



Karen J. Angelou

Councilmember At-Large
karen.angelou@gahanna.gov

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) Representative Report to City Council

September 18, 2023

MORPC Highlights:

- **Economic Development District (EDD) Designation** – MORPC has been awarded designation by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration as an Economic Development District. This designation is anticipated to unlock additional support and collaboration for economic development in Central Ohio. [More information here.](#)
- **Community-Based Planning Assistance Program Expanded to Empower Communities** – MORPC is expanding their Community-Based Planning Assistance offered to communities to assist member communities in planning for a sustainable future. More information on the expanded program, which includes information on consultant services and a planner pool pilot program, is attached to this report as a Media Release.
- **MORPC 2024 Technical Assistance Program** – The Technical Assistance Program aids MORPC members in advancing regional goals and strategies in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, which includes staff assistance with active transportation, bicyclist and pedestrian safety, and transit support. More information on the expanded program is attached to this report as a Media Release.
- **MORPC Launches “Leaders Listen” Survey on Sustainability and the Environment** – this survey is open to the public to provide input on sustainability and the environment, addressing topics such as air and water quality, conservation of green space, climate change, and commercial solar power developments. To take the survey, [click here.](#)

Upcoming Events/Important Dates:

- *Monday, September 18 from 1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.*
Money Mondays: State Capital Budget and Community Investment - Recent years have seen extraordinary investments from the federal government, creating new funding possibilities for local governments of all kinds. To keep our members updated and create new pathways for our members to take advantage of these funds, MORPC’s Regional Investment Officer, Dr. Todd Bradley is hosting weekly, topical meetings. [More information here.](#)
- *Thursday, October 26 from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.*
Summit on Sustainability - This is MORPC’s signature environmental conference, bringing hundreds of community leaders together to explore and share sustainable ideas and solutions, and to celebrate individuals and collaborative sustainability efforts with the Regional Sustainability Awards. The Summit will feature two plenary sessions and breakout sessions that will focus on MORPC’s sustainability programs. [More information here.](#)

Media Contact:

Melissa Rapp

Public Information Manager

Office: 614.233.4187

Mobile: 614.428.7277

Email: mrapp@morpc.org

**COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
EXPANDED TO EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO ADDRESS FUTURE
GROWTH**

Consultant Services, Planner Pool Pilot Programs Added to Complement Existing Programs

[Columbus, OH – September 14, 2023] – With Central Ohio communities on the brink of unprecedented growth, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is strengthening efforts to support its member communities. In response to these challenges, MORPC has introduced an innovative initiative, collectively referred to as [Community-Based Planning Assistance](#), a suite of programs designed to empower member communities with the tools and resources needed to envision and plan for a sustainable future.

MORPC is adding a Consultant Services Program and a Planner Pool Program to the already existing Technical Assistance Program. Together, these programs complement MORPC's existing range of assistance offerings, enabling a rapid response to the evolving needs of Central Ohio's diverse communities.

"Central Ohio is growing - it's a pivotal moment for the region's communities to ensure we grow better as we get bigger. MORPC is committed to ensuring that this growth is guided by thoughtful, strategic planning," said MORPC's Executive Director William Murdock. "Our Community-Based Planning Assistance initiative is a one-stop shop designed to help our member communities address their unique challenges and opportunities with growth and investment."

The suite of services now offered under the Community-Based Planning Assistance includes:

[Consultant Services Program](#) - The Consultant Services Program streamlines the Requests for Proposal (RFP) process for MORPC member communities. The program does this by prequalifying consultants for long-range planning projects; drafting RFPs on behalf of the community's project goals, interests, and budgets; creating a central repository for long-range planning RFPs; conducting initial reviews of proposal submissions; and facilitating final presentations of proposals for communities. The goal is to lower member communities' burden – as well as the consultants' – of engaging in long-range planning activities. In its first year, the program is focused on assisting with comprehensive planning and zoning code development and updates, an area considered a priority concern by MORPC member communities.

[Planner Pool Program](#) - The Planner Pool Program aims to provide communities with direct professional assistance to support local planning functions, such as discretionary and ministerial reviews, and miscellaneous short-term projects or research related to land use, development, sustainability, or transportation. The primary benefit to communities is to fill staffing gaps, add new expertise where needed, or create short-term relief for the member agency who may be overwhelmed with an influx of development, permit or other requests. **MORPC expects to begin assistance through the Planner Pool Program in mid-fall of 2023.**

Technical Assistance Program - The Technical Assistance Program (TA Program) is an existing program that aids eligible MORPC members with community-based planning services that advance regional goals and specific strategies identified in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The TA Program awards technical assistance services through a competitive application process. Only local governments and MORPC members within the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area are eligible.

"Central Ohio has been growing for years. While this is exciting and allows for incredible opportunities related to economic development and community development, it also puts immense pressures on our communities to keep up with the growth and demand for new housing and amenities," said Kerstin Carr, MORPC's Chief Regional Strategy Officer and Senior Director of Planning. "Through the expansion of our community-based planning assistance program, we aren't just adding more support to our members but also helping connect our communities to the assistance and resources available throughout the region."

MORPC member communities can utilize the form under the Request for Assistance tab [on the MORPC website](#) to provide initial information about a particular project or need. By submitting this form, communities can initiate a dialogue with staff to discuss their specific needs and explore how MORPC can contribute to their planning efforts.

"We are excited to roll out the Planner Pool and Consultant Services Program specifically to make it easier for our communities to get ahead of that growth and assist with long-range planning," said MORPC Senior Planner Jonathan Miller. "This is a pilot year, and we will adjust and evaluate it on a regular basis to make sure it adds value."

To learn more about MORPC's Community-Based Planning Assistance Programs or to request assistance through one of the programs visit [Community-Based Planning Assistance – MORPC.org](#)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Melissa Rapp

Tel: 614. 233.4187

Mobile: 614.428.7277

Email: mrapp@morpc.org

MORPC LAUNCHES 2024 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Deadline to submit applications is Friday, Oct. 13, 2023

[COLUMBUS, OH, September 14, 2023] – The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission is opening the application window for the 2024 cycle of the Technical Assistance Program (TA Program) beginning Friday.

The TA Program provides assistance to eligible MORPC members for community-based planning services to advance regional goals and strategies identified in the [Metropolitan Transportation Plan](#) (MTP).

"As our region continues to grow, transportation and development demands are shifting," said Nick Gill, MORPC Transportation Study Director. "MORPC's Technical Assistance Program is

designed to be a resource to local communities as they address the needs of their communities.”

The TA Program awards technical assistance services through a competitive application process. Only MORPC members within the Metropolitan Planning Organization area are eligible. This area includes Delaware County; Franklin County; Bloom and Violet Townships in Fairfield County; New Albany, Pataskala, Etna Township in Licking County; and Jerome Township in Union County.

“With the 2024 cycle of the TA Program, MORPC will provide staff assistance on services that focus on moving active transportation, bicyclist and pedestrian safety, and transit-supportive elements of our regional plans toward implementation,” said MORPC Principal Planner Lauren Cardoni.

MORPC staff will assist awardees with specific services intended to move the region closer to meeting the vision and goals established in the MTP, the Active Transportation Plan, the MORPC Complete Streets Policy, and the Central Ohio Greenways Vision.

The TA Program application is available online starting Friday, Sept. 15 and will be due by 5 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 13, 2023. The draft TA Program Guide, which describes the available service types and program eligibility, can be viewed [here](#). Printed copies are available upon request.

An informational webinar will be held on Monday, Sept. 18, 2023, to highlight the purpose of the program, the types of services being offered for 2024, and the requirements for the application process.

[Register for the webinar here](#)

Questions can be submitted by email to lcardoni@morpc.org or in writing to MORPC, 111 Liberty Street, Suite 100, Columbus, Ohio 43215, Attn: Lauren Cardoni.

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