



## MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

### 2022 STATE OF THE REGION

Advertising Supplement to *Columbus Business First* | March 18, 2022



# Grove City

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**Richard L. "Ike" Stage, Mayor**

Council Members: Ted Berry, President  
Randy Holt, Christine Houk, Roby Schottke, Mark Sigris

# FROM POSSIBILITY TO REALITY

**A**s a community, we are experiencing a profound moment: We are well positioned to see so many possibilities finally become reality. Along with our many partners, MORPC is working hard as Central Ohio's regional council to drive investment and bring new opportunities and growth to our region.

Central Ohio is growing, and it's growing rapidly. We are on track to see the region grow to 3 million people by 2050. As we look at a world changed forever by COVID-19, we see how our region must also adapt to changes in technology, infrastructure, and more.

We are so proud to have over 75 communities who call themselves MORPC members – counties, cities, villages, townships, and regional organizations who all recognize the value of coming together to help create a better future for our region. We honor their partnership by building value for our members.

Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, we can create an environment for equity and prosperity. This once in a generation legislation sets the stage for investments today which will have a major impact for decades to come and on communities of every type – rural, suburban, and urban. From roads and bridges – to transit opportunities – to utilities, technology, and so much more – infrastructure impacts every facet of our lives. Working with public, private, and non-profit partners, MORPC stands ready to bring these critical funds quickly into communities.

More than ever there's a strong business case to invest in Central Ohio's future. With the incredible economic development announcements already in 2022, there is great opportunity and urgency to move plans to implementation soon. This could be a year seeing major new transit and mobility investments, reconnecting the region to the nation's passenger rail system, using trails to improve health, quality of life, and the economy, meeting regional housing challenges, and much more.

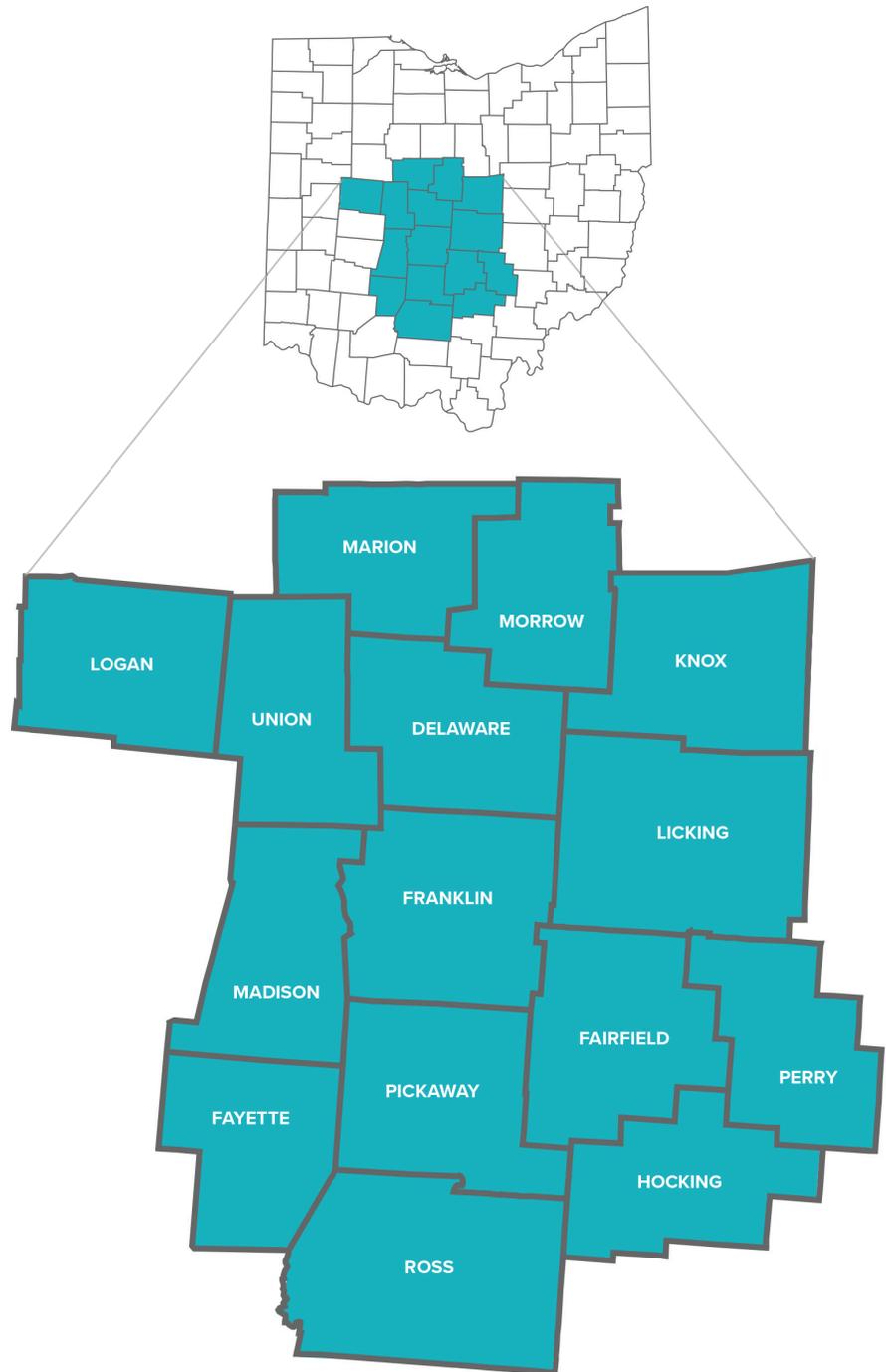
There is so much to look forward to this year, and beyond, in Central Ohio. It's a privilege to work with each of you to ensure we are ready for a future where our boundless possibilities become a reality. ■

Kind Regards,



**William Murdock**  
Executive Director,  
MORPC

**Karen Angelou**  
City of Gahanna  
MORPC Board Chair



# CENTRAL OHIO LEADERS JOIN TOGETHER FOR STATE OF THE REGION

Central Ohio's top political, business, and civic leaders gathered at the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's (MORPC) 2022 State of the Region event to plan for the future of the region and highlight the community's accomplishments.

Held at the Greater Columbus Convention Center on March 16, this was the first in-person State of the Region since 2019. The event brought together many leaders, collaborators, and friends for the first time in years.

This year's theme, *From Possibility to Reality*, showcased MORPC's vision for the region's future, highlighting the endless possibilities that could be, and the exciting realities that are fast approaching.

MORPC welcomed keynote speaker Andy Berke, Special Representative for Broadband for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and former mayor of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Berke spoke about his role at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration where he works to help states and territories connect, prepare, and take advantage of an influx of \$48 billion in new federal funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to help make broadband more accessible and affordable to underserved communities.

At the event, special honors were presented to three recipients as MORPC bestowed the William C. Habig Collaborative Achievement Award; the William H. Anderson Excellence in Public Service Award; and the Regional Leadership Award.

The **William C. Habig Collaborative Achievement Award** honors individuals or organizations that have achieved an effective effort or innovative collaborative project in Central Ohio. This award was presented to Downtown Bellefontaine Redevelopment & Small Nation.

Across the country, many small towns with once flourishing economies have experienced a decline. As a passionate believer in the ability to revitalize local communities through concerted efforts to support and sustain entrepreneurs, rehabilitate former commercial buildings, and incorporate the expansion of unique new age housing/workspace centers, Small Nation CEO, Jason Duff, has inspired small towns to reinvent themselves.

Most notable among their success stories is the restoration of the City

of Bellefontaine. This public-private partnership between Small Nation and Downtown Bellefontaine Redevelopment led to the repurposing of abandoned spaces through city-led enforcement of zoning/property management codes, the installation of new, extraordinary inspirational workspaces to attract the creative class of innovative entrepreneurs, and a wide range of unique support services to help these young businesses thrive.

Small Nation develops places, spaces, and dreams for small towns and small-town entrepreneurs to flourish. The city welcomed private investment and augmented these efforts by expanding designated outside restaurant areas in public spaces, adding benches and picnic areas, and improving the pedestrian experience. These efforts demonstrated that small towns could reinvent themselves through their collective efforts to help each other thrive.

The **William H. Anderson Excellence in Public Service Award** recognizes a MORPC board member who exemplifies outstanding leadership. This year, the award was presented to Joe Stefanov, City Manager for the City of New Albany, Ohio.



MORPC keynote speaker, Andy Berke, Special Representative for Broadband for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and former mayor of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Stefanov has faithfully served on the MORPC Executive Board since 2008. He has held significant leadership roles as the Chair of both the Reserve and Investment Advisory Committee and Building Committee, and for numerous strategic planning activities to review and establish the agency's priorities to advance the region.

Having served as City Manager for New Albany since 2000, Stefanov led the city through an extraordinary period of residential and commercial growth, including the development of a 5,000-acre International Business Park that provides employment for thousands of area residents throughout Central Ohio. He is widely respected among his peers for his calm demeanor and ability to work in a collaborative manner with public and private partners to achieve positive success for the greater community.

As he enters the final chapter of his public service, Stefanov continues to be an instrumental part of the region's success, including as an integral member of the team that landed the largest investment in the Ohio's history – the upcoming Intel manufacturing site located in New Albany.

Stefanov epitomizes a humble leader who possesses integrity, a deep passion for public service, and the wisdom to cultivate a great team.

The **Regional Leadership Award** honors extraordinary efforts to ensure the future viability of the region's communities. This award was presented to Jennifer Gallagher, Director of the City of Columbus Department of Public Service.

Gallagher has a long history of public service. She was instrumental in the city winning the Smart City Challenge and is currently spearheading two critical mobility initiatives for the City of Columbus that will change the entire region: building a coalition to promote the LinkUS initiative that will provide a complete mobility system along key regional corridors in Central Ohio; and eliminating traffic fatalities through Vision Zero Columbus.

Director Gallagher has approached the rapid growth of the Central Ohio region through a lens of equity. Recognizing the importance of high-capacity rapid transit, Gallagher has dedicated Department of Public Service resources to moving the LinkUS initiative forward from conception to implementation. Once completed, this transformative initiative will bring more opportunities for mobility to everyone in the region.

With Gallagher's leadership, Columbus became one of the earlier adopters of Vision Zero in the Midwest. This transformational initiative reimagines traffic management to make safety the number one priority on our city street network, above moving cars as quickly as possible. Launched in the days leading up to the pandemic, Vision Zero Columbus has fundamentally changed the way we prioritize transportation projects. ■

## William H. Anderson Excellence in Public Service Award



**Joe Stefanov**  
City Manager  
City of New Albany

*Congratulations to this year's winners!*

## Regional Leadership Award



**Jennifer Gallagher**  
Director  
City of Columbus Department of Public Service

## William C. Habig Collaborative Achievement Award

## Downtown Bellefontaine Redevelopment & Small Nation (City of Bellefontaine, Logan County, and Small Nation)

# CONNECTING OUR REGION BEYOND CENTRAL OHIO

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission is well known for being a regional facilitator of important matters affecting the future of Central Ohio residents. But the agency's desire to build important transportation connections stretches well beyond MORPC's 15-county service area.

The most recent example is the possibility that Amtrak could be bringing passenger-rail service back to Columbus for the first time since the 1970s.

Even before knowing the federal Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act would be enacted – making historic investments in the nation's transportation system – Amtrak released its vision of what corridors it would like to service by 2035. The vision is aimed at more-frequent, reliable, and sustainable intercity passenger rail service to over 160 more communities and 20 million more passengers annually.

Among the corridors included is Ohio's potential 3C+D route, which would link Columbus to Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Dayton – and more importantly, connect the region with markets beyond Ohio's borders.



**“CENTRAL OHIO IS THE LARGEST NEW, POTENTIAL MARKET FOR AMTRAK IN THE COUNTRY. RECONNECTING TO THE NATIONAL SYSTEM COULD BRING SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC BENEFITS.”**

– Thea Ewing

MORPC Chief Regional Development Officer and Senior Director of Programming

In addition to improvements in time savings and accessibility, passenger rail creates more regional economic integration and intermodal access to broader markets – to say nothing of the environmental benefits. It also creates reliability and redundancy – providing another option if a highway experiences congestion or unexpected closures.

Amtrak officials have visited Columbus to further discuss the 3C+D route, and communities throughout the corridor are clamoring to have their own stops along the way, wishing to capitalize from the economic benefits a station could bring.

Now, with the federal infrastructure legislation providing a financial

windfall to help build out the nation's passenger-rail network, MORPC wants to capitalize on the opportunity – working to build the first part in a system that could serve Central Ohio residents and businesses well beyond the 21st century.

As MORPC continues its discussions with Amtrak, as well as state and federal officials, the agency is also hoping to capitalize from its recently created Interregional Connections Committee, which includes representatives from throughout the agency's 15-county service area.

The committee is a continuation and a logical next step following MORPC's Rapid Speed Transportation Initiative that focuses heavily on

connections to neighboring regions, both by passenger rail and hyperloop technology.

In addition to a strong focus on passenger rail over the next year, the committee will be taking a more in-depth look at advanced air mobility and active transportation opportunities.

The creation of the committee is just the first step in what MORPC hopes will be future, project-specific collaborations across the entire state with such organizations as DriveOhio and MORPC's peer organizations in other cities. To learn more about MORPC's Rapid Speed Transportation Initiative visit [www.morpc.org/rsti](http://www.morpc.org/rsti).

The City of Pickerington is an epicenter for healthcare facilities that continue to modernize and grow. Its growth diversifies the city's tax base and provides economic security for the business community. Pickerington's quick access to expansive medical facilities means residents don't have to travel far for healthcare services and workforce opportunities. This further solidifies that the city connects excellence and prosperity, giving all its citizens the opportunity to thrive.



**Medical Services Right Here in Pickerington.**

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2022 Recipient of the William C. Habig Collaborative Achievement Award

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**Inc.** Entrepreneur **Forbes** FORTUNE TIME  
 THE WALL STREET JOURNAL **CNBC** BUSINESS INSIDER

# FOR WORK OR PLEASURE, CENTRAL OHIOANS WANT OPTIONS IN HOW THEY TRAVEL

Like many places throughout the United States, travel in Central Ohio was once developed as car-centric. However, as more residents learn the benefits of alternative transportation modes, communities are creating new habits and yearning for more travel options throughout the region.

Many people think of a transportation infrastructure system as being only about cars, trucks, roads, and highways, but a well-planned transportation system is one that has all transportation modes linked together to move people across the entire system. This complete system connects residents from their front doors to their destinations – whether by car, bicycle, walking, or transit.

Efforts have been made for a more complete system over the years, including our update to the Active Transportation Plan, completed last year. The Active Transportation Plan focuses on pedestrian and biking needs and provides context-sensitive solutions, which can be incorporated into the existing and new transportation projects.

Today, as increased emphasis is placed on diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, local communities are continuing their efforts to provide mobility options

## What is Bus Rapid Transit?

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a high-quality bus-based transit system that delivers fast and efficient service and may include dedicated lanes, busways, traffic signal priority, off-board fare collection, elevated platforms, and enhanced stations.

Because BRT contains features similar to a light rail or subway system, it is considered more reliable, convenient, and faster than regular bus services.



to residents. The more easily and affordably people can travel from one place to another, the more likely they are to have access to educational and employment opportunities, health care, and other amenities that impact daily quality of life. This is especially true for those with low incomes, older adults, and those with disabilities, who are unable to drive a car.

For decades, MORPC has collaborated with federal, state, and local agencies to improve the region's transportation system, and expanding mobility remains a focus in the region today – with more options coming in the future.

## LinkUS Mobility Initiative

LinkUS is Central Ohio's mobility and growth initiative. It is in full swing in 2022, moving from planning to implementation. Through LinkUS, MORPC and its partners at the City of Columbus, Central Ohio Transit Authority, and Franklin County are seeking to create a complete and connected mobility system along key regional corridors – a system that includes such aspects as bus rapid transit, technology solutions, and a robust bike and pedestrian network.

These mobility improvements, along with strategies for infill and new land

development, will guide Central Ohio toward fulfilling a regional vision that includes better access to amenities, more variety of housing choices, a wider range of businesses, and nearby locations for medical providers, human services, and educational institutions.

So far, much of the work on the initiative has been focused on the East Main Street corridor, West Broad Street corridor, and northwest corridor between Downtown Columbus and Dublin.

Learn more about the LinkUS Mobility Initiative at [linkuscolumbus.com](https://linkuscolumbus.com).

## REGIONAL MOBILITY PLAN

The 2021-2026 Regional Mobility Plan was developed with nine Central Ohio counties and identifies local transportation needs of people with disabilities, older adults, and those with low incomes. The plan is providing strategies for meeting those needs, as well as prioritizing transportation services and projects for funding and implementation.

The goals of the plan include:

- Identify community resources for transportation and mobility
- Understand the gaps and unmet needs within those resources
- Determine the approach to addressing those gaps and needs

The mobility plan applies to the Ohio Department of Transportation's human service transportation coordination region 6, and it was developed in consultation with representatives from the district's nine counties of Delaware, Franklin, Fairfield, Fayette, Licking, Logan, Madison, Pickaway, and Union.

Learn more about the Regional Mobility Plan at [morpc.org/mobilityplan](https://morpc.org/mobilityplan).



## GOHIO COMMUTE

MORPC's Gohio Commute program is part of a statewide network that offers an online rideshare platform for commuters to explore sustainable commute options such as carpooling, vanpooling, biking, and taking transit. It also helps companies develop rideshare programs for their employees.

Specifically, MORPC's vanpool program is a solution for traveling to and from rural areas. Many employees look to vanpools as a cost-effective way to commute to work. In addition to cost savings, the vanpool program also promotes environmental sustainability, community building, and increased productivity. Although people are reacclimating to the idea of a shared commute, vanpooling allows for a more controlled environment because it consists of a small group of people who regularly ride together.

MORPC is currently accepting applications for its Gohio Commute Action Fund, a tool that empowers Central Ohio companies to fund new incentives and/or commute projects that motivate company associates to drive less and use sustainable modes of transportation to work. Companies can receive up to \$5,000 in dollar-for-dollar matching funds.

Learn more about Gohio Commute at [morpc.gohio.com](https://morpc.gohio.com).

## COUNTY CONNECTIONS

Closely related to the Regional Mobility Plan, the County Connections is an initiative among MORPC, COTA, the Ohio Department of Transportation Office of Transit, and transit providers surrounding Franklin County to break down barriers and think about mobility as a regional concept.

In today's connected economy, employers are pulling employees from across Central Ohio to fill jobs across county lines. One of the biggest challenges identified is that each transportation provider generally does not cross its county line or is legally prohibited from doing so, creating a cross-county connection issue that prevents riders from getting to jobs, school, or medical appointments.

The group will be working to implement as many coordinated projects as possible in the years to come. Many will be based on a playbook that identifies near-term strategies as a starting point.

Participating county transit providers include Delaware County Transit, Lancaster-Fairfield Public Transit, Licking County Transit, Madison County (no existing transportation provider), Pickaway Area Transit, and Union County Agency Transportation Service.

# MORPC STANDS READY TO BRING INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT BACK TO CENTRAL OHIO

For decades, infrastructure in Ohio and across the nation has suffered from a systemic lack of investment. In fact, the American Society of Civil Engineers recently gave Ohio a C- on its infrastructure report card. To address this growing problem, Congress passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

If it were not for the bipartisan leadership of Senators Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown, and Congresswoman Joyce Beatty, this transformative piece of legislation would not have been signed into law. Central Ohio residents are fortunate to have members of our Congressional delegation that work together for the benefit of our region. And although the policymaking is over, the real work has just begun. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission stands ready to be a resource to communities as we work together to bring this needed investment back to the Central Ohio region.

Based on formula funding alone, Ohio is expected to receive \$9.2 billion for federal-aid highway apportioned

programs and \$483 million for bridge replacement over the next five years. Furthermore, there are competitive grants such as Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE), Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA), the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program, and countless others.

In its capacity as a Metropolitan Planning Organization and with plans such as Competitive Advantage Projects, MORPC is uniquely positioned to help local communities leverage the formulaic funds and compete for these competitive dollars. Seeking these funds is no small task, which is why MORPC formed an Invest2050 team and recently hired a Grants and Investment Officer who will help lead the effort in assisting communities.

MORPC is proud of its regional approach to its government affairs work and will continue to assertively advocate for critical investment to our infrastructure. To learn more about MORPC's investment in infrastructure visit [www.morpc.org/investing-in-central-ohios-future/](http://www.morpc.org/investing-in-central-ohios-future/)



**“We look forward to supporting all of our communities – rural, urban, and suburban alike – in the years ahead. This investment to our infrastructure is a once in a generation opportunity and will impact the prosperity of our communities, the health of our environment, and the lives of residents as we grow.”**

**– William Murdock**  
MORPC Executive Director



## MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

CITIES		VILLAGES		COUNTIES
Bellefontaine	Lancaster	Ashville	Marble Cliff	Delaware
Bexley	Marysville	Buckeye Lake	Minerva Park	Fairfield
Canal Winchester	Mount Vernon	Galena	Plain City	Franklin
Chillicothe	New Albany	Gambier	Riverlea	Hocking
Circleville	Obetz	Granville	Shawnee Hills	Knox
Columbus	Pataskala	Hebron	Somerset	Logan
Delaware	Pickerington	Lithopolis	Urbancrest	Madison
Dublin	Powell	Lockbourne		Morrow
Gahanna	Reynoldsburg			Perry
Grandview Heights	Sunbury			Union
Grove City	Upper Arlington			
Groveport	Westerville			
Hilliard	Whitehall			
Johnstown	Worthington			
TOWNSHIPS			ASSOCIATE MEMBERS	
Blendon	Jackson	Plain	Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks	
Bloom	Jefferson	Prairie	Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority	
Clinton	Jerome	Truro	Columbus Metropolitan Library	
Etna	Madison	Violet	Educational Service Center of Central Ohio	
Franklin	Mifflin	Washington	Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District	
Granville	Perry		Licking County Soil & Water Conservation District	
			META Solutions	
			Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio	

# REGIONAL GROWTH HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR LONG-TERM INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

As Central Ohio continues to grow, and new development comes to the region, it is imperative that we make the appropriate investments in our transportation infrastructure that will support this growth.

Recent development announcements such as Hyperion's \$300 million investment in a facility on Columbus' Far West Side to research and manufacture hydrogen fuel cell stacks, and Intel's \$20 billion chip manufacturing project in New Albany, are a reminder that economic progress relies on a transportation infrastructure system that efficiently moves people and goods, while also being inclusive and sustainable.

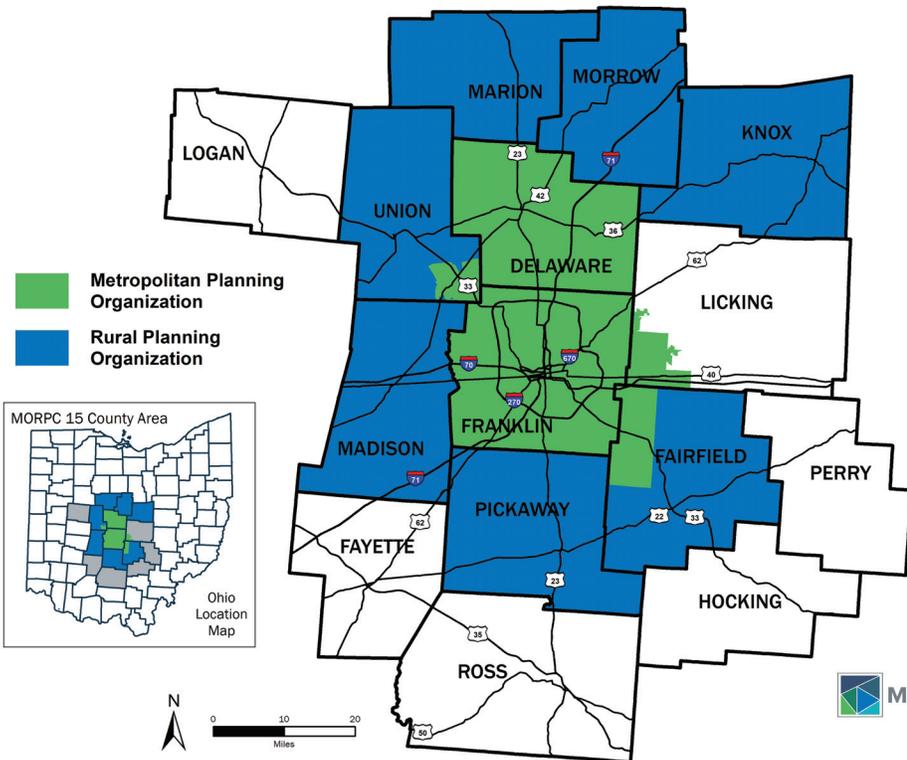
That is why the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission continues to plan transportation projects well into the region's future, playing an important role in determining which projects receive funding.

The region is ready to utilize this funding, and there are already plans in place.

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) identifies nearly \$30 billion in strategies and transportation improvement projects to advance Central Ohio toward its goals for 2050. The development of this plan is led by MORPC as the region's federally designated metropolitan planning organization, but it is developed in a collaborative partnership among local and regional stakeholders, with local public input.

Most importantly, the MTP articulates regional goals and strategies, and provides the regulatory foundation for regional and local partners to utilize federal transportation dollars to carry out and implement the strategies and projects.

It also identifies key strategies for managing and developing the regional transportation system in a way that will help achieve set goals, including over \$8 billion in preservation and smart management of existing transportation infrastructure, six high-capacity transit projects covering 50 miles, 415 miles of new, stand-alone bike and/or pedestrian facilities, safety improvements for 149 intersections and 120 corridor miles, and upgrading 25 freeway interchanges.



In the region's outlying areas of Fairfield, Pickaway, Madison, Union, Marion, Morrow, and Knox counties, the Central Ohio Rural Planning Organization – also housed within MORPC – is developing its 2023-2050 Transportation Plan. Much like the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, this plan will identify goals, objectives, strategies, and priority infrastructure projects.

The development of the CORPO Transportation Plan will enable the region's rural areas to leverage state capital dollars for transportation and mobility projects and facilitate coordination among ODOT and other regional and local planning partners.

From Lancaster to Marysville, London to Mount Vernon, and beyond, Central Ohio continues to plan for the future of its residents and businesses – and MORPC is proud to be leading these efforts. To learn more about the MTP, visit [www.morpc.org/mtp](http://www.morpc.org/mtp). To learn more about the CORPO Transportation Plan, visit <https://www.morpc.org/committees/corpo>



**“Federal economic recovery and transportation infrastructure legislation is making a great deal of funding available to Central Ohio to tackle the challenge of growth and development in a potentially transformative way.”**

– Nick Gill

MORPC Transportation Study Director

**COTA**



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# CENTRAL OHIO COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM MORPC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Economic development has surged to the forefront of conversations across Central Ohio. To better prepare its member communities for emerging opportunities, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission is bringing forward more economic development tools and resources than ever before.

The January announcement that Intel plans to build a world-class set of semiconductor manufacturing facilities in New Albany – the largest economic development project in Ohio’s history – created excitement about its potential to transform the region’s and state’s economic future toward a diversified, high-tech innovation economy with international impact.

Meanwhile, communities throughout the region continue to experience unprecedented levels of investment in manufacturing, research and development, data centers, warehousing and logistics, and industrial space.

**Competitive Advantage Projects** MORPC and One Columbus, the Columbus Region’s economic development organization, are continuing their work to ensure that both urban and rural counties throughout Central Ohio are prepared with key infrastructure needed to enable jobs and investment, and to improve the quality of life in the region.



PHOTO courtesy of Intel

The Competitive Advantage Projects (CAP) program is a collection of shovel-ready, prioritized infrastructure projects that benefit economic and community development. MORPC convenes local elected officials, economic development professionals, business leaders, and other stakeholders from each county to provide input on which projects are most important to their communities.

With historical federal investment in infrastructure enacted in 2021, CAP provides Central Ohio with the ability to act quickly so the region, its businesses, and residents can benefit when funding is available.

Whether it is a transportation project, water or sewer project, fiber optics and smart technology, energy systems, or strategic planning, CAP gives the region a

competitive edge for key federal and state resources.

**Economic Development District** MORPC is leading a major effort that will facilitate increased economic development-related technical assistance, greater eligibility for funding, and more options for regional officials to pursue federal resources.

MORPC recently led the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in partnership with One Columbus. This process brought together economic developers, workforce development stakeholders, transportation officials, higher education representatives, and many others for a set of key conversations about Central Ohio’s economic development strengths and opportunities.

These conversations resulted in the Columbus Region CEDS.

With an approved CEDS in place, MORPC will apply for the region to be designated as an economic development district (EDD) by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. Having this designation will enable regionally driven, economic development planning processes that leverage input from the public, private, and non-profit sectors. With a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration, key tools and federal funding sources will be available across Central Ohio.

To learn more about MORPC’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, visit [morpc.org/CEDS](http://morpc.org/CEDS)

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We proudly recognize Karen Angleou  
Gahanna’s Longest Serving Councilmember  
Thank you for your years of service as MORPC Chairperson



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# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION LIVE AT THE HEART OF OUR REGION'S POSSIBILITIES

Over the past few years, the terms diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) have grown from thought provoking buzzwords to imperative actions of creating an equitable and socially just environment.

As evidenced in MORPC's Insight2050 report, the results demonstrate the importance of a strategic focus on diversity, equity and inclusion. Ohioans come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Current projections now reveal that our region will grow to 3 million people by 2050 and racial and ethnic minorities are expected to account for most of our region's growth.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Columbus is one of the nation's fastest-growing large metropolitan areas. That includes diverse populations, such as new Americans and communities of immigrants and refugees. Immigration continues to be a substantial source of Ohio's growth.

As the regional council of local governments, diversity, equity and inclusion are core values for MORPC and our members. Our agency's commitment to these long-standing values is reflected in



our daily work and throughout the region. MORPC's Diversity & Inclusion Work Plan guides diversity efforts. The plan focuses on six key strategic areas: Workforce & Leadership, Workplace, Service to Diverse Populations, Supplier Diversity & Procurement, Diverse Requirements, and Diverse Communications.

To build more inclusive communities and to advance racial equity, MORPC partnered with the YWCA Columbus and the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. The YWCA Columbus recently created a DE&I training and consultant service to provide resources to its members and community partners on strategies to address racial injustice.

The Kirwan Institute is an interdisciplinary engaged research institute at The Ohio State University and their mission is simple: "we work to create a just and inclusive society where all people and communities have opportunity to succeed."

Through these collaborations, individuals have learned how to become more informed and advocates by gaining insight and the tools needed to be an active participant in the fight for equity.

Overall, these trainings promote racial literacy, help others to understand white flight, and teach how racism is a systemic problem.

In addition to our partnerships with community organizations, MORPC

partnered with the Atlanta Regional Council to host a six-week conversation with leaders from across the nation on race and equity, in 2020. The conversation series received national recognition and resulted in the creation of a toolkit available for communities to use as they navigate critical conversations.

MORPC acknowledges the impact of structural racism, particularly as it relates to access to affordable housing, and transportation for historically marginalized and underserved communities. MORPC remains committed to working with its members and community partners towards building a more inclusive Columbus Region – one that provides opportunities for all. To achieve this mission requires intentionality, purpose, and action. MORPC has strengthened many of its DE&I initiatives and remains committed to listening and being more inclusive of its engagement strategies to ensure equity, access, and prosperity to everyone in our region.

To learn more about how MORPC is addressing inequities and racism in the Central Ohio region, visit [www.morpc.org/eliminatoracism/](http://www.morpc.org/eliminatoracism/).

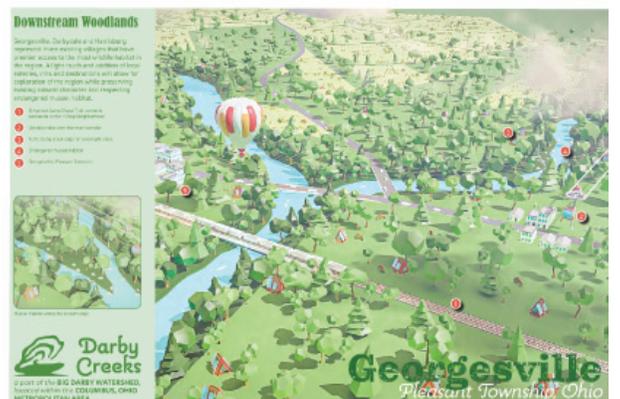
# CONNECTING CENTRAL OHIO'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Over the past two years, the region has had to take a hard look at history and the remnants of racism that still exist today in many policies, programs, and built environments. Communities had to examine our institutions to understand the amount of work required to truly be a just, equitable, and inclusive nation and community.

As communities emerge from a pandemic that changed everyone in some way – a global pandemic that resulted in division, isolation, and desperation – they are all yearning for a sense of community, beauty, and most importantly, healing. Greenspaces were, and continue to be, a safe space and an outlet for many of us during this crisis. Communities have recognized just how powerful nature is to personal and social well-being.

Last summer, five design and planning firms came together to offer a new vision for our region that has the potential to strengthen connections to nature and to each other. Each vision, built around each of the five river corridors serving Central Ohio, is thoughtfully grounded in our region's history, even as it dreams big for our future.

Collectively known as RAPID 5, these visions ensure environmental stewardship of our natural assets while making them more accessible for all and celebrate the history and culture of each corridor while creatively identifying ways to activate each space. Each firm approached this exercise with an equal amount of sensibility, passion, and innovation that allowed the creation of beautiful spaces that could resonate with everyone.



These visions are just the beginning. What happens next is up to us, as a community. RAPID 5 will not be the silver bullet to all the issues communities face, but it can be a major part of bridging divisions—literally connecting neighborhoods with each other and to nature—and bringing

joy back into people's lives, should it be via kayaking, art, music, play, beauty, or simple nature walks. As communities find a new normal and a sense of belonging, they move from the question of "what if" to the realization "our time is now". RAPID 5 can serve as a regional blueprint that

allows communities to simultaneously tackle housing, mobility, and equity challenges while staying connected to nature. To learn more about RAPID5 and view the proposed concepts visit [www.rapid5.org](http://www.rapid5.org).

# SUSTAINABILITY AT THE CORE OF MORPC'S FUTURE PLANS

Planning for regional sustainability is top of mind for the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and its members. Residents, businesses, and local governments alike are recognizing the urgency to act on climate change and strengthen our sustainability efforts.

As the region continues to grow, communities are facing new and exciting opportunities, but also the challenges of accommodating growth in a manner that shapes sustainable, equitable, and resilient communities.

MORPC's Sustainable2050 program is one way MORPC is advancing sustainable practices across the central Ohio region. Through this program, 35 local governments and regional organizations are committed to improving air quality and reducing climate change impacts, protecting, and preserving natural resources, creating sustainable and equitable communities, and promoting sustainable growth and development. The Regional Sustainability Agenda provides the framework for regional members and stakeholders to align around common goals.

MORPC supports members' sustainability efforts through direct technical assistance, collaboration, and recognition. Each member can earn a tier status – Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum – determined by the number of eligible activities it carries out in the goals corresponding to MORPC's Regional Sustainability Agenda. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values that are elevated by the regional goals and will be emphasized through

a new Sustainable2050 Equity Plus recognition level as well.

Sustainable2050 members are dedicated to improving the quality of life of their residents in sustainable ways, and that should be celebrated.

- After releasing their first-ever Climate Action Plan, the City of Columbus recently made a significant investment in their Sustainable Columbus program to advance equity, sustainability, and achieve climate neutrality by 2050.
- The City of Bexley is busy carrying out the Race to Zero Program to reach net-zero climate emissions by 2050, supporting the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee in their implementation of the Zero Waste Goal, and preparing future programs, such as universal recycling, restaurant composting, and energy aggregation.
- The City of Hilliard, like many other communities, adopted a Complete Streets Policy in central Ohio which supports safe and sustainable mobility options for all users, advances trail development, and offers a community composting program for residents to divert waste from the landfill.
- The Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) is not only a leader advancing waste diversion in the region, but they are also developing the Columbus Solar Park in partnership with City of Columbus and AEP Energy Partners, which will be the largest solar array on a closed landfill in the U.S.

<p><b>GOAL ONE</b></p> 	<p>Improve air quality and reduce climate change impacts to protect public health and the environment.</p>
<p><b>GOAL TWO</b></p> 	<p>Protect and preserve natural resources to support a healthy and resilient region.</p>
<p><b>GOAL THREE</b></p> 	<p>Improve quality of life for all residents by creating sustainable and equitable communities.</p>
<p><b>GOAL FOUR</b></p> 	<p>Promote robust, inclusive and sustainable growth and development.</p>

Plus, there's so much more going on across the region.

MORPC is helping more communities to earn a national SolSmart designation to make it faster and easier for residents and businesses to go solar. A neighborhood level air monitoring program with Franklin County Public Health will help us better understand inequities in pollution exposure. Finally, MORPC is working with its regional partners to ensure that Central Ohio has clean and abundant water resources now and in the future.

MORPC looks forward to supporting local sustainability initiatives and increasing membership through the Sustainable2050 program. In partnership with its members, MORPC is doing its part to help address climate change, and make the region a more sustainable place to live for everyone.

To learn more about MORPC's Regional Sustainability Agenda, visit [www.morpc.org/sustainabilityagenda](http://www.morpc.org/sustainabilityagenda).

# REGIONAL HOUSING CHALLENGES TOP OF MIND AT MORPC

Central Ohio's future is bright. In the last decade, Central Ohio's population grew by about 240,000 people, ranking the region as 27th among the nation's nearly 400 metro areas. Even amidst the uncertainty and disruption created by COVID-19, Central Ohio still attracted new residents in 2020.

Growth is a positive indicator of Central Ohio's past success, and a strong predictor of the region's future. However, growth alone cannot make Central Ohio a more vibrant, just, inclusive community. Actively planning for growth gives communities the power to shape what the region will look like in the years ahead and helps to be more resilient against future disruptions.

Central Ohio faces many important decisions in planning for its future. Chief among them is where and how to accommodate current and future residents. Although the Building Industry Association (BIA) estimates that about 14,000 new homes are needed every year to meet our housing demand, the region has yet to hit that mark. The reasons why are well-documented; what matters is how the region moves forward. More homes – of all types – are desperately needed across our region.



The emphasis is on all types. Financial investors know the value of a diversified portfolio: life comes with risk, and change is inevitable. Diversified investments spread the risk and are more resilient to disruption. Communities are no different. Communities with a diverse housing stock are positioned to more nimbly and successfully adapt to the inevitability of change by supporting a variety of homes – apartments, duplexes, townhomes, and other missing-middle-type-homes – and single family homes – of all sizes and all prices.

All people experience many milestones and stages. The home someone lives in now likely would not have met their needs or budget twenty years ago, and it may not be the home they will need or afford twenty years from now. Communities with a diversified housing stock are not just better able to meet residents' needs at every life stage, they are also more resilient to changing market preferences, changing demographics, and even a changing climate.

Change can be challenging, and so can changing the community's mindset to

be supportive of more homes and more choices for those homes. MORPC has created a plan to help, adding to the Regional Housing Strategy resource hub this year with communication materials, educational resources, and a member assistance program to connect communities with technical expertise to support the development of their comprehensive plans and zoning codes. Just as a community plans for its roadway infrastructure – where a new road should go, how many lanes should be added, and which modes of travel will be accommodated – comprehensive plans and zoning codes allow a community to plan for its housing infrastructure: who it's for, where and how it's built, and how it's priced. These tools allow a community to thoughtfully accommodate growth and lay the foundation for a more resilient future.

Central Ohio's story is still being written. Communities must embrace growth and its potential. They must also embrace the responsibility to actively plan for growth, in a way that allows all central Ohioans to be part of the success.

To learn more about the Regional Housing Strategy, visit [morpc.org/rhs](http://morpc.org/rhs).

# NEW APPLICATION BRINGS 3D PLANNING TO CENTRAL OHIO

**H**ousing, sustainability, transportation, and economic development considerations are compelling MORPC members to make use of technology for better planning and decision-making. To assist with that goal, MORPC is working with geographic information systems (GIS) supplier ESRI and their data-driven scenario planning tool, ArcGIS Urban.

Created for planners and design professionals, ArcGIS Urban is an immersive 3D web-based application that applies GIS technology to help visualize and better facilitate planning decisions.

Easily configurable tools allow a user to:

- Create, edit, update, and streamline zoning and land use plans
- Assess land use changes to meet future demands
- Upload and visualize 3D CAD designs of new or proposed developments
- Visualize and analyze the development capacity and transportation impacts of proposed designs
- Define metrics to quantify and compare different scenarios
- Identify and score parcels, running weighted suitability analysis
- Conduct interactive shadow impact analysis
- Exchange feedback with collaborators in or outside of organizations
- Boost access by incorporating online comments and surveys that increase public engagement



Together with funding from our partners at COTA and the cities of Columbus and Dublin, MORPC is creating a 3D base and compiling zoning and land use layers, beginning with a Franklin County pilot area. MORPC members will have access to this base data and the ability to add land-use plans, update zoning, and evaluate proposed developments – all of which can be shared for staff or other small-group collaboration or published for public engagement.

Over the next year, MORPC plans to use this advanced tool in various ways. With ArcGIS Urban, MORPC can create development scenarios for projects like LinkUS. The tool will enhance MORPC-member collaboration with a more efficient way to track new and proposed development.

Thanks to the immersive technology, MORPC is also exploring how the tool can be utilized for workshops and public engagement, inviting users to see and

experience future development. Digital visualization of proposed projects in our local and regional contexts, while leveraging location intelligence, will drive better decisions and increase collaboration across internal agencies and public stakeholders throughout the region.

Learn more about ArcGIS Urban at [morpc.org/ArcGIS](http://morpc.org/ArcGIS).

## WHEN WE DO OUR JOB, CONFIDENCE GROWS.

We are proud of our hard work to create affordable housing in our communities, and of the vital partnerships we have fostered to strengthen the Columbus Metropolitan area.

**It's news we can all get excited about.**



Learn more at [cmhanet.com](http://cmhanet.com).



# FOR THE LOVE OF TRAILS

Central Ohio Greenways' (COG) trails are among the most loved natural amenities the region has to offer. Residents and visitors travel more than 12 million miles annually on the beautiful multi-use trails to connect with natural spaces, cultural destinations, job centers, and other regional assets.

Since the pandemic began, many of our region's trails saw usage nearly double as people sought reprieve from the stay-at-home and social distancing recommendations. More than ever, trails are proving to be critical amenities supporting mental and physical health, transportation demands, and economic opportunity. In fact, a recent COG user survey revealed that nearly 100% of trail users report improved mental health because of trail use.

With the rising interest in more walkable and bikeable communities, we have seen a steep increase in the demand for trails that conveniently connect the places that people need and want to go. Hearing this demand, MORPC's COG Board developed a vision to add over 500 more miles of trails to the existing 230+ miles to create a fully connected network that will serve as the backbone of active transportation and outdoor recreation opportunities.

A recent COG impact of trails study has quantified the benefits of trails giving us even more reasons to invest in them. It is estimated that each mile of the fully



built Regional Trail Vision could mean nearly \$200,000 of healthcare savings annually; \$300,000 annual direct spending associated with trail usage; and an 84,000-mile reduction in vehicle miles traveled.

Building more trails is clearly beneficial to quality of life and essential to meeting the region's growing demand. MORPC is committed to finding innovative funding solutions to do just that. Additionally, MORPC is taking this opportunity to celebrate the trails that we already have

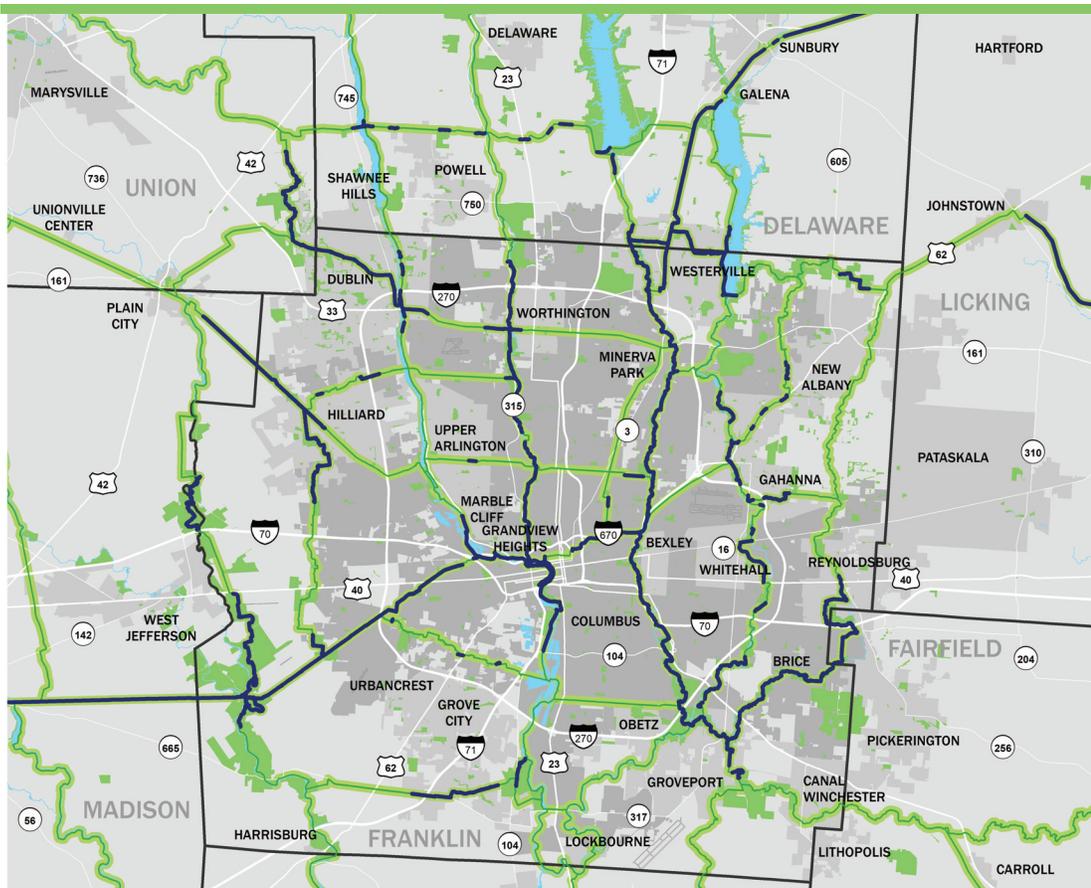
and encourage even more people to use them for fun, health, and commuting.

With support from local partners, COG is leading an effort to develop a Trail Town Framework for communities to encourage trail tourism as well as general active transportation. Communities of all backgrounds in urban, rural, and suburban spaces are energized to collaborate on this Trail Town effort and hope to be able to collectively market themselves as a welcoming destination for all trail users.

Trail advocates from all over Central Ohio have been dreaming about a Trail Town Program®, for decades. The Ohio to Erie Trail board hosted webinar events about the topic over the last few years. Small towns across the region have been positioning themselves as trail friendly communities and are already well known world-wide among enthusiasts as go to trail destinations. The city of London in Madison County offers trail side camping and an inviting city center that draws hundreds of visitors from all over the world annually. We also see businesses popping up along trails including Wolf's Ridge Brewery on the Olentangy. With all the activity already occurring, we know that Central Ohio is a prime location to capitalize on the economic opportunities afforded by our beautiful trails.

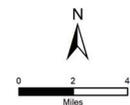
As we continue to develop our Trail Town Program®, it is exciting to imagine how uniquely positioned Central Ohio is to entice not only visitors and tourists but also our own community members to walk, bike, or even paddle to access destinations for work or play.

If you are ready to fall in love with Central Ohio Greenways, check-out and win prizes monthly using the Experience Columbus free Outdoor Trails Pass. To learn more about the Outdoor Trail Pass, visit [www.experiencecolumbus.com/outdoortrails](http://www.experiencecolumbus.com/outdoortrails).



Central Ohio Greenway Trails for greater Franklin County

- Existing Multi-use Path
- Proposed Multi-use Path
- Greenway Trail Corridor
- River/Water
- Park/Open Space





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