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TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM
ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 1979

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BROAD STREET LOOKING
NORTH ON HIGH STREET,
CIRCA 1898.

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION



BROAD STREET LOOKING
NORTH ON HIGH STREET,
1980

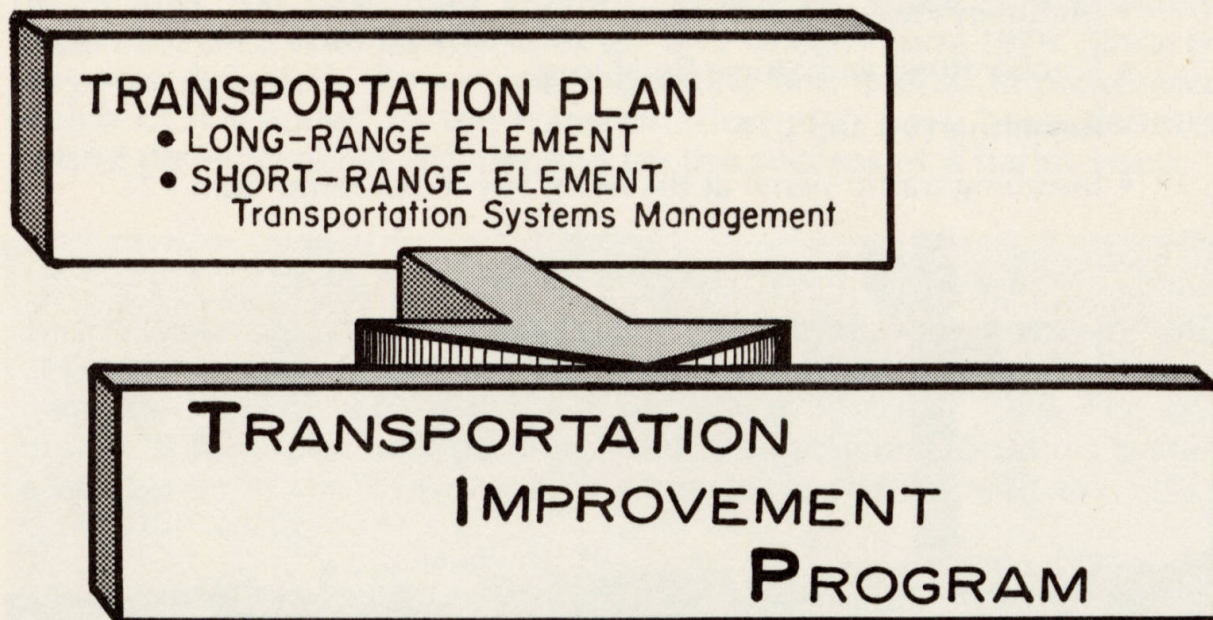
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WHAT IS TRANSPORTATION PLANNING?

Planning ways to move people and goods safely, economically and efficiently is the art of transportation planning. Finding practical solutions to transportation problems in the mid-Ohio area means combining the efforts of cities, villages, townships and counties to provide coordinated transportation service for all concerned. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) coordinates these efforts, improving all forms of transportation. Plans for highways and mass transit are clearly the concern of transportation planning, but so are pedestrian facilities, bikeways and ridesharing.

Urban transportation planning looks ahead, both to the near future and to more long-range changes. Transportation plans must be made in harmony with other changes to the mid-Ohio area. Some examples include:

- *Land use*—What street and transit facilities are needed to move people in and out of the new Convention Center?
- *Energy*—How can private businesses and public agencies cooperate to share rides to work and back to save fuel?
- *Environmental quality*—How can highway service be improved to save energy and reduce air pollution?



Although analyzing transportation problems is a technical process, it is based on community needs, and solutions to these problems do affect mid-Ohio communities. MORPC compiles and regularly updates a Transportation Plan, combining it with other development plans and cooperating with local communities. The Transportation Plan consists of a "long-range element" and a "Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Element."

The long-range element of the plan identifies *future* transportation needs in the region, based on anticipated growth. The existing long-range element is based on 1990 projections.

The Transportation Systems Management process (TSM) represents the short-range element of MORPC transportation planning. Its major emphasis is providing low capital solutions to present transportation problems such as high accident locations or congested streets. The questionnaire included in this report is one important way these problems are identified.

From the Transportation Plan, projects are scheduled for implementation on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). With few exceptions, any project receiving federal transportation funds must be included in the TIP. The TIP covers a five-year period and is updated annually through the cooperative effort of the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Central Ohio Transit Authority, MORPC member communities and MORPC staff.

Federal funds provided by the Urban Mass Transportation and Federal Highway Administrations are the main sources of funding for completion of these projects once they are made part of the Transportation Improvement Program. Local and state funds also provide much of the revenue. When funds are available, various agencies or communities begin actual work.

During 1979, some improvements identified in earlier years were scheduled for implementation:

- McKinley Avenue bus facility
- Sinclair Road and Morse Road loop
- Repairing I-70 and I-71
- Installing traffic signal at the Main Street exit ramp from I-71



- Computerized timing of traffic signals on State Route 161
- Intersection widening at Lane Avenue and North Star in Upper Arlington

Projects added to the TIP in 1979 included:

- Signal upgrading projects for S.R. 317 — U.S. 40 — Yearling Road
- Improvement of Sawmill Road from Bethel Road to I-270
- Bridge deck replacement on U.S. 33 over Scioto River
- Transit resource productivity demonstration project
- Bridge deck replacement on U.S. 23 over the railroad tracks
- Resurfacing U.S. 40 between West Jefferson and New Rome
- Signal coordination projects at Refugee and Henderson Roads
- Upgrading the intersection of Shrock and Huntley Roads, including bikeway

In addition, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) suggested many transit improvements, including route extensions, 64 replacement buses and 200 passenger shelters. However, these improvements depended on a vote for the sales tax levy in early June 1979. Since the levy was defeated, the service, marketing and capital improvements which COTA added to the transportation plan have been deferred. Future developments will depend on the success of a ballot issue.

TSM: A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

To test the way transportation problems are identified and the most appropriate solution determined, the Federal Highway Administration awarded MORPC a total grant of \$91,600 in October 1978. The grant money is for a practical demonstration of the Transportation Systems Management (TSM) process. This money is shared with the City of Columbus and COTA.

Two groups, a Policy Group and a Working Group, decided on an area with many transportation problems to study. The Cleveland Avenue corridor, as it is called, was chosen for three reasons:

- it includes property within the City of Columbus, Minerva Park, Franklin County, and Mifflin, Blendon and Clinton townships. This involves many people in decisions for the area.
- it has many different land use features, from industrial to residential.
- it includes many different neighborhoods.

The study will be concluded in June 1980. MORPC is meeting with community leaders as alternate ways of solving short-range transportation problems are found.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Public involvement in transportation planning activities is a necessary part of the planning process. MORPC's decision-making structure uses community participation in many forms:

- TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee)—A group of experts in technical transportation matters who review much of the MORPC transportation staff's work.
- Policy Committee—Local government and government agency officials who oversee MORPC transportation activities.
- CAC (Citizens' Advisory Committee)—A large group of people representing either themselves or the interests of an agency or group, such as transit services for the elderly and handicapped. CAC meets at least six times a year to advise staff or Commission members.

MORPC encourages public participation. If you are interested in being a member of the Citizens' Advisory Committee, please contact MORPC's Public Information Administrator, Laura Ecklar, at 228-2663.

TRANSPORTATION DECISION-MAKING PROCESS



*Policy decisions are sent to the appropriate jurisdictions for action.

PLANNING FOR THE ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED



During the last fiscal year, MORPC adopted a plan called *Improving Mobility for the Transportation Disadvantaged*. This year, as a result of that plan, two major projects were put in action.

Project Mainstream, COTA's curb-to-curb service for the handicapped, began operations on August 14, 1978. Five vans equipped with wheelchair lifts and locks are available 15 hours a day, five days a week, providing direct service for work, school, and other personal business purposes anywhere in COTA's service area. Those people who are physically unable to use COTA's regular service are eligible to use Project Mainstream on a subscription basis for frequent and regular trips, or on a 24-hour-in-advance reservation basis. Due to the limited capacity, a priority system is in effect which puts wheelchair users and people going to school or work at the top of the list.

MORPC is assisting COTA in evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of Project Mainstream's first six months of operation. This is accomplished through a computer analysis of the operating data and a questionnaire sent to persons registered as eligible for the service. Recommendations resulting from this evaluation will be considered in light of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Section 504 regulations, addressing accessibility of transit to the handicapped, and COTA's financial picture. Plans are being made to provide for accessibility on any new full-sized buses COTA purchases.

In March 1979, MORPC was awarded a \$74,000 grant from the Battelle Memorial Institute Foundation. This grant allows MORPC and the Metropolitan Human Services Commission (MHSC) to start a pilot project, combining the vehicle fleets of three local human service agencies.

The three agencies, United Cerebral Palsy/Support Resources Incorporated, St. Stephen's Community Center and Project NICE (Nutrition Involving Columbus Elderly) are working out the details of the project administration, funding and operation.

During fiscal year 1979, a central facility was sought for administration, dispatching, storage and maintenance of the agencies' vehicles. A central location will cut costs, making participation attractive to other agencies. This project is a way to deliver better transportation to clients in a more efficient manner, putting savings back into other direct client services.

AIR QUALITY

Growing concern for air quality had an impact on transportation planning this year. Most forms of transportation have some effect on air quality, so MORPC is coordinating activities of government agencies, industry and private business, and individuals to help make sure air quality in the mid-state area improves.

A 1970 law, the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, set the standards for air quality throughout the United States. The Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) found the mid-Ohio region exceeded prescribed levels for carbon dioxide and hydrocarbons. In addition, the City of Columbus exceeds particulate emission levels. Consequently, MORPC is preparing an air quality plan (known as the State Implementation Plan) for the mid-Ohio area.

This plan will contain a Transportation Control Plan to help reduce polluting emissions from vehicles as well as ways of controlling industrial pollutants.

MORPC is studying several ways of controlling pollution:

- Vanpooling
- Public transit improvements
- Traffic flow improvements
- Bikeways
- Ridesharing
- Land use controls
- Future growth policies

MORPC is updating the air quality data for the State Implementation Plan, to do the following:

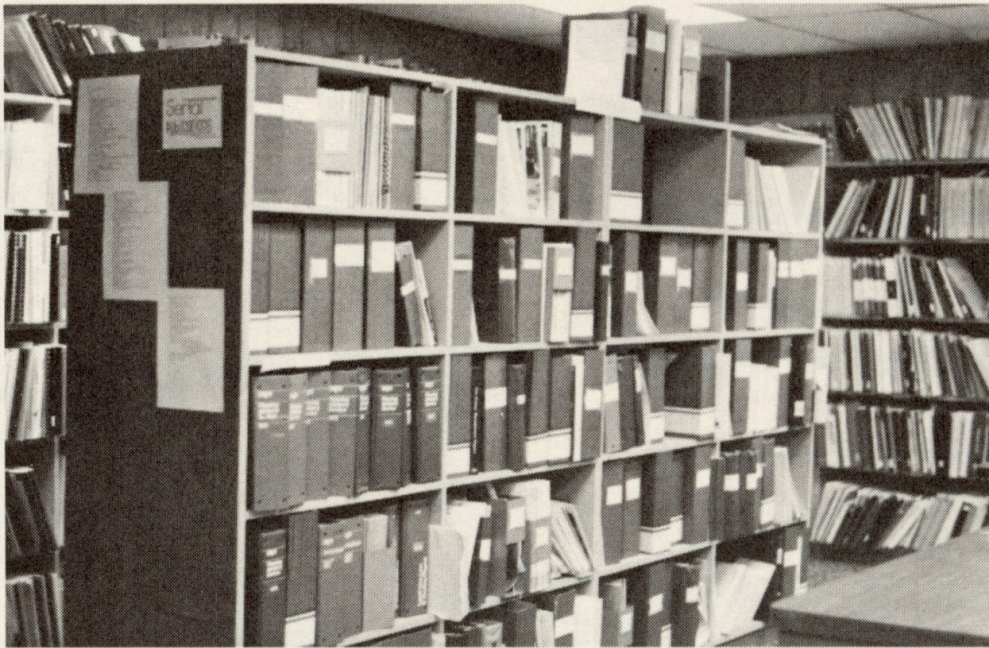
- Develop a reliable base of air quality data;
- Refine a model for forecasting air pollution levels more accurately than in the past;
- Evaluate alternative measures proposed to cut down transportation and industrial sources of pollution.



MORPC'S RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Accurate planning relies on up-to-date information. Since transportation planning is influenced by many conditions in the mid-Ohio area, MORPC staff members record and continually update information on many conditions for their own use and for use by the general public.

- **MORPC library**, one of the most comprehensive planning libraries in the area, houses publications related to all aspects of planning—land use, air quality, water quality, housing, transportation—as well as reference materials from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. These materials cannot be checked out but are available for public use at MORPC.



- **Traffic counts** are made by the City of Columbus, Franklin County and the Ohio Department of Transportation, to get an accurate picture of street use and traffic patterns. MORPC coordinates this information by filing all traffic counts and publishing a revised traffic volume map every two years, usually in August. Maps and accurate traffic counts are available to the public.
- **Traffic accidents** in Franklin County are in a computerized file. They are sorted by type and location of accident, municipality and frequency of accidents at each location. Planners and local officials use the file to rank the areas most in need of safety and street improvements.
- **Demographic data** locates information by traffic zones (similar to a census tract). This information about population characteristics was updated in 1979, and census tract information will be updated by the 1980 census. Maps which show related information are available to the public with one day's notice.

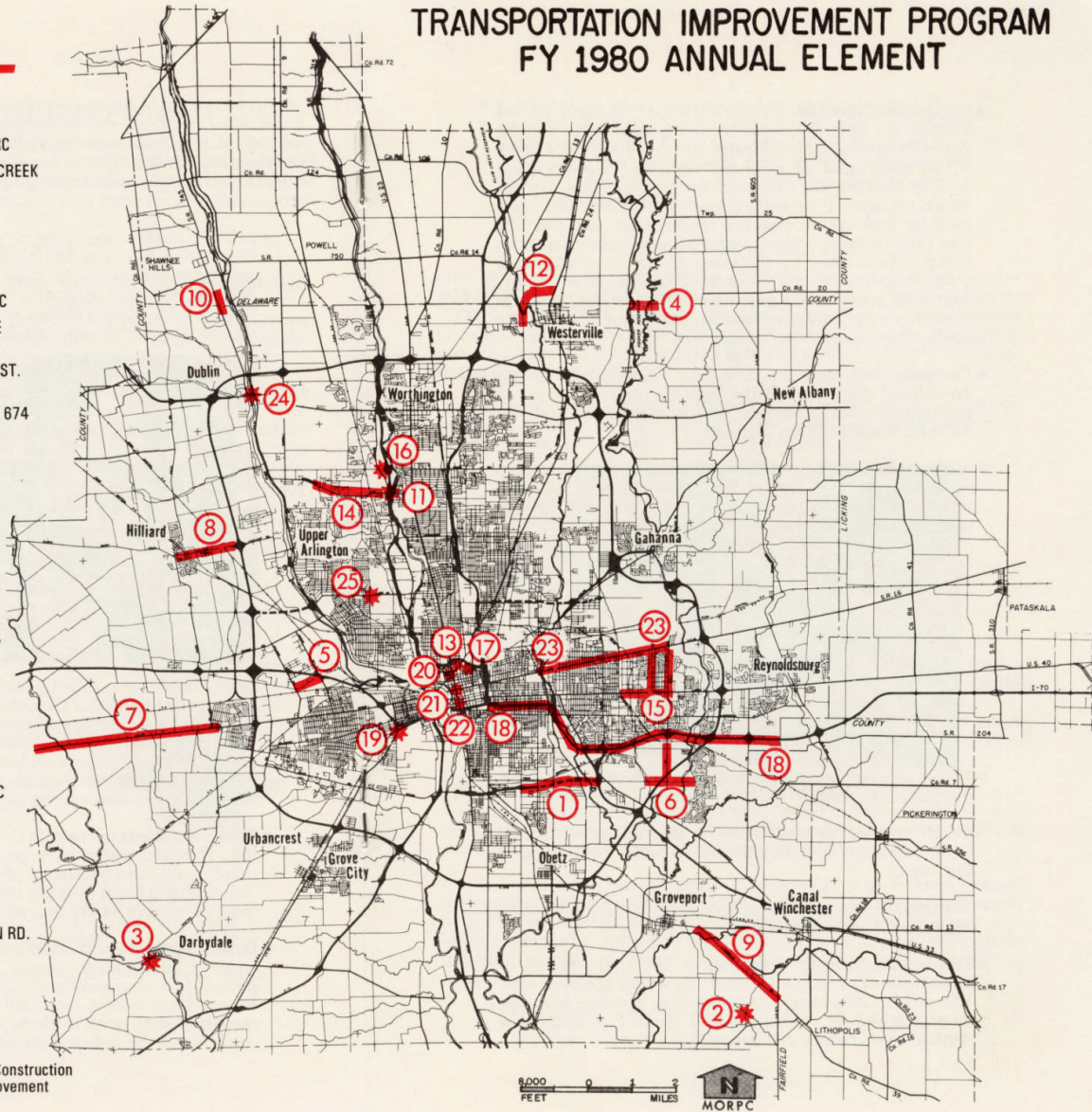
IMPROVEMENTS

LOCATION & NUMBER

23

- 1 FRANK RD. FROM LOCKBOURNE TO U.S. 33
Highway Construction—RC
- 2 OREGON RD. OVER BIG RUN — Bridge Const. — RC
- 3 HARRISBURG-GEORGEVILLE RD. OVER DARBY CREEK
Bridge Construction—C
- 4 SMOTHERS RD. OVER HOOVER RESERVOIR
Bridge Repair—C
- 5 FISHER RD. FROM WILSON RD. TO HAGUE AVE.
Highway Widening—C
- 6 S.R. 317 AT REFUGEE RD. — Intersection Imp. — C
- 7 U.S. 40 FROM WEST JEFFERSON TO NEW ROME
Highway Resurfacing—C
- 8 HILLIARD-CEMETERY RD. FROM I-270 TO MAIN ST.
Highway Widening—P
- 9 LITHOPOLIS RD. FROM GROVEPORT RD. TO S.R. 674
Highway Resurfacing—C
- 10 S.R. 745 NEAR DELAWARE/FRANKLIN CO. LINE
Bridge Const.—C
- 11 HENDERSON RD. — Landscaping — C
- 12 CLEVELAND AVE. FROM S.R. 3 TO MAIN ST.
Highway Const.—P
- 13 THIRD ST. BRIDGE — Bridge Repair — C
- 14 HENDERSON RD. FROM OLENTANGY BLVD. TO
DIERKER RD. Intersection Imp.—C
- 15 VARIOUS INTERSECTIONS ON U.S. 40, S.R. 317,
& YEARLING Intersection Imp.—C
- 16 OLENTANGY BIKEWAY — Bikeway Const. — PC
- 17 I-670 BETWEEN CLEVELAND & 4TH ST.
Bridge Repair—PRC
- 18 I-70 FROM INNERBELT TO FAIRFIELD CO. LINE
Safety Upgrading—C
- 19 MOUND ST. AT CENTRAL — Intersection Imp. — C
- 20 OHIO CENTER WALKWAYS — Transit Imp. — C
- 21 HIGH ST. TRANSITWAY — Transit Imp. — P
- 22 CAPITOL SOUTH WALKWAYS — Transit Imp. — P
- 23 E. BROAD ST. FROM NELSON RD. TO HAMILTON RD.
Intersection Imp.—PC
- 24 U.S. 33 BRIDGE OVER SCIOTO RIVER
Bridge Repair—C
- 25 LANE AVE. AT NORTH STAR RD.
Intersection Imp.—C

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FY 1980 ANNUAL ELEMENT



P—Preliminary Engineering
R—Right-of-Way Acquisition

C—Const.—Construction
Imp.—Improvement

8000
FEET

5
MILES



- **Geographic Base File**, sponsored by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, is a computer file which MORPC has maintained since 1966. This file offers a way to link information that may be kept by census tract, block, tax district, zip code or traffic zone. Each year, new uses for that information are found. This year, the GBF was used to find concentrations of handicapped persons living in Columbus, for planning special service to these areas. Also this year, COTA and MORPC began to identify routes to areas where downtown workers live. Maps of these concentrated areas are available to employers for use in developing ridesharing plans.
- **Computerized** land use data file, base year 1976, was completed this year. It is the basis for information about population characteristics, and is a valuable tool for MORPC transportation planners.
- **National Science Foundation** is providing funds for Ohio State University to test models developed for city and regional planning. OSU subcontracted with MORPC to test the Land Use Model, which projects growth in the mid-Ohio area. MORPC completed the collection and coding of information for the OSU model testing.

MONITORING REGIONAL CHANGE

In 1979 MORPC research staff filled over 600 data requests from the public.

As part of the continuing service to its member communities, MORPC studied several transportation elements this year, including:

- Traffic requirements expected from industrial and commercial parks along Hamilton Road in Groveport;
- Modifications to the freeway interchanges around Eastland Shopping Center to relieve traffic congestion in that area;
- The need for transportation services around the developing area in south central Delaware County;
- The intersection of Brice Road and Main Street in Reynoldsburg, which is troubled by a high accident rate. The newly completed Transportation Systems Management method of evaluating and ranking projects was applied to this particular project;

- Entrances to Cleveland Avenue from Maplewood Drive and Minerva Park. Neighborhood residents contributed traffic counts, the Ohio Department of Transportation videotaped the intersections, and MORPC evaluated the sites using federal standards to determine whether a traffic signal was warranted.

TRANSIT PLANNING

One of the most important parts of transportation planning for the mid-Ohio region is transit planning. The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) and MORPC adopted the Mid-Range Transit Development Concept during November 1976 to January 1977. This document provides a foundation for improving transit service in Franklin County in the next 10 to 20 years.

A successful transit system depends on high density development patterns. A study in 1977 identified two corridors or areas of high density in Franklin County: one north and one east.



THE STUDY OF ALTERNATIVES: EAST CORRIDOR

The East Corridor Alternatives Analysis, begun in November 1977, will select the most economical method of moving people in the east corridor by bus, with the least environmental impact.

The East Busway is one alternative. Another is to give buses priority over other vehicles on Broad and Main Streets, Livingston Avenue and I-70. The third alternative includes increasing transit coverage and service frequency along existing routes. All three alternatives include increased express, local and crosstown bus service, especially during peak hours.

1) The Busway Alternative

The East Busway would run from the Ohio Center east

along Conrail and Chessie Railroad right-of-way. At Stelzer Road the proposed busway turns south along a Conrail right-of-way, past Town and Country Shopping Center. The busway then crosses I-70 and ends at Eastland Shopping Center. Construction of this 10 miles of two-lane roadway would:

- Provide an exclusive route for buses and emergency vehicles;
- Include covered stations for riders at Joyce Avenue, Stelzer Road, the Ohio Center, Main Street, Livingston Avenue and Eastland Shopping Center;
- Offer park-and-ride lots and feeder routes for access to express bus service to downtown.

2) Bus Priority Alternative

Buses using major eastside streets would be equipped with special devices which emit signals to keep traffic lights green for bus traffic. Computers would quickly turn red signals on side streets to green to prevent traffic from backing up. Express bus service would be expanded and realigned to take advantage of resulting faster travel time.

A separate project planned by the City of Columbus would put traffic signals on I-70 ramps to limit entries based on the amount of traffic already on the freeway. During peak hours, express buses would be allowed to bypass waiting ramp traffic and enter the freeway.

3) Improvements to the Existing System

This alternative is the least costly. Basically, it focuses on improving and building on the existing transit system through the COTA improvements listed in the Transportation Improvement Program. These improvements include route additions and bus fleet expansion.

THE STUDY OF ALTERNATIVES: NORTH CORRIDOR

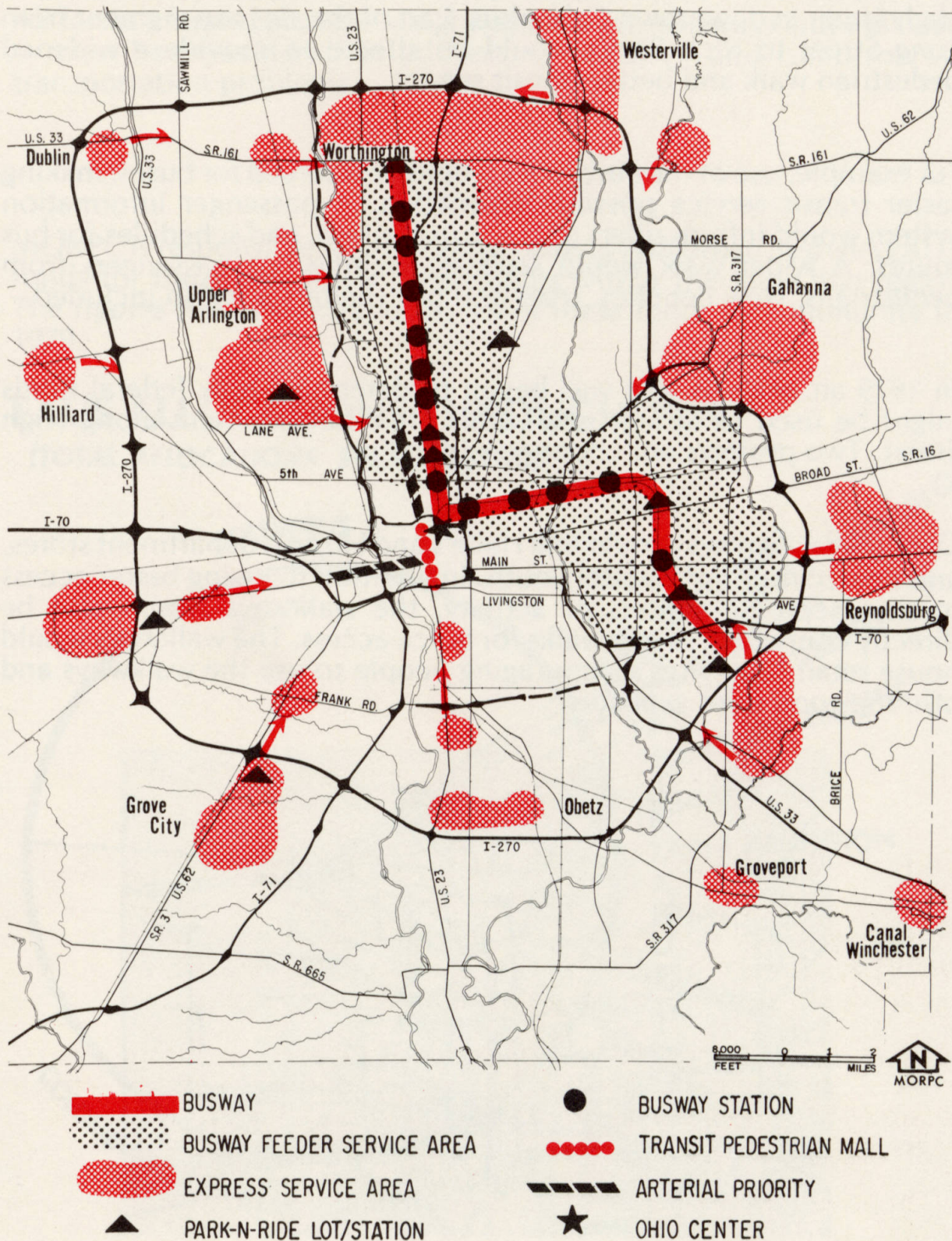
The North Corridor Alternatives Analysis will investigate transit options for the area located approximately between Alum Creek and the Olentangy River. The same range of alternatives identified for the east corridor will be analyzed, along with a passenger rail option.

Early analysis locates the busway or rail alternative along the Conrail track running parallel to I-71 north. Bus priority methods appear feasible for High, Third and Fourth Streets and Cleveland and Indianola Avenues.

Alternatives for the north corridor will be studied in greater detail in coming months.

A major part of selecting an alternative is determining what impact on the environment that choice will have, and how much that alternative will cost. During 1979, the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the East Corridor Alternatives was postponed until final decisions on the I-670 freeway can be resolved. Three miles of the proposed busway would be built as part of I-670, reducing the cost and making it the preferred alternative. If I-670 is not constructed, the busway would have to be coordinated with the improvements replacing I-670.

MID-RANGE TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT



REGIONAL CENTER STUDY

The purpose of the Regional Center Study is to identify and evaluate transportation improvements for moving people into and around downtown Columbus. This includes everything from freeway ramps to transit shuttle buses, and is possible with the cooperation of many agents, including City of Columbus departments, MORPC, COTA and local business leaders.

In 1979, the major project under review involved a six-block section of High Street in downtown Columbus. Part of the six-lane segment from Long Street to Rich Street would be altered to provide a widened pedestrian walk and better transit service.

For example, use of the curb lanes would be reserved for buses, making faster transit service possible downtown. A passenger information system would inform riders of bus arrival times, and schedules for bus routes. A wider walk would separate waiting bus passengers from pedestrians. New benches, trees and bus shelters are also included.

In 1979 an analysis also was begun to determine how federal funds might be used to attract retail and office development along High Street. Two projects are under consideration.

Overhead walkways would link Halle's and Lazarus department stores, and new portions of Capitol South. In addition to giving better access to now separate centers of activity, the walkways would also be directly connected to sidewalks for quick access. The walkways would house retail sales sites, encouraging people to use the walkways and offering good sales exposure.



These activities in the downtown Columbus area must be coordinated with other proposed developments. The congenial cooperation of many agents—the City of Columbus, COTA, Franklin County, private business—and Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission will result in a unique, productive environment.

Transportation planning in the mid-Ohio region is an ongoing process, involving close cooperation between MORPC, local government officials, state and federal agencies and private citizens.

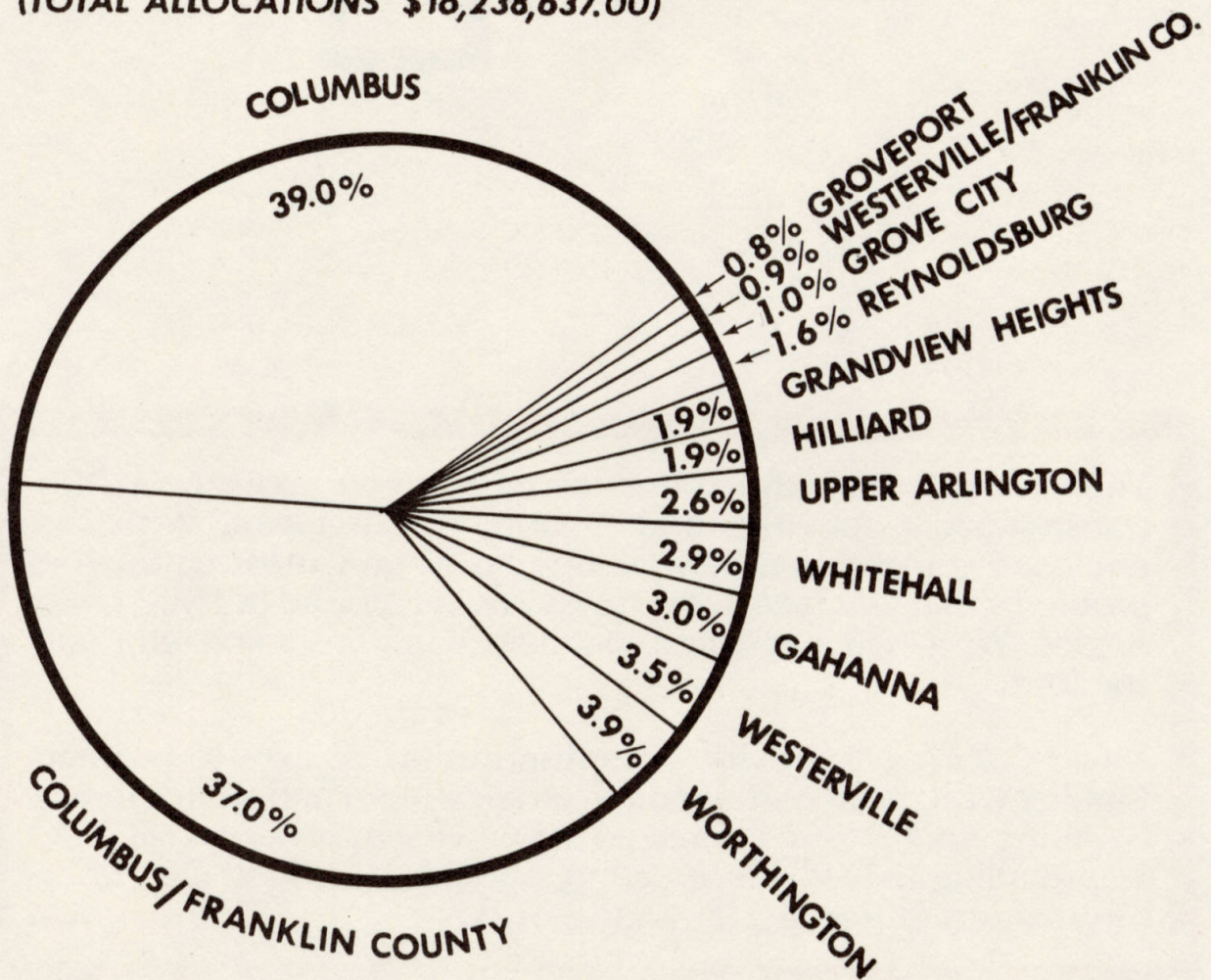
All forms of transportation—highways, transit, bikeways and walkways—must be considered in addressing today's—and tomorrow's—transportation problems.

FUNDING

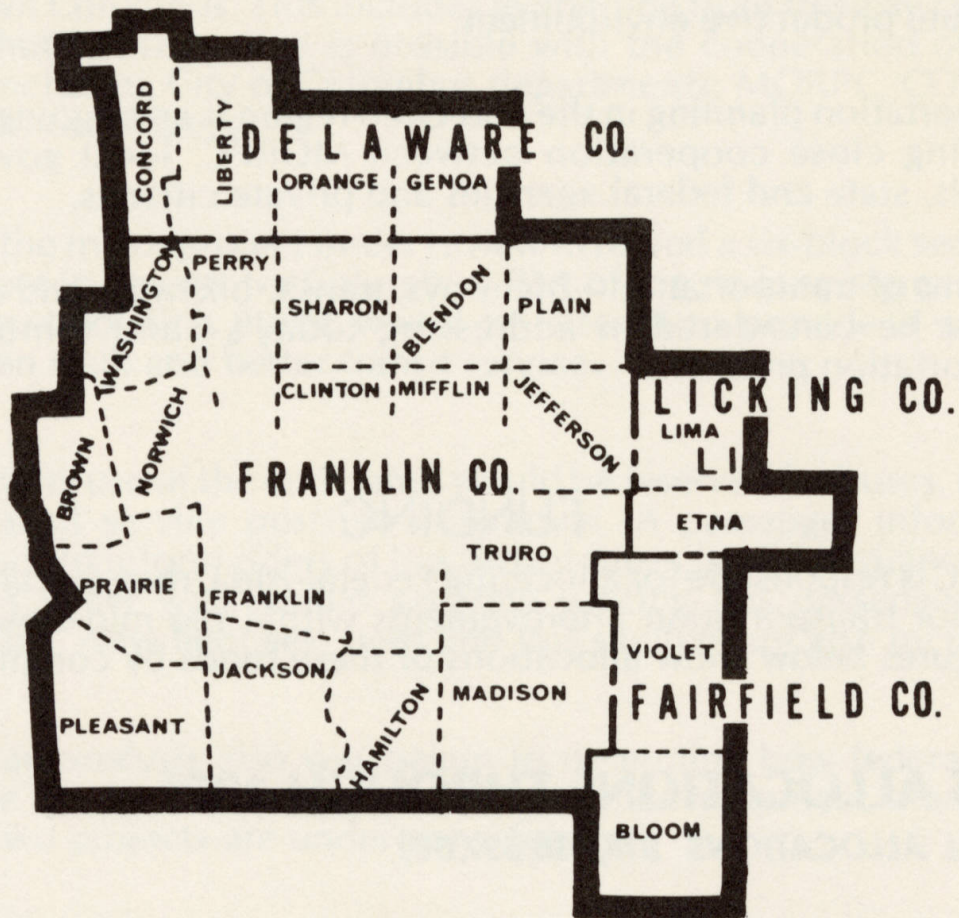
MORPC is responsible for allocating Federal-Aid Urban System (FAUS) funds for transportation improvements within the mid-Ohio region. The figures below show allocations of these funds by community for 1979.

FAUS ALLOCATIONS THROUGH 1979

(TOTAL ALLOCATIONS \$16,238,637.00)



MORPC'S TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AREA



This report is our latest effort to inform you about MORPC's transportation activities and to obtain your views. With the enclosed questionnaire, we hope to obtain information on problems that you face in day-to-day travel around the Mid-Ohio Region. We would appreciate your help in filling out and returning the form.

MORPC strives to provide opportunities for citizens to become familiar with our activities and to provide input and advice to our planning work. Those interested in knowing more about MORPC or providing us with information, should call MORPC's Public Information Office at 228-2663.

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*Secretary From April, 1979

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