

THORNWOOD DRIVE  
Multimodal Corridor Planning  
RAISE Discretionary Grant Application  
Submitted February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023



## **Table of Contents**

1. Project Description.....	2
a. Focused Project Description.....	3
b. Current Challenges that Application will Address.....	4
c. Project History.....	4
d. Proposed Schedule.....	6
e. Project Partners.....	6
2. Project Location.....	7
3. Grant Funds, Sources and Uses of all Project Funding.....	9
4. Merit Criteria.....	10
a. Safety.....	10
b. Environmental Sustainability.....	12
c. Quality of Life.....	12
d. Improve Mobility and Community Connectivity.....	13
e. Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity.....	14
f. State of Good Repair.....	15
g. Partnership and Collaboration.....	15
h. Innovation.....	15

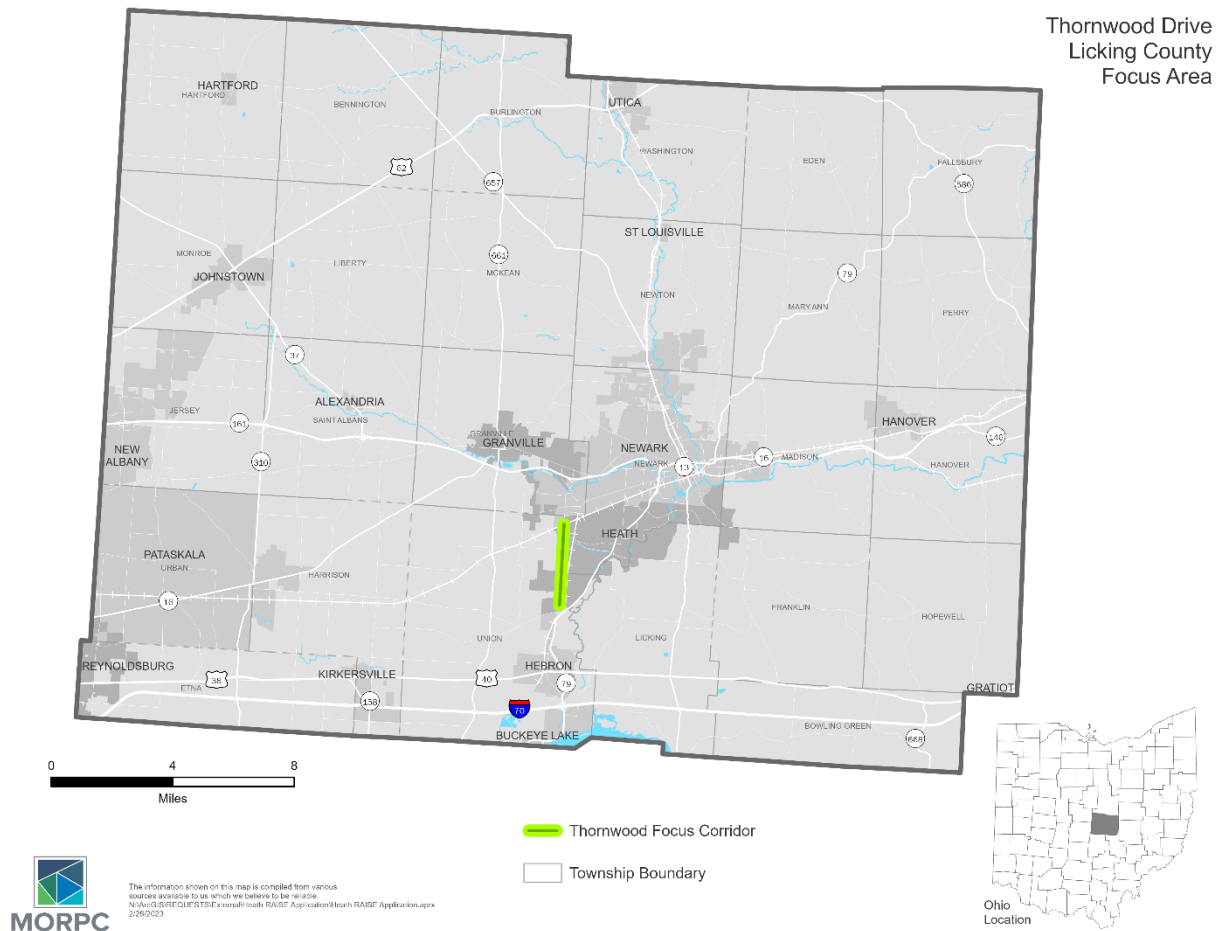
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**Project narrative, maps, tables, and letters of support are available online:**

**<https://www.morpc.org/heaths-thornwood-drive-raise-application/>**

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## 1. Project Description



This application is seeking \$2.0 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT's) Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program. These funds will support planning activities to transform Thornwood Drive and design a multimodal transportation system in Central Ohio's largest manufacturing corridor. In its current condition as a two-lane rural road, it does not have the capacity to support the growing and changing traffic demand. The imminent mixed-use, industrial, and manufacturing development along this corridor continues to emphasize Thornwood Drive's inability to support these future transportation needs. Planning for Thornwood Drive is needed to ensure sustainable infrastructure is implemented in this quickly growing region of Central Ohio.

This planning activity will be a collaborative regional effort to address multiple challenges along this corridor. Activities will include researching previous traffic studies and collecting data to better understand current limitations, as well as developing future traffic projections to understand prospective transportation needs. This includes the need to support commercial and freight travel generated by planned warehousing and manufacturing development. The demand

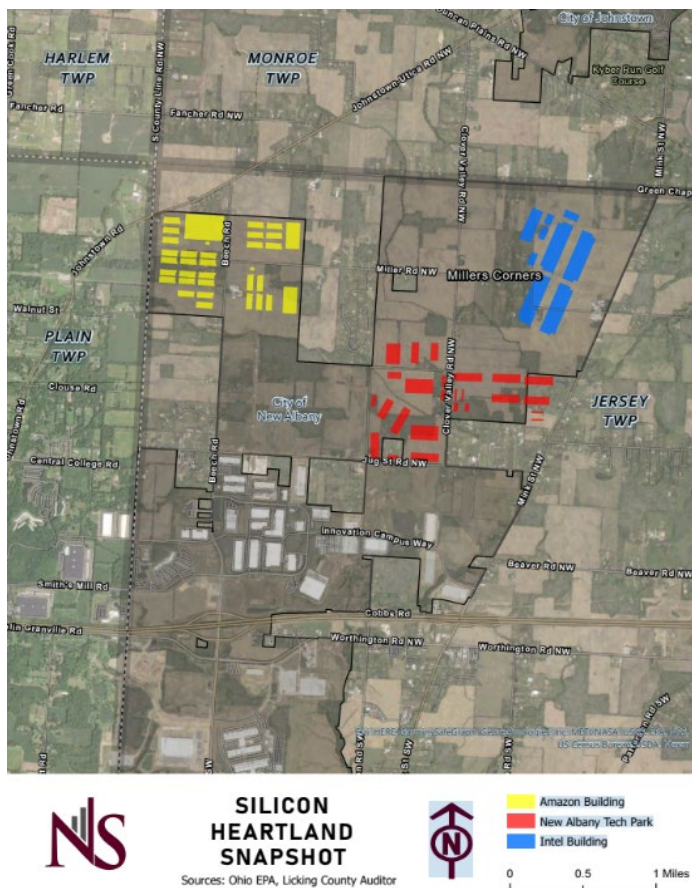
to support this type of transportation comes from recent zoning policies implemented by the City of Heath. Planning must reflect these zoning regulations to support long-term transportation needs. Additionally, multimodal transportation must be incorporated into this corridor to provide safe workforce mobility options and connect nearby neighborhoods to a major regional greenway, the TJ Evans Trail and the proposed fixed route transit service at the southern terminus of the corridor. Developing a comprehensive corridor plan will ensure all sections are constructed in a consistent manner to maximize benefits for all stakeholders. The challenges and costs for the corridor are greater than any single agency can take on independently, making USDOT funding necessary for the region to address these challenges and costs.

a. **Focused Project Description**

Currently, Thornwood Drive is used by commuters and freight carriers accessing Central Ohio's largest manufacturing corridor, located in the "Silicon Heartland." This road provides easy access to Interstate 70, a major east-west freeway. Over 8,500 people are employed by businesses along Thornwood Drive and over 800 industrially zoned acres are available for development. The corridor is also home to over 600 residential housing units. According to a June 2020 traffic study completed by Licking County Area Transportation Study (LCATS), traffic volumes on Thornwood Drive have grown consistently over the last 20 years from 3,430

in 2002 to 4,422 in 2016 and continue to grow. Vehicular and freight traffic will only increase as manufacturing and warehousing locations expand in the Silicon Heartland and along Thornwood Drive. The same LCATS study estimated that freight vehicles make up about 9% of traffic in the corridor but forecast the share of freight traffic to increase to 22% by 2040, emphasizing the need for sustainable and equitable changes in this corridor.

The City of Heath seeks to secure funds for the planning and engineering of roadway improvements and modernization needed throughout the corridor. The scope of planning for the project will include (but is not limited to) data collection and analyses, stakeholder engagement, development and analysis of alternative solutions, identification of cross-section and right-of-way acquisition needs, and determining any additional NEPA requirements needed



for the eventual construction of the improvements. The Ohio Department of Transportation's project development process will be followed. With these RAISE funds, the city and its partners will be able to design a corridor that can support the needs of the region for years to come.

**b. Current Challenges that Application will Address**

The Thornwood Drive Corridor supports regional population and job centers within Central and Northwestern Licking County. The Silicon Heartland, located in Northwestern Licking County, is a growing economic asset for the Central Ohio region as companies such as Intel and Amazon develop regional hubs here and attract supporting business to the area. These private investments are projected to not only increase the amount of high paying jobs in Central Ohio, but also contribute to the rapid population increases already present throughout Licking County. The most recent population projections from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission forecast Central Ohio to be home to over three million people by 2050, with nearly 240,000 people projected to live in Licking County. As more private investments are leveraged throughout the Silicon Heartland, travel demands will increase on Thornwood Drive. Intentional planning is needed for Thornwood Drive to accommodate and support the growth in the Silicon Heartland and move people and freight safely and efficiently.

The current conditions of Thornwood Drive present multiple challenges that do not support its role as a key manufacturing corridor in a growing regional economic hub that provides connections to two major inter-regional thoroughfares. Thornwood Drive was not designed for the level of industrial uses it serves already. Its original purpose was to support the local agricultural industry that was largely present in this region of Licking County for many years. This "farm road" could support local farmers but struggles to accommodate current traffic patterns which hinders its capacity for future use. Thornwood Drive is a narrow, two-lane road with no shoulders throughout the entirety of the corridor. This creates challenges for commercial and residential traffic sharing the road and limits the ability for non-motorized users to travel the road safely, reducing the overall effectiveness of the road as a valuable transportation route. The limited shoulder access does not support multimodal access as there is no space for walking or bicycle traffic.

Additionally, Thornwood Drive has an at-grade crossing with an active rail line, steep terrain in the northern part of the corridor, flood plain throughout, and creeks and wetlands to the south. These physical and environmental conditions present design and engineering challenges and likely increase the costs of identified solutions.

The proposed plan will use a pragmatic yet innovative data-driven approach to create a sustainable and equitable multimodal transportation plan for Thornwood Drive that responds to and addresses the challenges described above. Planners and engineers will analyze land use policies, traffic information from current and future developments, workforce mobility needs, and follow ODOT's Project Development Process to plan and design a corridor that works for employees, businesses, and residents in Central Ohio's largest manufacturing corridor.

**c. Project History**



Thornwood Drive is an important connector for north-south transportation in Licking County. Originally, this road was designed for agricultural traffic due to Licking County's farming history. Although this infrastructure has the capacity to serve the agricultural traffic it was intended for it no longer supports the needs of the region.

Growth in Licking County, specifically in the Silicon Heartland, has directly contributed to the increased traffic demand on Thornwood Drive. Over the past twenty years, much of the farmland has been sold to private developers for various industrial projects. These manufacturing and warehousing developments have shifted the types of users of the corridor and increased the general population in the area. These new users include commercial vehicles, such as semi-trucks, and commuters. Recent developments in the Silicon Heartland have increased the volume of vehicles on Thornwood Drive. The Silicon Heartland is located in Northwestern Licking County and Thornwood Drive's geographic location provides the most direct access to these developments for travel to and from the south and east. Many of the businesses that are located along Thornwood Drive directly or indirectly support the businesses located in the Silicon Heartland, which has contributed to the increased commercial and commuter traffic being loaded onto Thornwood Drive.

As economic development has occurred in Licking County and along the corridor over the past two decades, Federal, State, and local funds have been strategically invested into this increasingly significant transportation corridor. In November of 2007, the Congressional Representative for the City of Heath supported two projects located on the southern end of the corridor through a federal allocation. This included widening State Route 79 and extending Ridgely Tract Road to connect Thornwood Drive to this essential State Route. The investment strengthened the connection of Thornwood Drive Corridor to Interstate 70. Additional federal funds were invested into the northern section of Thornwood Drive in 2016. This investment utilized federal and state funds to complete the Thornwood Crossing interchange which connects the corridor to State Route 16. Since then, multiple State and local funds have been invested in various sections of Thornwood Drive as a result of the quickly occurring development in the Central Ohio region. In 2022, the City of Newark designated funds to repair a failing bridge located in the northern section of the corridor. The bridge had been active since the 1830's and was in desperate need of repair. Multiple truck overturns had occurred at this bridge. In the central part of Thornwood Drive, local investments have supported road resurfacing, adding turning lanes, and other intersection improvements. These changes are taking place between Irving Wick Drive and Hallie Lane to account for large volumes of traffic from the Owens Corning Warehousing Center in the City of Heath. Future investments are also committed for an improvement to the Beaver Run Road and Thornwood Drive intersection.

The Thornwood Drive Corridor has been an attractive investment because of the manufacturing and warehousing operations in Central Ohio and the jobs these operations provide. Federal, state, and local tax dollars have been invested along its length. To maximize the investments already made, the work of improving and modernizing the entire corridor comprehensively must continue. This work is already a priority for the region. Thornwood Drive has been ranked as the top infrastructure priority for the Licking County Transportation District, the Licking County Area Transportation Study, and GROW Licking County Community

Improvement Corporation. Many local governments, agencies, and Central Ohio organizations support the efforts to transform the multimodal Thornwood Drive Corridor. The City of Heath requests the assistance of the U.S. Department of Transportation in helping to plan for achieving this goal.

**d. Proposed Schedule**

The corridor plan will follow a schedule based on the Ohio Department of Transportation's Project Development Process. This timeline considers the length of the corridor, as well as the challenges that have been identified. It also addresses the project's need to coordinate with multiple local governments, residential groups, businesses, and other stakeholders. The schedule can be adjusted based on award conditions upon receipt of funding.

Phase	Start Date	Duration	End Date
ODOT Planning Phase	January 2024	18 months	June 2025
ODOT Preliminary Engineering Phase	July 2025	18 months	December 2026
Stage 1 Plans	January 2027	12 months	December 2027
ODOT NEPA Document	March 2027	9 months	December 2027

**e. Project Partners**

City of Heath: Lead Applicant

The City of Heath is the municipality in which the majority of Thornwood Drive is located. Most activities will take place within the City of Heath's jurisdiction. Thornwood Drive can be understood as Heath's western border. The City of Heath has experience facilitating developments along this corridor and managing the recently implemented industrial zoning policies applied here.

City of Newark

The City of Newark is the County seat of Licking County, located less than 30 minutes east of Columbus, and among the top 15 most populated cities in Ohio. Geographically, Newark sits atop Heath's northern border, and has historically been a strong partner with Heath with implementing the development of the Thornwood Drive Corridor.

Village of Hebron

The Village of Hebron sits in the southernmost section of the Thornwood Drive Corridor. It is immediately adjacent to Interstate 70 and has many U.S. and foreign based manufacturing facilities in the Newark Ohio Industrial Park. Significant housing growth can be found in Hebron.

Licking County Area Transportation Study (LCATS)

LCATS is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Newark-Heath urbanized area and provides transportation planning for the greater Licking County Area.

LCATS plays a major role in approving and facilitating funding for improvements along the Thornwood Drive Corridor.

#### Licking County – Transportation Improvement District (LCTID)

Created in 2015, the TID has made a significant impact on transportation projects throughout Licking County. The Thornwood Drive Corridor is its top transportation infrastructure project.

#### Heath – Newark – Licking County Port Authority (HNLCPA)

Formed after the closure of the Newark Airforce base in 1995, HNLCPA has a three-fold mission of management, development, and solutions for county-wide economic development efforts. It owns industrially zoned, utility provided, and property-tax-abated greenfield property at the southern end of the Corridor.

#### GROW Licking County Community Improvement Corporation

GROW is the County's lead economic development agency and is integral in the marketing of development-ready sites and supporting the activities of current and future employers in the Corridor. The Thornwood Drive Corridor is the top priority for GROW Licking County Infrastructure Committee.

#### Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)

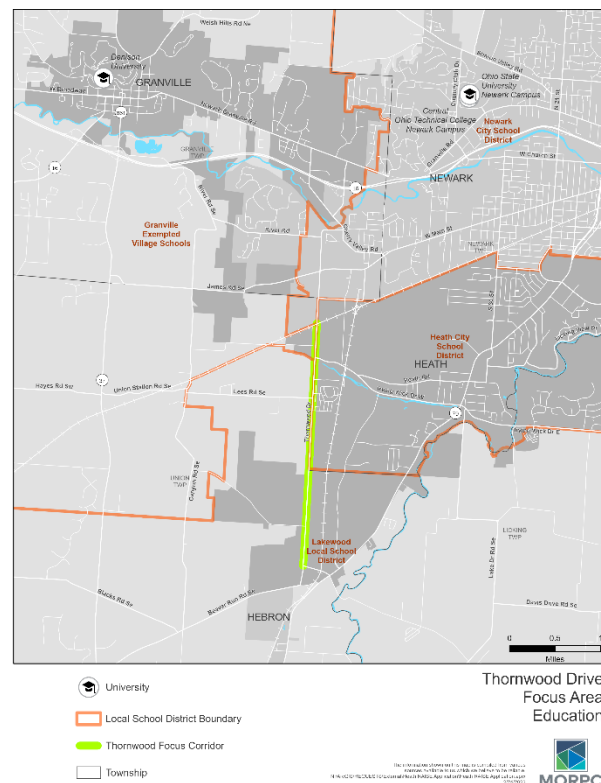
MORPC is a council of governments that serves the greater Central Ohio region, including Licking County. MORPC identified the Thornwood Drive Corridor as one of its Competitive Advantage Projects, a priority transformational project for Central Ohio.

#### Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)

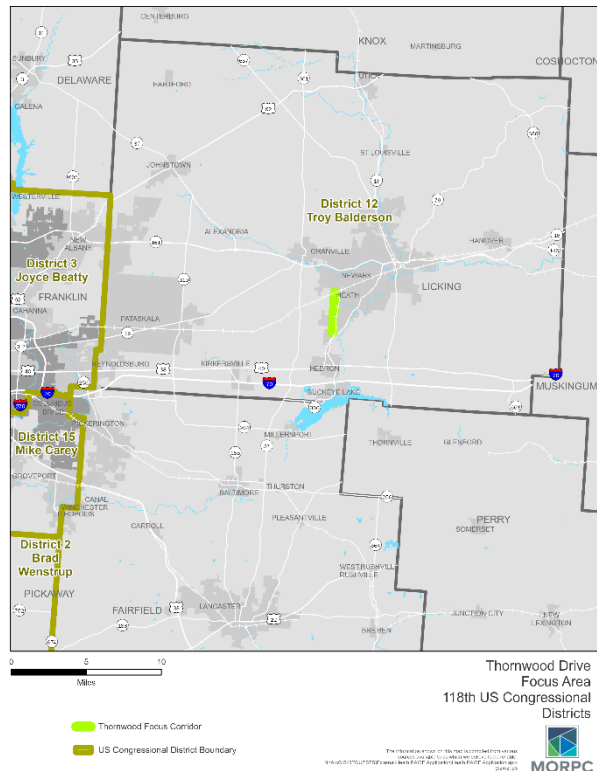
The Thornwood Drive Corridor is in ODOT's fifth district and has prioritized funding to multiple sections of Thornwood Drive to make incremental improvements.

### **2. Project Location**

The Thornwood Drive Corridor is located primarily in the City of Heath. However, the northern section of the road falls within the City of Newark and the Village of Granville. The Village of Hebron is near Thornwood Drive's southern end. The





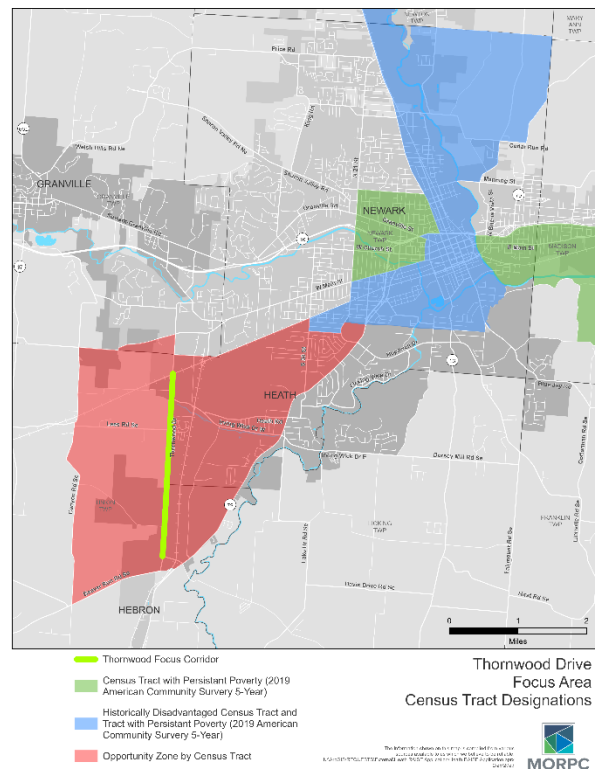


end of this project also takes place in U.S. Census Tract 75.33, Licking County, Ohio. Of these Census Tracts, Tract 75.31 is an identified Opportunity Zone (DSA: Distinct Tract Number 39089753100). This census tract has a high concentration of existing and future commercial, industrial, and manufacturing uses with substantial potential for future development opportunities. Although the Thornwood Drive Corridor is not located in a Historically Disadvantaged or Persistent Poverty Census Tract, this projects borders Census Tracts with such delineations. The bordering U.S. Census Tracts of 75.07, 75.90, 75.19 are all areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged. The bordering U.S. Census Tracts of 75.10, 75.13, 75.25 are all areas of Persistent Poverty.

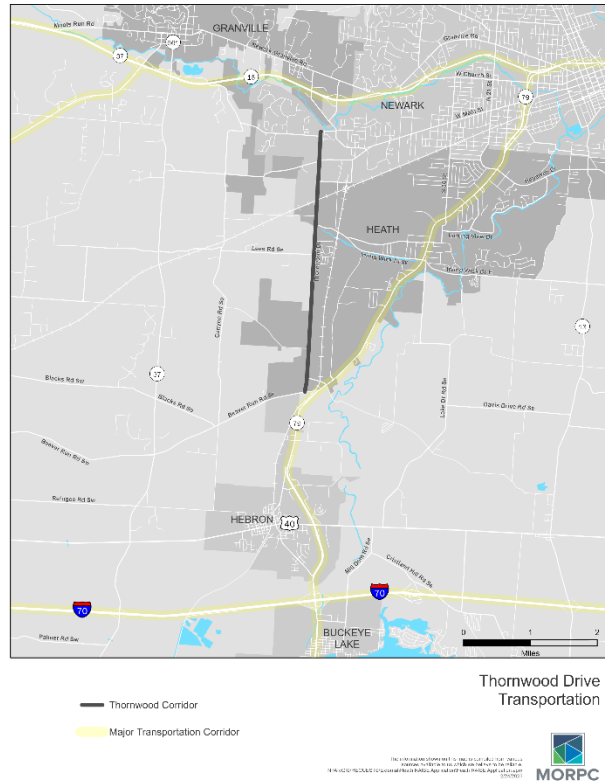
Thornwood Drive provides a connection between two State Routes which has led to the increased use of this road. State Route 16 runs

project falls entirely within Licking County in Union, Licking, and Granville Townships. The corridor serves four school districts: Lakewood Local School District, Heath City School District, Newark City School District, and Granville Exempted Village Schools. This transportation route also provides access to post-secondary educational institutions like Denison University, The Ohio State University Newark Regional Campus, and Central Ohio Technical College. Thornwood Drive lies in Ohio's 12<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congressional District, Ohio's 68<sup>th</sup> and 69<sup>th</sup> House Districts, and Ohio's 20<sup>th</sup> Senate District. The geographic coordinates of this project fall between 40.032448°N and 82.479732°W to the north, and 39.993471°N and 82.482594°W to the south.

The Thornwood Drive Corridor is located in a U.S. Census delineated rural area. This project is primarily located in U.S. Census Tract 75.31, Licking County, Ohio. The north



west to east and marks its northern border, while State Route 79 runs southwest to northeast and represents Thornwood Drive's southern extent. The corridor's southern intersection, Ridgely Tract Road Southeast connects Thornwood Drive to State Route 79. This intersection is four miles north of the Interstate 70 and State Route 79 junction. This provides Thornwood Drive with ready interstate access and contributes to why this area is considered Central Ohio's largest manufacturing corridor. Focusing on this corridor's northern intersection, Cherry Valley Road and Thornwood Crossing connect this corridor to State Route 16. State Route 16 is an important State Highway, connecting Central Licking County to Northern Franklin County and the City of Columbus at State Route 161. The previously identified Silicon Heartland developments are accessible via State Route 161. Thornwood Drive's north-south orientation and proximity to Interstate 70 make it the preferred route for commercial and commuter traffic to access the businesses and sites in the Silicon Heartland and throughout this corridor.



### 3. **Grant Funds, Sources and Uses of all Project Funding**

The cost for the Thornwood Drive Corridor Plan is estimated to be approximately \$2.5 million. This RAISE application is seeking to obtain an award of \$2,000,000 spread across all components. This award would be leveraged to ensure the proposed planning work for Thornwood Drive is fully funded. The City of Heath will commit \$500,000 in local funding towards future eligible costs. Other sources of funding will also be investigated to leverage this local match. This will include conversations with other municipalities present throughout Thornwood Drive to understand their match potential; as well as discussing innovative financing options with the Licking County Transportation Improvement District (LCTID). The LCTID is an innovative and collaborative government body authorized by Ohio Revised Code 5540 and is able to provide funds to be leveraged with other federal resources to complete large impactful projects.

Category	Total Cost	RAISE	% of Total	Other Federal	% of Total	Non-Federal	% of Total
ODOT Planning Phase	\$ 250,000	\$ 200,000	8.0%	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 50,000	2.0%
ODOT Preliminary Engineering Phase	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 800,000	32.0%	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 200,000	8.0%
Stage 1 Plans	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 800,000	32.0%	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 200,000	8.0%
ODOT NEPA Document	\$ 250,000	\$ 200,000	8.0%	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 50,000	2.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>	<b>80.0%</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>\$ 500,000</b>	<b>20.0%</b>

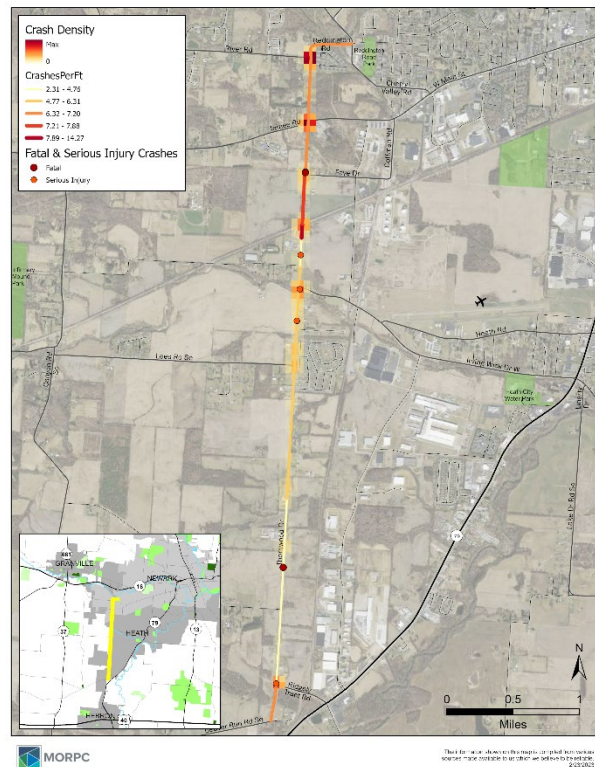
#### 4. Merit Criteria

##### a. Safety

The current conditions of Thornwood Drive present alarming safety factors that need to be addressed. There is no shoulder access on this road, and Thornwood Drive is only 2 lanes throughout its entirety. These circumstances foster an environment that does not support on-road or roadside safety. Crash data has been supplied by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission to better understand the relationships between the vehicles using this road and the safety concerns they present.

Crash data for the Thornwood Drive corridor (between Reddington Road and Ridgely Tract Road) was analyzed for the most recent 5-year period available: 2017-2021. During this period, 115 crashes were reported along the corridor. The majority (75.6%) of these reported crashes resulted in property damage, and at least one person was injured in 24.3% of crashes. This includes two individuals who were fatally injured and 11 who suffered serious, life-threatening injuries. Thornwood Drive comprised 66.7% and 33.3% of all traffic fatalities and serious injuries experienced in the City of Heath during this time, respectively.

As shown below, fixed object, angle, and rear end crashes were the three most prevalent crash types along the corridor during this period. Together they accounted for 67% of all crashes.

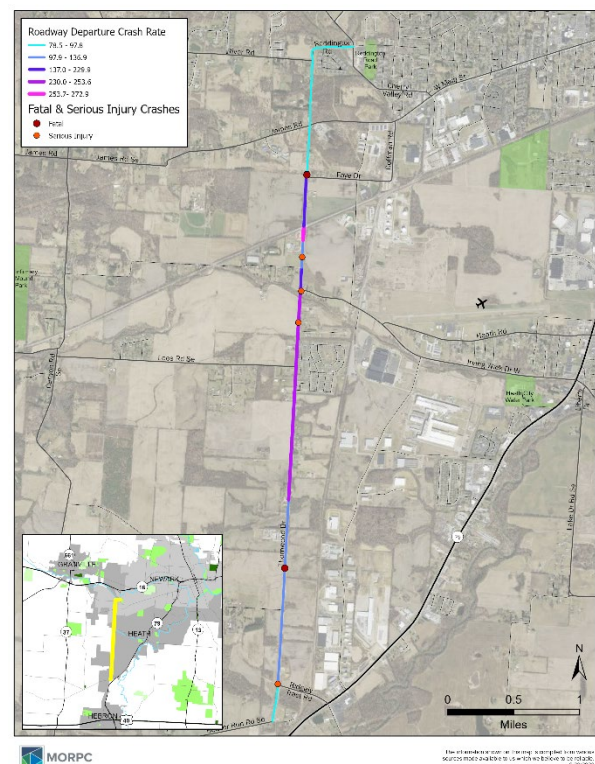


Crash Type	Injury Level						Total %
	Fatal	Serious Injury Suspected	Minor Injury Suspected	Injury Possible	PDO/No Injury	Grand Total	
<b>Fixed Object</b>	0	0	3	3	24	<b>30</b>	<b>26.1%</b>
<b>Angle</b>	0	3	2	0	20	<b>25</b>	<b>21.7%</b>

<b>Rear End</b>	1	0	1	4	16	22	19.1%
<b>Left Turn</b>	0	0	0	3	6	9	7.8%
<b>Animal</b>	0	0	0	0	5	5	4.3%
<b>Backing</b>	0	0	0	0	5	5	4.3%
<b>Sideswipe - Passing</b>	0	1	1	1	2	5	4.3%
<b>Other Non-Collision</b>	0	0	0	0	4	4	3.5%
<b>Head On</b>	0	1	0	1	1	3	2.6%
<b>Overtuning</b>	1	0	1	0	1	3	2.6%
<b>Other Object</b>	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.9%
<b>Pedestrian</b>	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.9%
<b>Right Turn</b>	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.9%
<b>Unknown</b>	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.9%
<b>Grand Total</b>	2	5	8	13	87	115	

Furthermore, 42 crashes, or 36.5% of all crashes along the corridor resulted in roadway departures, with 1 of those crashes resulting in a fatality and another resulting in 2 serious injuries. Thornwood Drive experienced 151.1 roadway departure crashes per 100 million vehicle-miles travelled, or 2 roadway departure crashes per mile, from 2017-2021. In comparison, roadway departure crashes made up 19.7% of all crashes in the City of Heath, and Heath experienced 0.74 roadway departure crashes per road mile in the same time period. While Thornwood Drive makes up only 6% of the City of Heath's total road miles, it contributed 16.5% of the City's roadway departure crashes between 2017-2021.

Rural roadway departure crashes are a specific safety focus area for the Federal Highway Administration, making up 34% of all traffic fatalities in the U.S. from 2014-2016. USDOT's Focus on Reducing Rural Roadway Departures (FoRRRwD) comprises four key solution pillars: (1) addressing all public roads, (2) identifying proven countermeasures, (3) taking a systemic approach, and (4) formulating safety action plans. A RAISE award would enable the City of Heath to incorporate each of these pillars in its plan to systemically improve





safety and eliminate the potential for serious injuries and fatalities along the Thornwood Drive Corridor and in the City of Heath.

**b. Environmental Sustainability**

The Thornwood Drive Corridor Plan will help the City of Heath and its partners plan a sustainable and equitable multimodal freight corridor in Central Licking County. There are several environmental concerns to be addressed with the planning activities in the corridor. Many of these environmental concerns revolve around how to mitigate the carbon footprint left by vehicular traffic in the Corridor. This applied perspective has led to other intuitive ideas that further the sustainability of this corridor.

Upgrading the Thornwood Drive Corridor will provide many needed improvements, such as supporting north-south transportation in Central Licking County. Currently, the quickest north-south transportation route in Central Licking County is State Route 79. State Route 79 directs traffic through the urban areas of Heath and Newark. These urban areas also correspond to the bordering U.S. Census Tracts that were identified Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities. Not only are these commercial and commuter vehicles forced to take a longer indirect route, but the emissions from these vehicles are forced onto vulnerable populations as externalities. Thornwood Drive in its current condition attempts to serve as an ideal transportation route; however, the existing design cannot handle this intense use volume. Revitalizing Thornwood Drive will offset some of the concerns associated with vehicular travel in this area. Providing a more direct transportation route will significantly reduce the carbon footprint emitted by these vehicles. Sustaining this route will also reduce emissions projected onto vulnerable populations.

The northern segment of Thornwood Drive intersects the TJ Evans Trail, an existing regional greenway in Central Licking County. The TJ Evans Trail runs along State Route 16 and connects Granville, Newark, and Heath. Like State Route 16, the TJ Evans Trail also runs east to west. The eastern border of the TJ Evans Trail connects multiple U.S. Census Tracts that are Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities. Planning infrastructure for non-motorized users along the Thornwood Drive Corridor has the potential to further connect the existing active transportation infrastructure that is the TJ Evans Trail. First, planning can identify how to add a north to south connection to the TJ Evans Trail. Second, this will assist commuters from the identified Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities who use the TJ Evans Trail. As Thornwood Drive fosters future industrial development, the road will see increased traffic. Providing safe active transportation routes for the non-motorized users is crucial for providing options for workforce mobility in a corridor employing thousands of workers.

Finally, planning throughout this multimodal corridor will include strategic locations for Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations. As electric vehicles become more widely adopted, charging stations become essential components of the transportation system.

**c. Quality of Life**



Developing multimodal options for the Thornwood Drive Corridor will significantly improve the quality of life for residents, employees, and others who travel through the Corridor. The various types of planned developments throughout this Corridor will foster both residential properties and locations of employment. Multimodal transportation needs to be coordinated with these developments to ensure sustainable transportation options are available. Improving this corridor will create shorter commutes for people accessing the various industrial developments throughout and beyond Licking County. Doing so will not only lower drive time commutes and carbon footprints left by these vehicles but also lessen traffic in the urban communities around this Corridor that are Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities.

The Corridor provides an opportunity to connect commuters and residents to the existing regional trail network in Central Licking County. The TJ Evans Trail connects the Granville-Newark-Heath area and perpendicularly intersects Thornwood Drive. Adding separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities that connect to the TJ Evans Trail would significantly improve the quality of life for residents and employees. Not only will people who live and work along Thornwood Drive benefit from increased trail connectivity, but all stakeholders who regularly use the trail will also benefit. The TJ Evans Trail provides non-motorized travelers connections to the east and west, connecting to the Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities located in the Cities of Heath and Newark.

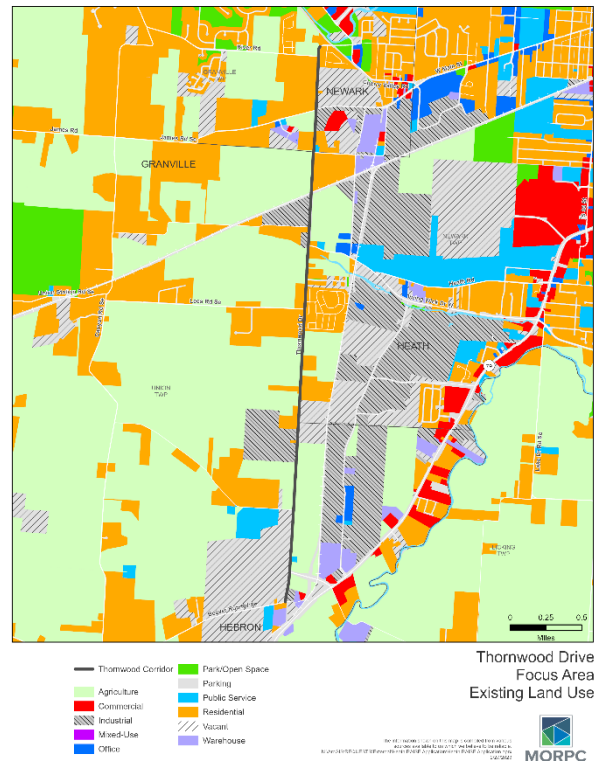
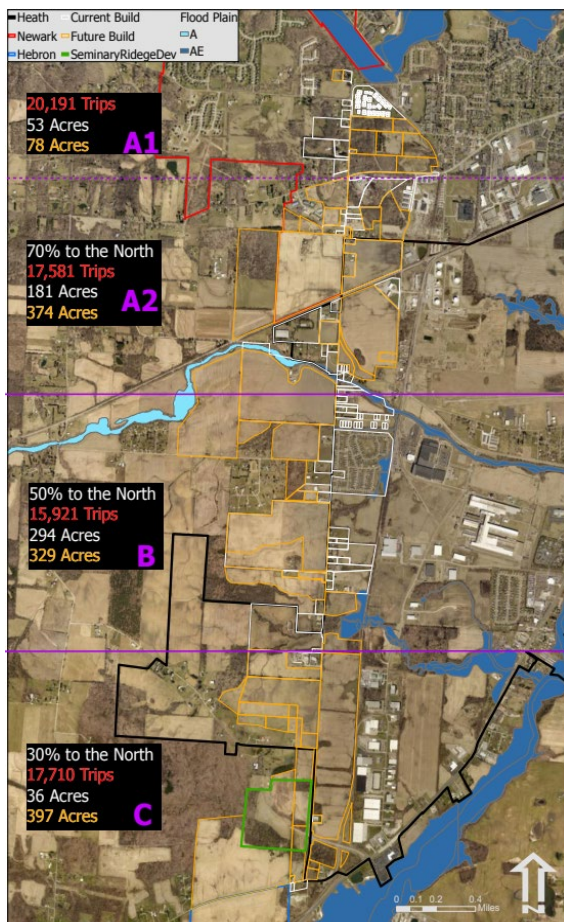
**d. Improves Mobility and Community Connectivity**

The Corridor has high potential to jointly support commuter and workforce travel and freight transportation. The multimodal Thornwood Drive Corridor is an example of how mobility and community connectivity can be improved for not only Central Licking County, but the greater Central Ohio region. Licking County's MPO, Licking County Area Transportation Study (LCATS), has done work to connect communities throughout Licking County to employers and resources to increase workforce mobility.

LCATS and the Licking County Transit Board released their most recent Transit Development Plan in June of 2020. The plan identifies several alternatives for fixed-route transit service throughout the County, including service on SR-79 at the southern terminus of Thornwood Drive. Thornwood Drive's present condition cannot support bus traffic as there is no shoulder throughout this corridor, but it also cannot safely support pedestrians or bicyclists making their first/last mile connection to or from a transit stop. As Thornwood Drive continues to develop it will be necessary to accommodate transit and first/last mile connections in the Corridor. This will lead to better community connectivity for people from Granville, Newark, Heath, and Buckeye Lake. Finally, this multimodal transportation system will be ADA compliant infrastructure to increase equitable access for all community members.

e. **Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity**

The hundreds of acres of developable land within the Thornwood Drive corridor are economically competitive within the region. Land use planning for parts of this undeveloped land has already begun and largely includes industrial and manufacturing businesses and housing developments. Creating a strategic transportation route to support these developments will strengthen the economic development of this area by connecting people to jobs and facilitating freight movement.



Acquisition and development of properties by private developers presents an opportunity to grow new public-private partnerships. The City of Heath has already begun sustaining such relationships to spur long-term development and job growth. As part of this effort, the City of Heath zoned over 800 acres of land along Thornwood Drive for industrial use to attract private developers to the region for job growth, increase the number of high-paying jobs for Central Licking County and create a competitive economy for the region.

Thornwood Drive must support and contribute to the success of these developments. Economic progress continues, but the road is failing to keep up. Now is the time to modernize local infrastructure as Central Ohio welcomes a new level of growth. Freight providers must be able to efficiently move through this corridor, while people commuting to and from work must

have safe and equitable mobility access. Multimodal planning is the solution to balance these transportation needs.

f. **State of Good Repair**

The current condition of Thornwood Drive is not considered in a state of good repair. This road has become derelict as increased traffic patterns exceed its operational capacity. The pavement throughout this road is littered with potholes and creates obstructions for heavy traffic flow. Most of the corridor has a Pavement Condition Rating (PCR) of 57-65, which is the poorest condition category on the Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT's) rating scale. Limited shoulder access exacerbates potholes as vehicles are forced to drive over them. On the northern border, the Thornwood Crossing Bridge is outdated and in need of repair. It is considered Structurally Deficient by ODOT. The bridge was constructed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and is severely dilapidated. Multiple freight trucks have overturned on this bridge in recent years, highlighting the need to revitalize the bridge to ensure safety. The Ohio Department of Transportation has dedicated funds to construct a new bridge in Fiscal Year 2023. Lastly, the Central Ohio Rail Cross creates a hazard for traffic traveling through this Corridor. The crossing intersects Thornwood Drive perpendicularly, forcing traffic to drastically reduce their speed to safely cross the railroad. Thornwood Drive is not in a state of good repair and creates safety concerns for vehicles, drivers, and pedestrians. The planning funds associated with this RAISE grant will assist project partners in revitalizing Thornwood Drive and maintaining a state of good repair.

g. **Partnership and Collaboration**

The success of Thornwood Drive's multimodal potential relies heavily on the partnerships and collaboration between various organizations. Relationships among the various municipalities and government organizations in central Licking County must also be implemented. The proven ability of the Cities of Heath and Newark, Villages of Hebron and Granville, Union Township, and the County to work together will directly impact the multimodal success of the Corridor.

These relationships can be sustained by creating public-private partnerships with the developers investing in land around Thornwood Drive. Revitalization and the fostering of public-private partnerships will strengthen the interest of private developers in the region. As planning continues, these partnerships will ensure multimodal concepts align with development. The City of Heath works regularly with current industries throughout the Corridor, as well as the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority. Sustaining relationships like these will be essential for creating this multimodal corridor.

h. **Innovation**

The Thornwood Drive Corridor planning process presents an opportunity for the City of Heath to explore innovative options for financing and project delivery. The Thornwood Drive Corridor Plan anticipates clearing the NEPA process as part of the proposed planning project and will benefit from the Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) ability to complete the

Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. ODOT is one of the only State Transportation Departments that has the authority to assume the FHWA's NEPA responsibilities. ODOT's NEPA Assignment ensures a single point of contact that understands both project details and the regulatory process. This delivery method allows ODOT to streamline the environmental approval process. When ODOT entered the NEPA Assignment Program, it estimated the reduction would equate to approximately 20%-time savings for the overall program. Since the implementation of NEPA Assignment in Ohio, ODOT has saved approximately 8,550 days of review time and approximately \$32.42 million dollars. The NEPA Assignment will allow the Thornwood Drive Corridor project to complete the NEPA process more efficiently.

Efforts to create new non-federal revenue for transportation infrastructure investment are not limited to the City of Heath. Regional efforts in Licking County have created a Transportation Improvement District (TID), a collaborative government body authorized by Ohio Revised Code 5540 that can provide funds to be leveraged with other federal resources to complete larger, more impactful projects in a shorter timeframe. In addition to being able to raise their own funding, TIDs are also eligible for up to \$500,000 per year in funding from the State of Ohio. These efforts have provided Licking County with the ability to create significant new revenue across its program, which is a benefit to the entire region. This revenue will help improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of freight movement and community mobility throughout Licking County. As the corridor plan proceeds, it is anticipated that at least portions of the corridor will be eligible for state funding provided to the Licking County TID. The unique funding provided by Licking County's Transportation Improvement District (LCTID), in combination with Ohio's use of Transportation Improvement Districts will result in innovative project delivery for the planning of this multimodal corridor.