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

October 21, 2024

Highlights

- **MORPC Commission/Committee Meeting:**
 - MORPC held its monthly commission and committee meetings on:
 - Thursday, September 12, 2024
 - Thursday, October 10, 2024
 - Next meeting – November 14, 2024
- **Salary & Fringe Benefit Survey Results Now Available**

MORPC is pleased to present the 2024 Annual Salary & Fringe Benefit Survey. Thank you to the 36 local governments who participated - your input enables our members to better serve their employees and constituents. Contact salariesurvey@morpc.org for an Excel copy.
- **Linkus Town Hall: Tuesday, October 9, 6:00 p.m. at Reynoldsburg High School**

A Town Hall Meeting to learn more about COTA's plan to link us with additional services and sidewalks in your community. Guest speakers such as Columbus City Council President Shannon Hardin, Reynoldsburg Mayor Joe Begeny, MORPC Executive Director William Murdock and more.
- **Summit on Sustainability**

MORPC's premier annual environmental conference, the Summit on Sustainability takes place October 29, 2024. This year's Summit will be headlined by city planner and author Jeff Speck.
- **Jessica Kuenzli Joins MORPC**

MORPC recently welcomed a new addition to the team - Jessica Kuenzli, who is MORPC's new Chief Regional Planning Officer and Senior Director of Planning. She joins MORPC from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, where she served as Deputy Director of Business and Regulatory Affairs.
- **MORPC Convenes Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee**

On August 22, MORPC convened the first CEDS Committee Meeting. The Committee is comprised of 32 individuals from the public and private sectors that represent the main economic interests of the region. In addition to assisting with the creation of the region's next CEDS, the committee will advise MORPC's Economic Development District Board on activities, funding opportunities, and strategies related to implementation of the CEDS.
- **MORPC Receives \$70,000 Economic Development Administration (EDA) Grant Award**

In July, MORPC received a grant award from the EDA to perform work related to the Economic Development District. This award will allow MORPC to pursue activities related to the implementation of the CEDS priorities : 1) boosting labor force participation, 2) preparing communities for growth, and 3) improving regional alignment on infrastructure development.

- **Community Spotlight**

In August, the State of Ohio announced \$106.9 million in state support to help assess and remediate 61 hazardous brownfield sites in 22 counties. The Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program helps communities redevelop underutilized properties into valuable economic and community assets. Four counties in Central Ohio received support: Marion, Delaware, Franklin, and Fairfield. Planned end uses for the remediated sites include a coffee shop and charcuterie board prep kitchen, baseball and soccer fields, mixed use buildings, light industrial, affordable housing, and a food hall. You can find more information on these projects [here](#).

- **ED 411 Registration Open**

Registration is now open for Economic Development 411 (ED 411) hosted by One Columbus and the Mid-Ohio Development Exchange. This year's event, that takes place on December 6, will include a variety of breakout sessions and keynote addresses from Kevin Kelley, Principal at Shook Kelley, and Peter Goodman, Global Economic Correspondent. You can get tickets to the event [here](#).

- **Share Your Data Story**

MORPC is organizing its 3rd annual Data Day event on February 5, 2025. The theme, Making Impacts Through Trust in Data, will explore different opportunities for building data capacity and education. Data Day brings together the data creators, innovators, analysts, and end users of the Central Ohio data community to share their experiences, innovative uses of tools, analyses, and creative projects that are moving Central Ohio forward. The Regional Data Advisory Committee (RDAC) is accepting session proposals until November 30. Sign up [here](#) to be a presenter!

Key Funding Opportunities

MORPC Grant of the Month

Bridge Investment Program

- Department: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
- Award size: \$50,000 - \$80,000,000
- Applications due November 1st for projects
- Eligible applicants: States, metropolitan planning organizations serving urbanized areas over 200,000 people, local governments, political subdivisions, special purpose districts
- Eligible projects: Bridge construction

Learn more about the bridge investment program [here](#).

Available

Build to Scale

- Department: U.S. Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration
- Available Funding: \$50 million available, award ceiling is \$5 million
- Application Deadline: October 28, 2024
- Eligible Applicants: Local government, state, institutions of higher education, nonprofits
- Eligible Projects: operational and programmatic activities to build public and private capacity for entrepreneurs and innovators, accelerate the growth of regional economies, empower communities to provide proof-of-concept and commercialization assistance, equitably and inclusively increase access to capital

Rural Housing Site Loans

- Department: U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development
- Application Deadline: Rolling
- Available Funding: 5 Year loan with 3%, or below market rate, interest rate
- Eligible Applicants: Public and private nonprofits
- eligible projects: site acquisition and development

Recycle Ohio

- Department: Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
- Available Funding: Awards will range from \$10,000 - \$300,000
- Application Deadline: December 6, 2024
- Eligible Applicants: Ohio – schools, local government, health departments, municipal corporations, non-profits, park districts, private sector businesses, solid waste management authorities, state agencies
- Eligible Projects: Initiate or expand recycling programs, encourage sustainable practices, stimulate economic growth, support litter prevention efforts

Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities: Section 5310

- Department: Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)
- Available Funding: \$1,584,297 in award funds
- Application Deadline: October 25, 2024
- Eligible Applicants: Private non-profit organization, state and local government authorities, public or private operators of public transportation
- Service area must be primarily within the Columbus urbanized area
- eligible projects
- Traditional: Van and bus purchases, wheelchair lifts, wheelchair ramps and securement devices, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) for transit, mobility management programs, acquisition of transportation services under a contract or lease, preventive maintenance, radios and communication equipment, purchase and installation of passenger amenities
- Non-Traditional: Travel training, building an accessible path to a bus stop, improving signage or way-finding technology, mobility managements programs

Prospective

Local and Regional Project Assistance Grants (RAISE)

- Department: U.S. Department of Transportation – Office of the Secretary
- Prospective Announcement: November 2024
- Eligible Applicants: Local government, states, transit agency, port authority, special district government
- Eligible Projects: Surface transportation improvements, safety improvements, increasing economic strength and global competitiveness, equitable transportation development and planning, sustainable transportation development

October Legislative Update:

As lawmakers enter the final push of the November election, Congress acts to keep the federal government open through mid-December. Meanwhile, federal legislation to accelerate semiconductor production is signed into law and state lawmakers mull re-regulation of Ohio's electric utilities. Click [here](#) for full Legislative Update.

Bills to Watch:

- **House Bill 2** - One-Time Strategic Community Investment Fund (OTSCIF) Makes capital appropriations for FY 2025-2026 from state bond funds and the \$700 million OTSCIF created in House Bill 33. Status: Effective (6/28/2024)
- **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: Passed by the House (6/26/2024)
- **House Bill 536** - Seat Belts, Primary Offense Makes failure to wear a seat belt and failure to properly secure a child in an appropriate booster seat or seat belt a primary offense. Status: 3rd Hearing in House Criminal Justice Committee (6/25/2024)
- **House Bill 340** - Employee Mobility Grant Program Creates a grant for employers in rural counties to hire charter transportation services for employees. Status: 3rd Hearing in House Economic & Workforce Development Committee (6/18/2024)
- **House Bill 79** - Permit Electric Distribution Utilities to Establish Energy Efficiency Programs Permits electric distribution utilities to establish voluntary energy efficiency and demand reduction portfolios, subject to approval of the PUCO. Status: Passed by the House (6/26/2024)
- **Congress Passes Budget Stopgap**, Community Projects On Deck Last month, Congress passed a continuing resolution to keep the federal government open through December 20th, setting the stage for a "lame-duck" budget battle after the November election. MORPC has been monitoring 17 Central Ohio community project funding requests in federal budget legislation, which total more than \$25 million. In cooperation with the Columbus Region Coalition, MORPC continues to support these efforts to drive investment to the region

Member Benefit of the Month: Ohio University Partnership

Among MORPC'S educational partnerships are multiple programs with Ohio University. MORPC members and their employees can receive tuition discounts on courses and degree programs, including the Master of Sustainability, Security, and resilience program and the Ohio Online program. Click [here](#) to learn more about our educational partnerships.

Grant of the Month: USDOT Bridge Investment Program

The USDOT Bridge Investment Program helps states, MPOs, and local governments plan and construct new bridges. The November 1st deadline is for construction projects, with grants of up to \$80 million available. Learn more about the USDOT program [here](#).

- **OU Virtual Open House: Online Resilience Graduate Programs**
 - Monday, October 14, 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.
 - Join Ohio University for a virtual open house to learn more about their new Master of Sustainability, Security, and Resilience program. MORPC members can receive discounted tuition! Register [here](#).
- **Responding to the Housing Crisis: A Conversation on Evictions in Central Ohio**
 - Friday, October 18, 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. on ZOOM
 - This fall, MORPC and The Ohio State University's Center for Urban and Regional Analysis are hosting a series of discussions on housing and its impacts on local communities. This month, join journalist Mya Frazier and attorney Jyoshu Tsushima for a conversation on evictions in Central Ohio. This event is approved for 1 AICP CM credit. Register [here](#).
- **Rural Forum: Zoning for the Future**
 - Wednesday, October 23, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Perry County Opportunity Center

- This forum is focused on how to start a zoning process in communities that have little to no zoning plans. Participants will learn why effective zoning programs help preserve valuable community assets while enabling leaders to plan for the future. Registration is free to MORPC members and lunch will be provided. Nonmembers are welcome to attend at the \$15 rate. Register [here](#).
- **Stepz for Planning Officials: Strategic Training on Effective Planning and Zoning Tuesday, November 19, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at MORPC**
MORPC invites elected or appointed planning officials to join the STEPZ for Planning Officials workshop. This workshop offers an excellent opportunity to enhance or refresh your knowledge of planning and zoning processes, equipping you with valuable insights to better serve your community. For more details about the training and to register click [here](#)

Learn More About MORPC's Educational Partnerships

2025 Summer Intern Program Accepting Requests

MORPC provides its members with the opportunity to secure talented college students in a variety of majors to complete projects and gain practical work experience in the public sector. MORPC coordinates the recruitment and screening processes, student orientations, mentor pairings, and supplemental activities while hosts provide their intern(s) an hourly wage. Hosts can request multiple interns and choose how many hours a week they prefer their intern(s) to work, ranging from 16 to 40 hours a week. For more information, contact Eileen Leuby, MORPC Membership Services Officer at eleuby@morpc.org or (614) 233-4135, or Alli Mancz, MORPC Intern Program Coordinator at amancz@morpc.org or (614) 233-4164.

Money Mondays

Every Monday from 1:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., MORPC is hosting “Money Mondays” virtual presentations with our Regional Investment Officer, Dr. Todd Bradley. These sessions will be an opportunity for members to ask questions and learn more about key funding opportunities.

Meet remotely every Monday, 1-1:30 p.m. Upcoming topics include:

Upcoming Topics

- **October 21:** Financing Options – Patty Huddle, President, Columbus-Franklin County Financing Authority
- **October 28:** Childcare Resources – Lynanne Gutierrez (Wolf), President and CEO of Groundwork Ohio
- **November 4:** Inflation Reduction Act Community Change Grants – Dr. Todd Bradley, Regional Investment Officer, MORPC
- **November 11:** Veterans’ Day – No Money Mondays