision for a Smart Region. Some of these may inform recommendations to MORPC’s work below, but many of these will require several actors working together.

- **Connectivity:** Infrastructure systems throughout Central Ohio will be connected across jurisdictions to a regional information system to maximize their potential and provide seamless public services.

- Digital Inclusion: Everyone in Central Ohio will have the access and ability to utilize broadband and the services and resources available through the internet.
- Data: Central Ohio will collect, share and analyze data to understand its current condition, improve and optimize its functions, and anticipate future needs and opportunities.
- Innovation and Resiliency: Central Ohio will build the capacity to work collaboratively to be a leader in understanding, implementing and leveraging new technologies as they emerge and to adapt its digital infrastructure.
- Quality of Life: Smart Region objectives will be pursued for the purpose of promoting prosperity and improving the quality of life of Central Ohio's residents in some aspect, such as enhancing their mobility, safety, health, education, engagement, social capital, productivity, or equity.

Recommendations

This section contains the recommendations of the Smart Region Task Force to be pursued by MORPC's staff and committees in order to achieve the Smart Region Goals and Vision. In addition to a brief statement describing the recommendation, each recommendation also identifies a likely owner responsible for implementation, possible partners and collaborators, prioritization, and a way to evaluate or track progress.

The recommendations are grouped into five broad categories of MORPC's activities.

Collaboration

- Monitor funding opportunities for connections to Smart Region initiatives and reach out to potential sponsors/applicants. Offer advice and assistance in preparing responses/applications when it is compatible with existing services offered by MORPC.
 - Owner: MORPC Economic Development & Infrastructure Officer
 - Partners & Collaborators: Director of Government Affairs, Membership Services Officer, Regional Policy Roundtable
 - Timeframe: Short
 - Level of Effort: Low
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Ongoing; number of responses to opportunities, number of applications for which assistance is provided, number and amount of awards received
- Review the smart initiatives of various agencies as they are announced and perform periodic checks for common themes, potential conflicts, opportunities to collaborate, and overlapping responsibilities. Prepare comments and provide connections to the owners of complementary initiatives.
 - Owner: MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development
 - Partners & Collaborators: Regional Data Advisory Committee
 - Timeframe: Medium
 - Level of Effort: Low
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Ongoing; track the number of initiatives reviewed.

- Gather points of contact from regional council staffs, disseminate relevant information, meet annually or as needed to build an alliance around Smart Regions among regional councils within Ohio and nationally.
 - Owner: MORPC Transportation/MORPC Data & Mapping
 - Partners & Collaborators: Ohio Association of Regional Councils, National Association of Regional Councils
 - Timeframe: Medium
 - Level of Effort: Medium
 - Evaluation/Tracking: contact list available, organizational meeting

Education & Outreach

- Incorporate Smart Region goals and objectives into MORPC's insight2050 Technical Assistance Program (TAP). The program provides staff assistance to certain MORPC members for sustainable transportation and community development plans related to the findings of insight2050 Scenario Results report. This could be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as intentionally including emerging technology applications, broadband connectivity, digital inclusion, data collection and analysis, etc., in project scopes and deliverables.
 - Owner: MORPC Planning & Sustainability
 - Partners & Collaborators: All MORPC departments, TAP recipients
 - Timeframe: Medium
 - Level of Effort: Medium
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Inclusion of Smart Region elements in project scopes and deliverables
- Provide a range of educational opportunities and trainings for community leaders to introduce the future of mobility and why smart streets matter. Work with other interested entities to increase regional capacity to assist local governments advance Smart Region goals and objectives.
 - Owner: MORPC Member Services Officer
 - Partners & Collaborators: All MORPC departments, Smart Columbus, ODOT, DriveOhio, FHWA, OSU (Center for Automotive Research, Department of City and Regional Planning, etc.)
 - Timeframe: Long
 - Level of Effort: High
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Ongoing, member events and other engagement opportunities
- MORPC will produce a digital/online Smart Region Resource Guide to help communities with project-specific best practices, policies, funding opportunities, etc.
 - Owner: Smart Region Task Force
 - Partners & Collaborators: MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development, MORPC Data & Mapping, MORPC member communities, subject-matter experts
 - Timeframe: Short
 - Level of Effort: Low
 - Evaluation/Tracking: The action will be considered complete when a useful resource guide is available to assist local agencies implementing Smart Region

projects. Ongoing activities include continuing updates and periodic revisions of the guide.

Policy Development & Advocacy

- Revise the Policies for Managing MORPC-Attributable Funds to be consistent with the Smart Streets Policy.
 - Owner: Attributable Funds Committee
 - Partners & Collaborators: MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development
 - Timeframe: Short
 - Level of Effort: Low
 - Evaluation/Tracking: The action will be considered complete when the attributable funding policies have been revised with provisions for the Smart Streets Policy included. This may include, but is not limited to, requesting information about digital infrastructure from project sponsors and considering that information in the selection and development of funded projects.

- Encourage local jurisdictions to develop and adopt their own Smart Streets policies.
 - Owner: MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development
 - Partners & Collaborators: MORPC Membership Services Officer, MORPC Communications & Engagement
 - Timeframe: Medium
 - Level of Effort: Low
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Track the number of jurisdictions that have adopted Smart Streets policies

- Promote the development of smart mobility corridors (which have the capability to pilot and implement various connected and autonomous vehicle technologies) and similar concepts in Central Ohio.
 - Owner: MORPC Economic Development & Infrastructure Officer
 - Partners & Collaborators: Local governments, MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development, MORPC Data & Mapping, MORPC Director of Government Affairs, Drive Ohio, Smart Columbus, Columbus2020, US 33 Council of Governments
 - Timeframe: Long
 - Level of Effort: Medium
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Submittal of funding applications, total funding commitments within the region, total mileage implemented and in development

- Advocate on behalf of local governments in Central Ohio to promote smart mobility projects and initiatives to federal and state transportation officials.
 - Owner: MORPC Director of Government Affairs
 - Partners & Collaborators: Columbus2020, Regional Policy Roundtable, MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development
 - Timeframe: Short
 - Level of Effort: Medium

- Evaluation/Tracking: ODOT funding criteria: TRAC, safety, and local programs; Transportation reauthorization bill; smart mobility projects for discretionary grants
- Explore opportunities to improve coordination among the various agencies in Central Ohio involved in using technology for traffic management and operations.
 - Owner: MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development
 - Partners & Collaborators: Attributable Funds Committee, COSMOS, MORPC ITS Committee, EMS, law enforcement, EMAs, COTA, ODOT & local traffic management centers, dispatchers
 - Timeframe: Long
 - Level of Effort: High
 - Evaluation/Tracking:
- Track emerging data policy issues and develop guidance on them.
 - Owner: Regional Data Advisory Committee
 - Partners & Collaborators: MORPC Director of Government Affairs, Regional Policy Roundtable
 - Timeframe: Short
 - Level of Effort: Low
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Ongoing; availability of guidance

Inventory & Mapping

- Develop an inventory of Smart Region projects and initiatives throughout Central Ohio.
 - Owner: MORPC Data & Mapping
 - Partners & Collaborators: MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development, MORPC Planning & Sustainability
 - Timeframe: Medium
 - Level of Effort: Medium
 - Evaluation/Tracking:
- Support the creation of a regional open data portal.
 - Owner: Regional Data Advisory Committee
 - Partners & Collaborators: MORPC Data & Mapping, Smart Columbus
 - Timeframe: Medium
 - Level of Effort: High
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Establish use cases and functional requirements; increase the number of data providers connected to the regional open data portal; identify a sustainable host agency and funding source for the regional open data portal.
- Improve mapping of broadband coverage (including speed, cost, competition, and adoption) across the Central Ohio region.
 - Owner: MORPC Data & Mapping
 - Partners & Collaborators: Regional Data Advisory Committee, COSMOS, National Digital Inclusion Alliance, Connect Ohio/Connected Nation, internet service providers

- Timeframe: Medium
- Level of Effort: High
- Evaluation/Tracking: Develop online mapping and data visualizations that illustrate broadband coverage and access data for Central Ohio.

Planning & Initiatives

- Develop and implement a regional broadband plan.
 - Owner: MORPC Data & Mapping, National Digital Inclusion Alliance
 - Partners & Collaborators: All MORPC departments, Regional Data Advisory Committee, local jurisdictions, Columbus 2020, OARnet, internet service providers, private sector stakeholders
 - Timeframe: Medium
 - Level of Effort: High
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Follow a traditional planning process that results in implementable strategies to expand broadband coverage and access throughout Central Ohio
- Coordinate the preparation of an application to the Intelligent Communities Forum for recognition as an intelligent region.
 - Owner: MORPC Data & Mapping
 - Partners & Collaborators: MORPC Planning & Sustainability, Intelligent Communities Forum, City of Dublin
 - Timeframe: Medium
 - Level of Effort: Medium
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Application submittal
- Create a program modeled on MORPC's Sustainable2050 program that supports our member communities' smart region efforts through direct technical assistance, collaboration, and recognition.
 - Owner: MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development
 - Partners & Collaborators: Regional Data Advisory Committee, member communities
 - Timeframe: Medium
 - Level of Effort: Medium
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Program guidelines, naming of member communities
- Include smart/intelligent transportation projects and priorities in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Competitive Advantage Projects. Make them easy to reference to help identify opportunities for funding and implementation.
 - Owner: MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development
 - Partners & Collaborators: MORPC Data & Mapping, local jurisdictions
 - Timeframe: Short
 - Level of Effort: Low
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Identification in respective documents

- Integrate the Smart Columbus projects into the Central Ohio Regional ITS Architecture. For example, the architecture needs to incorporate communication flows from infrastructure and Columbus’s Traffic Management Center to the Smart Columbus Operating System. This includes migrating the current architecture from Turbo Architecture software to Regional Architecture Development for Intelligent Transportation (RAD-IT).
 - Owner: MORPC Transportation & Infrastructure Development
 - Partners & Collaborators: MORPC ITS Committee, ITS owners
 - Timeframe: Short
 - Level of Effort: Low
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Identification in Regional ITS

- Develop a regional alternative fuel station plan/strategy, including electric vehicle charging and CNG refueling corridors throughout Central Ohio and coordinate with those throughout the rest of Ohio.
 - Owner: Clean Fuels Ohio, MORPC Planning & Sustainability
 - Partners & Collaborators: Smart Columbus, private providers, local jurisdictions, ODOT
 - Timeframe: Medium
 - Level of Effort: High
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Follow a traditional planning process

- Modify MORPC’s project charter template to ensure consideration of Smart Region elements in the scoping of all future MORPC planning projects.
 - Owner: MORPC Senior Leadership
 - Partners & Collaborators: All MORPC departments
 - Timeframe: Short
 - Level of Effort: Low
 - Evaluation/Tracking: Revised charter in use

Evaluation

The MORPC committees and staff members identified as owners of the various tasks will incorporate the recommendations into their goals and objectives and identify tasks in their work programs toward accomplishing the recommendations. MORPC’s senior leadership will periodically check progress toward these recommendations and continue their implementation.