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

May 20, 2024

Highlights

MORPC Commission/Committee Meeting:

- MORPC held its monthly commission and committee meetings on Thursday, May 9, 2024. The full meeting packet is available for review [here](#).

Air Quality Alerts:

- The EPA's Air Quality Awareness Week ran May 6th through 10th, 2024. This is an annual initiative aimed at increasing public understanding and awareness of air quality issues that affect our health and the environment. You can keep up to date with Central Ohio's air quality as we approach the summer months with Air Quality Alerts from MORPC.
- Sign up and be the first to know when the air quality is hazardous. [More information here](#).

Legislative Update:

- MORPC has highlighted the status of 5 bills to watch in its latest legislative update. These include:
 - HB 2 – One-Time Strategic Community Investment Fund,
 - HB 315 – Revise Township Law,
 - HB 257 – Virtual Public Meetings,
 - HB 344 – Eliminate Local Replacement Property Tax Levies and Modify Property Tax Complaint Law, and
 - HB 197 – Establish a Community solar Pilot Program.*See the end of this report for the full update attached.*

Grant Finder:

- MORPC provides a one-of-a-kind opportunity for each member government to access GrantFinder, which tracks over 10,000 grants. GrantFinder is a real-time, online, searchable database of \$60 billion of federal, state, foundation, and corporate grants available to local governments and their community partners.
- For more information, contact Eileen Leuby at eleuby@morpc.org.

Money Mondays Archive:

- You can view previous MORPC "Money Mondays" with Regional Investment Officer, Dr. Todd Bradley, on the MORPC YouTube Channel [here](#). These sessions are an opportunity for members to learn more about key funding opportunities. To sign up for upcoming webinars, complete this [registration here](#). Upcoming Money Monday sessions include:

- May 20: Council of Development and Finance Agencies (CDFA): Mitchell Smith & Toby Rittner.
- June 3: Jeffrey Arkin, Director, Strategic Issues, Government Accountability Office (GAO)
- June 10: Small Nation & Affordable Housing - Jason Duff & Nick Davis
- June 17: Brian Gorenflo, WeConnect Manager, WeConnect Data Center - Broadband Funding

Upcoming Events

Bike to Work Day

Thursday, May 23, 2024, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at City Plaza on the corner of Front & Gay St., Columbus

- MORPC, the City of Columbus, and partners are excited to invite you to our Bike to Work Day event on Thursday, May 23, 2024. Cyclists who bike to work are encouraged to stop by our event at the City Plaza from 8-10am, where we'll be having e-bike test rides, the COTA bus bike rack, and more! Participants who are interested in finding a "bike buddy" to share the ride with may use our Bike to Work Day Gohio Commute network. Join the network to map your route and find others who are biking along the same route. [More information here.](#)

Strategic Doing Practitioner Training: Leading Complex Collaborations

Tuesday, June 4 and Wednesday, June 5 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Ohio University

- In this training you will develop skills to lead complex collaborations and to innovate in open, loosely connected networks. This training is best suited for individuals working on a collaborative activity to move a project or idea forward with a team, group, or coalition. Fees apply. Learn more here. [More information here.](#)

Riverfest

Save the date for Riverfest!

- Join MORPC at the Scioto Mile during the Columbus Arts Festival on June 8th and 9th. Riverfest provides an opportunity to educate residents on the importance of our region's waterways and how to help protect and conserve these precious resources. There will be free kayaking, canoeing, and paddleboarding! Stay tuned for more details. For more information, please contact Edwina Teye at eteye@morpc.org.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

May 2024



MID-OHIO REGIONAL
MORPC
PLANNING COMMISSION

At each step of the legislative process, MORPC is actively engaged on behalf of our members. To learn more about our advocacy efforts, visit morpc.org/GovAffairs.

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5 Bills to Watch

1

House Bill 2 - One-Time Strategic Community Investment Fund (OTSCIF)

Makes \$350 million in capital appropriations for FY 2025-2026 from the \$700 million OTSCIF created in House Bill 33.

Status: Referred to Senate Finance Committee (4/10/2024)

2

House Bill 315 - Revise the Township Law

Omnibus bill making numerous minor modifications to township law. Due to MORPC advocacy, now includes housing technical assistance funding opportunity for all political subdivisions.

Status: 4th Hearing in House State and Local Government Committee (4/23/24)

3

House Bill 257 - Virtual Public Meetings

Authorizes certain public bodies (including MORPC and its committees) to meet and conduct business virtually and imposes requirements for virtual public meetings policies. MORPC submitted proponent testimony.

Status: 1st Hearing in Senate Government Oversight Committee (2/28/2024)

4

House Bill 344 - Eliminate Local Replacement Property Tax Levies; Modify Property Tax Complaints Law

Eliminates authority of political subdivisions to levy replacement property tax levies and modifies the law governing certain property tax complaints.

Status: Reported by House Ways and Means Committee (5/1/2024)

5

House Bill 197 - Establish a Community Solar Pilot Program

Amends the Ohio state energy policy to encourage development of community solar facilities and establishes a grant program at the Ohio Department of Development for facilities on certain brownfield sites.

Status: 6th Hearing in House Public Utilities Committee (5/8/2024)

See Also

New House Bill to Re-Join Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact

House Bill 488, introduced by Representatives Michael Skindell (D-Lakewood) and Haraz Ghanbari (R-Perrysburg), would re-enter Ohio into the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC). MIPRC is an independent, bipartisan, interstate commission comprised of appointees from Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. It was established in 2000 to advocate for passenger rail infrastructure development and facilitate collaboration between member states. Ohio has not been a member since 2013.

Top Stories

Ohio Senate Recommends Zoning Reform in Newly Released Housing Report

The Ohio Senate Select Committee on Housing released its report of recommendations following 35 hours of testimony from more than 200 witnesses across Ohio. The report contains 23 recommendations to address the housing crisis in Ohio that the General Assembly should address through legislation.

As a result of MORPC advocacy, the report recommends that the General Assembly consider providing technical assistance to help local governments modernize their zoning codes.

The report was released during a news conference hosted by members of the Select Committee on Housing, including the chair of the committee, Sen. Michele Reynolds (R-Columbus), Sen. Hearcel Craig (D-Columbus), Sen. Louis Blessing (R-Cincinnati), and Sen. Andrew Brenner (R-Delaware). Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) also attended the news conference.

In addition, members of the committee introduced four new bills that Reynolds said stem from the report: SB243 (Reynolds-Craig), which addresses zoning regulations; SB244 (Reynolds-Craig), which deals with the property tax and Residential Stability Zones; SB245 (Reynolds-Craig), which revises housing laws; and SB246 (Reynolds-Craig), which renames the Department of Development the Department of Housing and Development.

While the introduced version of Senate Bill 243 declares “its intention to enact legislation addressing local zoning regulations that impede the development of housing in this state,” it does not appropriate any state dollars that local governments may access at this time.

In the press conference, President Huffman said the recommendations all have different timelines, so some may take weeks, and some may even be achieved over the next few years.

USEPA Finalizes New Drinking Water Standards

In an effort to improve the safety of drinking water, the Biden-Harris Administration issued a final rule to enforce drinking water standards to protect communities from exposure to harmful per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also known as ‘forever chemicals.’ The White House says this final rule will reduce PFAS exposure for approximately 100 million people, prevent thousands of deaths, and reduce tens of thousands of serious illnesses.

The new rules set enforceable maximum contaminant levels for six kinds of PFAS chemicals. Beginning in 2027, local governments and water utilities will be required to inform the public of the contamination levels in their water systems, and must take action to reduce contamination levels by 2029 if the enforceable maximums are exceeded. The USEPA estimates that approximately 10 percent of public drinking water systems in the United States will be required to take action.

According to the USEPA, these “forever chemicals” in drinking water have been discovered to be more dangerous than had been previously known. PFAS are resistant to breaking down in the environment and can linger in the human body when consumed. They have been linked to deadly cancers, impacts to the liver and heart, and immune and developmental damage to infants and children, including low birth weight.

The USEPA was first alerted to the presence of PFAS in drinking water in 2001 but until now has failed to set a nationwide legal limit. Last year, the agency issued health advisories that set health risk thresholds for the chemicals close to zero, replacing 2016 guidelines that set a higher threshold.

Last year the USEPA invited states and territories to apply for \$1 billion under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to address PFAS in drinking water, specifically in disadvantaged communities. The grant funding will provide technical assistance, water quality testing, contractor training and installation of centralized treatment technologies and systems.