



Legislation Details (With Text)

File #: 2021-0030 **Version:** 1 **Name:**
Type: Communication **Status:** Approved
File created: 2/15/2021 **In control:** City Council
On agenda: 2/15/2021 **Final action:**
Title: MORPC Report, February 15, 2021

Sponsors:

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments:

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
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MORPC Report, February 15, 2021

Great to be with you on Thursday as we kicked off 2021's first Commission meeting. Looking forward to working with all of you in the year ahead!

February's meeting spotlighted racial equity work at MORPC and in the region. In addition to recognizing Black History Month, we were pleased to have Dr. Beverly Vandiver, executive director of the Kirwan Institute, to speak about their critical work and research on racism and equity. You can learn more about this important regional resource at kirwaninstitute.osu.edu <<https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/>>.

We also provided a Central Ohio diversity snapshot including the latest updates on our diversity and inclusion work and progress on broadening representation on MORPC's Commission, boards, and committees. To advance these important efforts and better help our communities, **MORPC announced a new partnership with YWCA Columbus** with new support and access to expertise for our local government members. This brings our members new opportunities for trainings and services on antiracism and racial equity. We'll be sharing more details soon about specific trainings in the spring as well as a new 15% discount on additional contracted services. Finally, we invite you to participate in the YWCA's 21-day [Racial Equity & Social Justice Challenge](https://www.ywachallenge.org/profile/form/index.cfm?PKformID=0x14232abcd) <<https://www.ywachallenge.org/profile/form/index.cfm?PKformID=0x14232abcd>> taking place in March. Contact [Ralonda Hampton](mailto:rhampton@morpc.org) <<mailto:rhampton@morpc.org>> for more info.

Below are action items and other updates from February's meeting:

KEY ACTION ITEMS FOR OUTREACH

Register for State of the Region - 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. March 31. State of the Region will be virtual this year, making it all the more convenient to attend. We have a great program and keynote speaker (Jonathan Rose) planned. [Register](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2021-state-of-the-region-tickets-) <<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2021-state-of-the-region-tickets->

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Host a Summer Intern - We have many great interns lined up for our members this summer (starting in May) in our Local Government Summer Internship Program. If you would still like to participate by hosting an intern, reach out to [Eileen Leuby <mailto:eleuby@morpc.org>](mailto:eleuby@morpc.org).

Participate in MORPC's Strategic Framework - As we advance MORPC's strategic framework work on services to the region and local governments, please let me now if you would like to participate in one of our upcoming focus sessions on housing or broadband.

GENERAL RESOURCES & REMINDERS:

COVID-19 Resource Hub - We continue to update the resource hub for our members at [morpc.org/covid19 <https://www.morpc.org/covid19>](https://www.morpc.org/covid19).

FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

Future Ready Columbus Executive Director Jane Leach joined us to discuss the Future Ready by 5 Plan. An action-oriented kindergarten readiness plan is being created to address racial and economic disparities in the first five years of children's lives. Learn more and provide input at [futurereadycolumbus.org <http://www.futurereadycolumbus.org/>](http://www.futurereadycolumbus.org), including information on hosting a discussion.

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Regional Policy Roundtable - In addition to highlighting the new Public Policy Agenda document, the update focused on COVID-19 relief, infrastructure, energy, and broadband expansion legislation, as well as the state operating and transportation budgets. The impact of the Central Ohio Defense Working Group, which seeks to strengthen our local military installations, was also highlighted. MORPC is meeting virtually with legislators on all these items.

Sustainability Advisory Committee - This report highlighted the success of MORPC's recent Solar Week programming, as well as the Impact of Trails Study that MORPC and Central Ohio Greenways are doing this year. The annual air quality [End of Season Report <https://www.morpc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MORPC_EOS_2020.pdf>](https://www.morpc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MORPC_EOS_2020.pdf) is also now available, which shows that high ozone days have been decreasing.

Transportation Policy Committee (MPO Report) - MORPC recently completed four virtual town hall meetings on the Regional Mobility Plan for nine counties, which focuses on the needs of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those with low incomes. We are also in the middle of an attributable funding round for future projects through 2027. USDOT BUILD and INFRA grant notices will be coming out soon. Please reach out to our team if interested in applying.

Recent media reports have discussed possible Amtrak expansion of passenger rail routes in Ohio as part of their federal request to Congress for reauthorization. MORPC has been in contact with Amtrak and will continue to monitor for any opportunities.

It's exciting to see so many of our members leading at the state and national level, especially on issues important to MORPC's members. At our meeting, we congratulated a few who recently stepped into new leadership roles. These include Grove City Mayor Ike Stage for serving on the National Association of Regional Councils Board of Directors, Delaware County Commissioner Jeff Benton for being named chair of Ohio Treasurer Robert Sprague's Central Ohio Regional Advisory Board, and MORPC board secretary and Dublin Mayor Chris Amorose Grooms for serving on the National League of Cities' Community and Economic Development Federal Advocacy Committee. Congratulations to all!