

Transportation Biennial Report 2002



MORPC



OH
338.409771
M629t
2002

MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Newer Planning Methods Maximize Transportation Resources



Increases in travel and congestion continue to outpace growth in central Ohio's population, employment and housing. This trend brings unpleasant and unintended consequences for the region's traveling public. For example, the Texas Transportation Institute's 2001

Urban Mobility Study estimated that between 1990 and 1999, the annual cost of congestion for Columbus area commuters soared from \$175 million to \$515 million. At the same time, the investment needed in the region's transportation system to manage the growth in congestion and delays fell short by \$1.5 billion. Looking at the current situation and future projections, transportation planners and policymakers must address the issue that there will never be enough resources to meet the region's transportation improvement needs.

Transportation planning in the 21st century needs to focus on improving traffic operations by maximizing limited resources through integrated systems operations, strategic planning and employing the latest technology. In the last two years the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) has concentrated on improving the transportation system through interagency coordination. For example, at the request

of the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, MORPC hosted one of four national dialogue sessions on transportation operations. Coordinating this effort demonstrates how MORPC is taking a lead in bringing stakeholders together to develop strategies and proposed actions to enhance the transportation system. Other successful endeavors are highlighted in this report, which demonstrate MORPC using innovative and collaborative techniques, while sensibly managing our limited resources.

As we look ahead, the reauthorization of TEA-21 is on the horizon. The latest version of this landmark transportation legislation will certainly include a new sense of awareness about the safety and security of the traveling public due to the events of September 11, 2001. MORPC is poised and ready to embrace this new challenge and integrate it into its transportation priorities.

I would like to thank the MORPC transportation staff and the communities who participate in our committees, task forces and forums. As you are reading through this Biennial Report, please be aware that both of these groups are essential to the quality planning and programs that we carry out at MORPC.

Mohamed Ismail
Director of Transportation

2002 Biennial Report

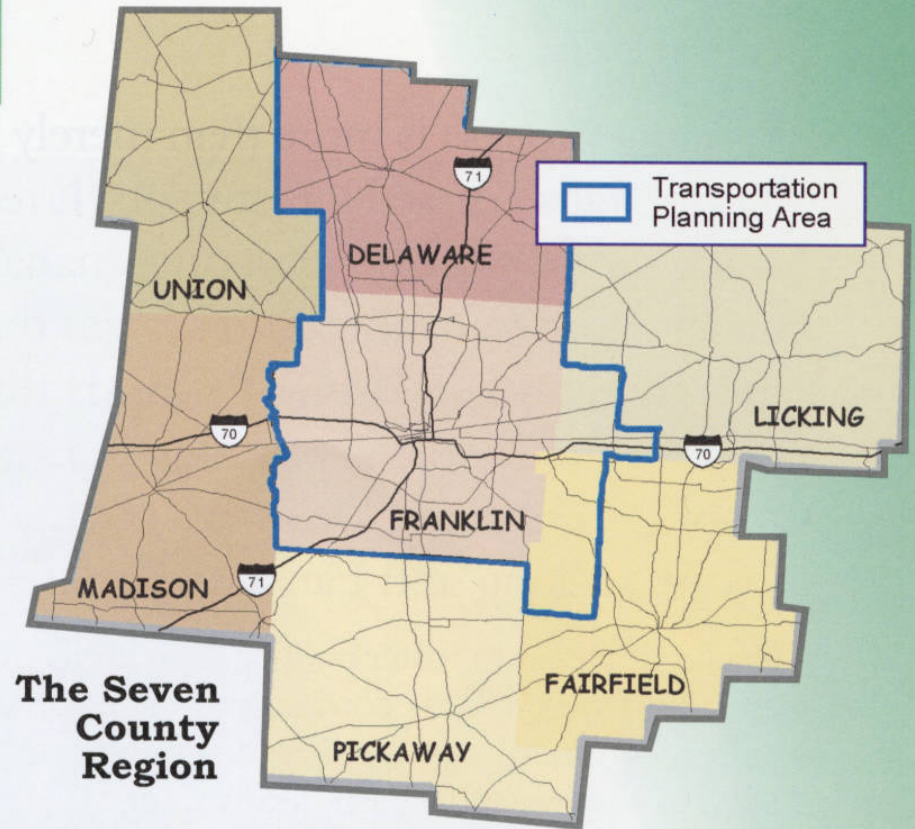


Central Ohio: A Growing Region

Central Ohio is one of the nation's fastest growing metropolitan areas. Between 1990 and 2000 the national census figures showed the seven county region capturing one third of Ohio's population growth. Franklin County's population grew by over 100,000 people and Delaware County was the fastest growing county in the state. Today, the seven county region is home to 1.6 million people.

One measure of growth is employment. Nearly one out of every four new jobs added to the Ohio economy during the 1990's occurred in central Ohio, resulting in over 200,000 new jobs. The outlook for the year 2025 includes slightly slower growth, but more congestion: the addition of 500,000 people and 375,000 jobs. MORPC projects that most of this growth is expected to take place at the fringe of the region's urban core.

Central Ohio has also experienced increased rates of auto ownership, more women and teens in the work force, and commuters traveling longer distances between work and home. All of these trends translate into more congestion on our roads, impacting the environment, economy and our quality of life.



**The Seven
County
Region**

500,000
375,000

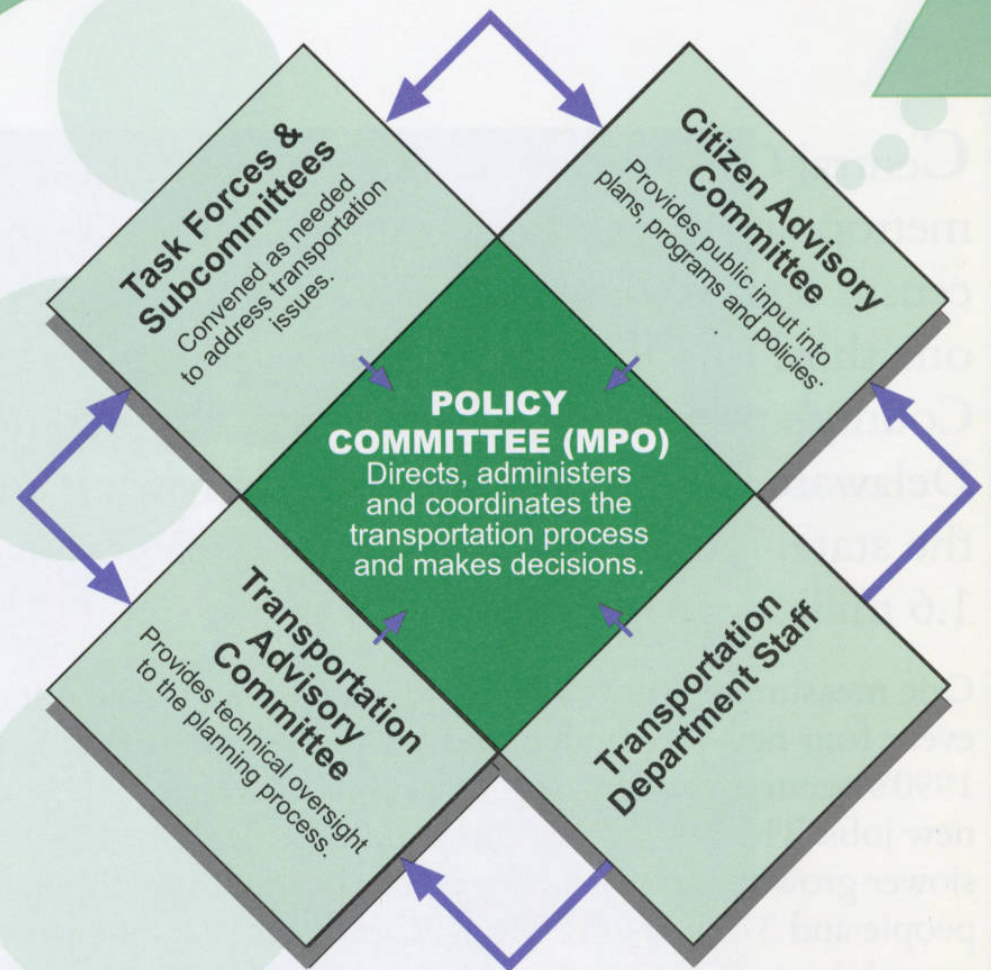
Additional People in the Region by 2025
Additional Jobs by 2025

The traditional approach to battling congestion – building more roads – is not always the answer. MORPC planners are being challenged to be creative and innovative in improving operations planning, identifying smart and acceptable choices for commuters and promoting a culture toward producing a well informed traveling public.

Transportation Planning Process

The planning process is more than merely listing highway and transit capital investments. It requires developing strategies for operating, managing and financing the transportation system through a collaborative process. MORPC leads this process as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for Franklin and Delaware counties, and portions of Licking and Fairfield counties.

The process is designed to foster participation by all interested parties including the business community, environmental organizations, community groups, general public and special groups such as the transportation disadvantaged. MORPC's planning process is organized with involvement from task forces created on an as-needed basis and the following on-going committees: Policy, Citizen Advisory and Transportation Advisory. The Policy Committee's purpose is to direct, administer and coordinate the transportation process in mid-Ohio. The Transportation Advisory Committee gives technical oversight to the planning process and to the Policy Committee. Members of the Citizen Advisory Committee provide the public an opportunity to participate in, review and comment on the planning process.



MORPC also provides general technical support to all of its members in response to various transportation issues. This support includes helping local communities prepare for major land use and long range transportation planning objectives and other related assistance.

In addition to being participants in the planning process, the state and federal agencies monitor the conduct and activities

Transportation Planning Process



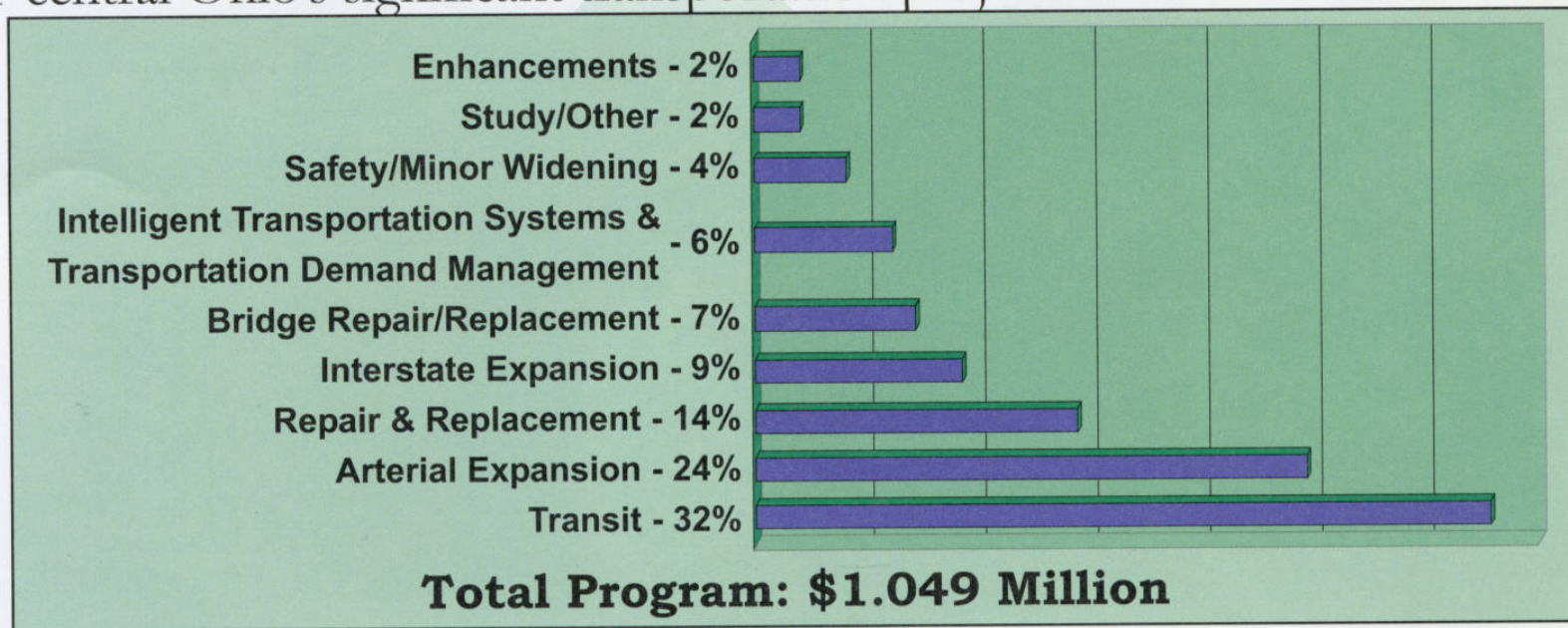
of MORPC to ensure it is meeting the requirements of federal and state law and regulation. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), as a major stakeholder and partner of MORPC, continues to seek and provide assistance in meeting statewide growth and economic development objectives. Each year MORPC and ODOT must certify to the federal agencies that the planning process is in compliance,

and every three years MORPC is audited by U.S. DOT to further ensure this compliance. The most recent audit was performed in 2000 with full compliance.

Establishing Regional Priorities

As the region's metropolitan planning organization, MORPC is charged with maintaining the area's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a comprehensive listing of central Ohio's significant transportation projects. The TIP includes all federal, state and locally funded transportation projects such as transit, highway and bikeways.

The TIP is adopted biennially and covers a four-year period. The current TIP covers fiscal years 2002 to 2005 and contains over \$1 billion worth of projects and activities.

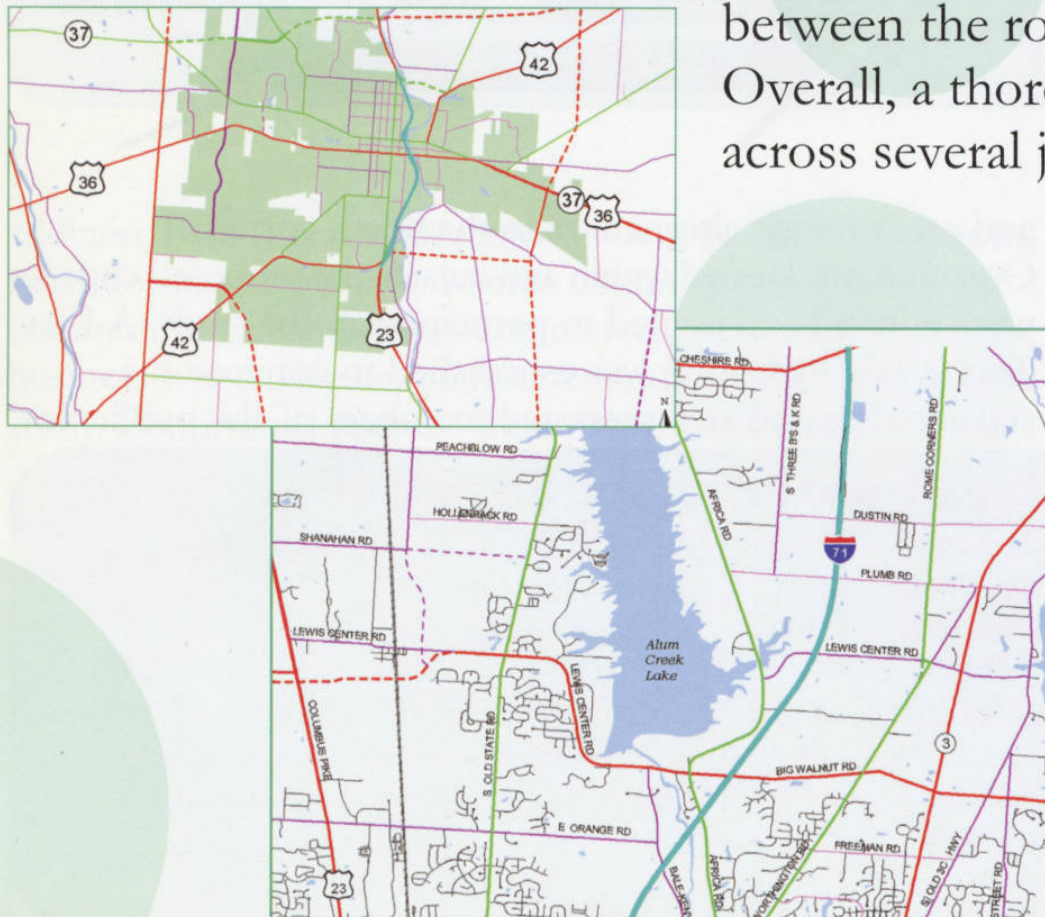


In preparing the TIP, MORPC's main function is to be a facilitator in the establishment of regional priorities. This includes meeting on a regular basis with stakeholders in the region.

The TIP also contains a special category called Transportation Enhancement Funds. These funds are used primarily to leverage local funds for pedestrian and bikeway facility improvements for the purpose of enhancing accessibility, connectivity and mobility in the planning area.

Connecting Our Communities

The purpose of a thoroughfare plan is to serve as a tool for local officials in developing and maintaining an orderly and efficient roadway system. MORPC provides on-going assistance to its members with the development or revisions of their thoroughfare plans. These plans identify needs in a community, including locations of new roads, new connections and needed widenings. They also provide communities with a set of guidelines for managing growth and proper access between the roadway system and adjacent land development. Overall, a thoroughfare plan will promote continuity of travel across several jurisdictional boundaries.



MORPC worked in conjunction with Delaware City and Delaware County to develop joint thoroughfare plans for the city of Delaware and Delaware County. MORPC provided expertise in the area of traffic projection data, and helped identify new roadway alignments to accommodate future population and economic growth expected by the year 2020. MORPC also participated in a number of public meetings to gather input and comments from the public about the plans. These planning tools will allow the city and county governments to develop new road capacity, as well as protect and enhance capacity on existing roadways.

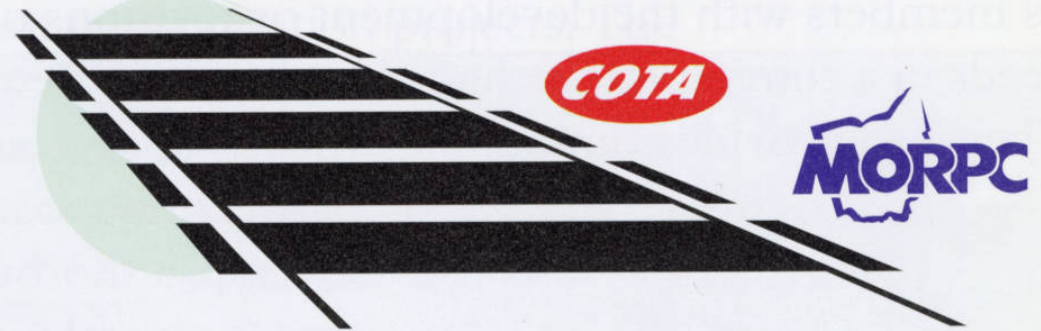
Transit Initiatives: North Corridor Rail Project

Over the past several years, MORPC and COTA embarked on many initiatives for central Ohio that provide a framework for the region's transportation options. These were designed to greatly improve mobility throughout the Columbus area.

In 2001, MORPC and the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) completed critical updates to the 1995 Major Investment Study to assess the feasibility of initiating rail service in central Ohio. The proposed 13-mile rail corridor extends from downtown Columbus to the Polaris business and shopping area in southern Delaware County following a path along I-71. This is the first of eight corridors in the region. In addition, the study update recommended the use of electrified Light Rail Transit technology.

The study was given a memorable name, called "Fast Trax," to communicate to the public that this was an updated look at rail

Fast Trax



and other transit alternatives in the north corridor. Organizations located within and outside the proposed corridor were notified and invited to participate in the study. A Fast Trax Advisory Group was established to convene the stakeholders and any interested members of the public. In

Light Rail Project Proposal

- Length of Rail Line:** 13 miles (Lazelle Road to Mound Street)
- Number of Vehicles:** 18 Light Rail Vehicles
- Number of Stations:** 14 Rail Stations
- Stations with Park and Ride Facilities:** Lazelle; Crosswoods; SR 161; Morse Road; E. North Broadway and Hudson
- Service Frequency:** Peak – 5 minutes; Off peak – 10 minutes
- Total Project Cost:** \$435 million

Transit Initiatives: North Corridor Rail Project

Goals and Objectives

- Improve mobility and access in the North Corridor
- Reduce negative environmental impacts
- Support access to employment in the North Corridor
- Optimize long-term, cost-effective public infrastructure and services
- Enhance economic and neighborhood development

In addition, Fast Trax was presented to over 40 civic associations, neighborhood associations, area commissions, local communities, chambers of commerce, public school system, businesses and advisory committees during the course of the study. Continuous updates were presented to these organizations as progress developed on various phases of the study. In less than one year, nearly 250 presentations were made about Fast Trax.

In June 2001, COTA and MORPC boards adopted the Light Rail Transit and expanded bus service as the preferred option. The Federal Transit Administration gave the project a “Recommended” rating in January 2002.



Transit Initiatives: Regional Rail Study

Strategically located within 500 miles, or a one-day truck trip, of over half of the U.S. population, Columbus, Ohio sits at a freight distribution nexus. This advantageous location is spurring new opportunities for MORPC's freight program and the region.

In 2001, MORPC completed a landmark freight study for the region – The Central Ohio Regional Rail Study. The study provided a regional rail analysis that identified specific freight rail opportunities in central Ohio, which may provide greater opportunities to enhance transportation to and within the region. Other participants in this study included ODOT, the Ohio Rail Development Commission, the Department of Development, COTA and the city of Columbus. The study uncovered opportunities to increase the efficiency of freight operations, reduce grade crossing accidents and blocked crossings and enhance opportunities for rail passenger service within the region. It's also intended to encourage economic development in central Ohio and reduce vehicular traffic congestion. COTA is currently pursuing Phase II of the study, based on MORPC's study recommendations.



MOVING CENTRAL OHIO FORWARD

MORPC Transportation Services for Government, Business, and the Public

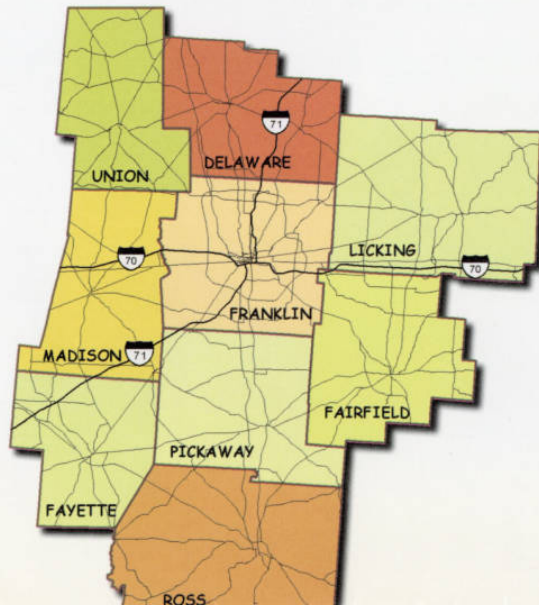
(614) 228-2663 • tservices@morpc.org

Aerial Photography: *Jason Kaper*
Traffic Volumes: *Cheri Mansperger*
Land Use & Demographic Forecasts: *Dina Lopez*
Census Data: *Nancy Reger*
Transportation Resource Locator: *Tony Hull*
RideSolutions: *Bonnie Love*
Central Ohio Ozone Action Program

(614) 233-4111
(614) 233-4158
(614) 233-4164
(614) 233-4154
(614) 233-4112
(888)742-RIDE
(614) 233-4126

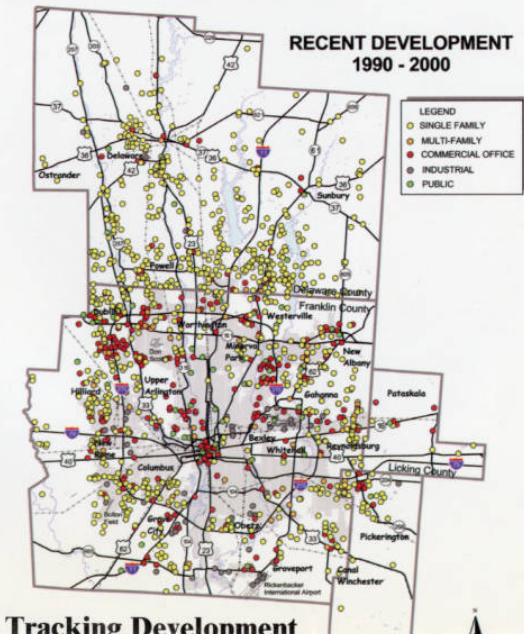
jkaper@morpc.org
cmansperger@morpc.org
dlopez@morpc.org
nreger@morpc.org
ahull@morpc.org
ridesolutions@morpc.org
ozone@morpc.org

You can now access demographic, traffic and other transportation data on MORPC's website - www.morpc.org



Aerial Photography

We have aerial photography from 1957 up through 2000. The aerials are paper copies and available for purchase. We are working with county auditor offices to compile a set of digital photographs for the region.



Tracking Development

Census

As data is released from the 2000 census MORPC is making this information available on its website. The census provides a rich data set that MORPC uses extensively in forecasting and general planning.



RideSolutions

Find a better way to work



MORPC's RideSolutions program provides carpooling and vanpooling services to central Ohio commuters and employers. RideSolutions' focus is to encourage people to share the ride to work and getting employees to their job sites in the most cost-effective and timely manner as possible.



Ozone pollution, a major component of smog, is a serious health concern and potential economic problem for central Ohio. The Central Ohio Ozone Action Program seeks to inform, educate and alert individuals, businesses and organizations of the actions they can take to reduce ground-level ozone pollution. From May through September, the program carefully monitors the ozone levels in the area. Visit www.morpc.org for the latest ozone forecast.



MORPC tracks development and stores the information in a GIS system. The system can display new residential lots or planned new development sites in a particular area of the region. This information is critical to preparing the long range land use forecasts.



Transportation Resource Locator

MORPC's Transportation Resource Locator allows nonprofit and government agencies to make better decisions for their clients by identifying the available transportation options in conjunction with community services quickly and easily.

Traffic Volumes

MORPC produces a book of traffic volumes on a two year cycle, with the most recent publication including traffic volumes through 2000. Volume counts are collected from state, county, city and private sources and stored in a GIS system.

Publications (614) 233-4157

MORPC issues a number of publications, special reports and studies each year on a variety of transportation issues, as well as maintains archives of past documents. Call or log on to www.morpc.org for more information on available publications.

Transit Initiatives: Transit Oriented Development

One of the major challenges facing central Ohio is maintaining a high quality of life as the population and traffic congestion keep growing. Focusing growth along existing and planned transit corridors and creating transit oriented development (TOD) can increase transit usage and offer a number of other benefits including reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality, and providing personal independence and mobility.

TOD is moderate to higher density development located within an easy walk of a major transit stop. These neighborhoods generally include a mix of residential, employment and shopping opportunities. TOD also encourages people to walk, bike or use transit to shop and to get to work.

MORPC will be conducting public presentations, workshops and group discussions about TOD to targeted audiences. Also, the TOD Regional Demonstration will include the development of feasible conceptual designs, with public input, that are transit-supportive. It is hoped that visual demonstration and better understanding of TOD patterns will create a greater emphasis on building neighborhoods that are ultimately more people-friendly across the region.



Transit Initiatives: Managing Mobility

Managing mobility means creating a one-stop resource to provide a means for residents and visitors to get around the region when driving is not an option. The Transportation Coordination Committee (TCC) of MORPC has been working to improve cooperative operations among transportation providers in Franklin County.

TCC is part of a larger effort to move toward mobility management in central Ohio through the leadership of COTA. TCC is identifying ways in which transportation providers can work together in the near term, while providing advice to COTA on the long term implementation of regional mobility management. Although still in its early stages in Columbus, over the next several years mobility management will see its evolution into an ever more sophisticated and valuable resource for everyone living, working and traveling in central Ohio.



RideSolutions

With traffic congestion at an all time high, ongoing road construction projects and the need to reduce air pollution levels in the region, commuting in central Ohio is more of a challenge than ever before. MORPC's RideSolutions program provides ridesharing alternatives to employees and employers that will help get commuters to their job sites in a cost-effective and timely manner.

In 2001, RideSolutions and COTA began working together to implement Commuter Choice, a federal program allowing a tax break for employees and the employers who assist them with bus or accredited vanpool transportation to and from work. Ohio chose to offer all state employees the option of taking the cost of their vanpool or bus pass pre-tax from their salaries. Over 900 state employees working in Franklin County have already registered with the program and are not only saving from \$7 to \$28 each month, but a bus pass or voucher for vanpool riders is mailed directly to the participant's home each month. The number of participants continues to grow as COTA and RideSolutions personnel partner in an outreach program to talk with other local employers and employees to help them understand the value of this benefit, not only in monetary savings, but also in the reduction of



pollution and congestion when single occupant vehicle drivers give up their cars to rideshare.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

MORPC's Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) program is putting words into action. Yesterday's plans are today being integrated into the region's transportation system. In fact, central Ohio commuters can experience ITS technology on I-71, where traffic flow is monitored electronically to detect slowdowns and freeway message signs provide travel information to motorists.

MORPC's ITS program functions with the commuter always in mind. It is MORPC's goal that a traveler in central Ohio will experience the benefits of ITS as a seamless service, whether using a freeway, arterial, public transportation or incident/emergency management service, and not be aware of the local jurisdiction or operating entity. This mission has evolved into the Central Ohio Regional Transportation and Emergency Management Center (CORTRAN). CORTRAN will serve as a multi-jurisdictional operations facility housing the region's key transportation, safety and emergency management resources.

Another milestone ITS project is the Columbus Metropolitan Freeway Management System (CMFMS) Detailed Project Plan. This study conducted an audit of the CMFMS as it was designed more than 10 years ago. Through value engineering and employing a new design philosophy, it was found that approximately \$40 million could be saved in the expansion of the region's freeway management system. ODOT is



currently redesigning the completion of the CMFMS based on the recommendations of this study.

Air Quality

Ozone pollution, a major component of smog, continues to be a serious health concern and potential economic problem for central Ohio. In 2000, MORPC launched the Central Ohio Ozone Action Program to inform, educate and alert individuals, businesses and organizations of the actions they can take to reduce ground-level ozone pollution. Beginning in 2001, daily forecasts of ozone levels were provided to the public and local news outlets. This new feature of the program greatly increased media coverage of the program and community awareness of high ozone days.

MORPC, the Columbus Health Department and the Ohio State University created Project CLEAR (**C**ommunity **L**eadership to **E**ffect **A**ir emission **R**eduction) as a grassroots initiative to involve the community in formulating strategies to reduce air emissions. The project will use the community's input to formulate recommendations that will be shared with policymakers.

At some point new more stringent federal ozone standards will be established and the growth of the region will necessitate the need to reduce ozone causing emissions from automobiles and other sources. Through the Ozone Action Program and the outcomes of Project CLEAR, MORPC is taking proactive steps to address the air quality issues for central Ohio.

How will I know when ozone pollution levels are Unhealthy?



The predicted ozone level for June 28, 2001 is Unhealthy for Sensitive People (101).

Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.

The Central Ohio Ozone Action program is a service of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (www.morpc.org)

The Ozone Meter is updated Monday thru Friday between 2 pm and 4:30pm.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel

For those who are unable to drive or simply choose not to, the bicycle and pedestrian transportation systems provide another avenue of travel. Biking and walking also directly benefit the environment through reduced vehicle emissions.

MORPC's vision to improve the bikeway and pedestrian travel is moving ahead through the Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP). TEP funding criteria were revisited and revised to reflect the region's commitment to the construction of new bicycle and pedestrian facilities. MORPC also conducted a pedestrian facilities survey of local communities in the region to determine if an inventory existed and if plans were in place to retrofit and/or construct new facilities.

MORPC helps raise awareness among the public about these important modes of transportation by participating as a local sponsor of Car Free Day. In April 2001, MORPC, COTA and local environmental and biking groups organized a car-free commute to work from Goodale Park to downtown Columbus. Approximately 100 pedestrians and bikers took part in the activity.



Local Communities' Response to the Need for More Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

- 62% have a policy in place for retrofitting pedestrian facilities
- 50% have an inventory of existing pedestrian facilities
- 54% have established design standards for pedestrian facilities in new development

Environmental Justice

The issue of environmental justice has increased MORPC's already extensive public outreach efforts. Executive Order 12898, declared in 1999, prohibits discriminatory practices in programs and activities receiving federal funds. In response to this important challenge, MORPC reviewed the impact of its projects on the minority, low-income and disabled populations. In addition, MORPC also looked at the level of involvement of these target populations in the regional transportation decision-making process.

MORPC found that there did not appear to be any disproportionate adverse impacts on the target populations and that all segments of the region's population were within a reasonable reach of places of work, health facilities, educational institutions and recreational areas. Receiving national recognition for tackling this tough issue, MORPC's work in this area is not complete. MORPC is committed to continue working on environmental justice and plans to use the 2000 Census update to identify additional quality of life indicators for further analysis. Furthermore, MORPC will continue reaching out to engage all of the public in the discussions of transportation improvements for the region.



Unanticipated Costs of Growth

MORPC has been engaged in a number of activities to gather information and help educate the region about the impacts that growth has on its region's infrastructure and the creative tools we can use to maintain central Ohio's high quality of life. MORPC prepared the study, *The Highway Costs of Growth*, for the city of Columbus, that looked at the amount of public money needed for building new roads and highways to keep up with current growth patterns. The study determined that the cost far exceeds available resources. Therefore, MORPC suggested several strategies, planning tools and policies that would assist the city and other local governments with this dilemma.

MORPC also participated in the Congestion Summit called by Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman in January 2001. The summit brought together public officials and stakeholders to address the issue of rising traffic congestion.

MORPC is currently engaged in a new project to develop a "growth toolkit" that will help local governments in northern Franklin County and southern Delaware County be ahead of the curve on providing and maintaining public services as growth strains their infrastructure.



Funding Issues

Transportation planning starts by taking a look at the existing transportation system's capacity to meet current needs and future projected travel demand. This helps to determine the overall improvements needed to serve the population over the foreseeable long-range future.

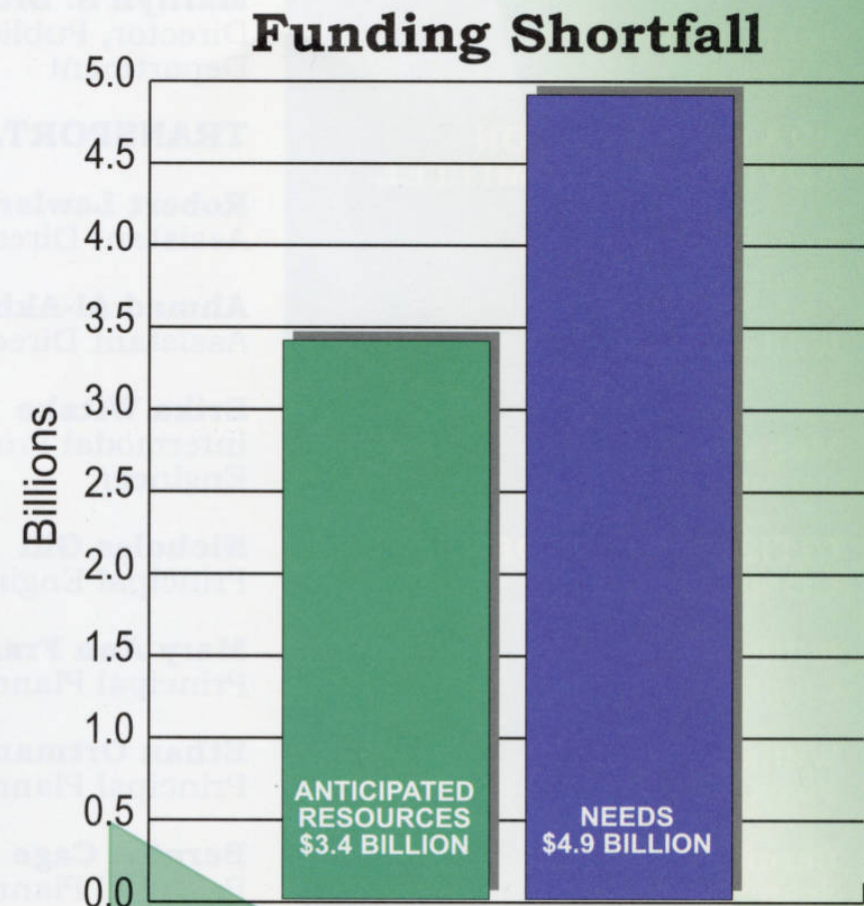
Over and above system preservation and operations, MORPC has identified the projected need to include a mix of specific highway, mass transit, bikeway and other projects with an estimated cost of \$4.8 billion. The projected transportation revenue stream allows meeting only a part of the need in the amount of \$3.3 billion, leaving a shortfall of \$1.5 billion. To make up for this, the region must embrace innovative techniques and explore new strategies for the future.

Innovative Solutions to Meet the Total Needs

- Find new, "innovative" sources of funding
- Change travel behavior through demand reduction: transit, ridesharing, vanpooling, ITS and creating transportation management associations
- Set priorities for the limited traditional funding
- Use Smart Growth Principles

\$1.5 Billion

Funding Shortfall



MORPC Officers/Staff

Officers

POLICY COMMITTEE

Michael R. Rankin
Chair

R. Thomas Homan
Vice Chair

John R. Doutt
Secretary

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dorothy Pritchard
Chair

William Lewis
Vice Chair

Mohamed Ismail
Secretary

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

William Inglis
Chair

William Allman
Vice Chair

Bernice Cage
Secretary

Staff

William C. Habig
Executive Director

Mohamed Ismail
Director, Transportation
Department

Marilyn S. Brown
Director, Public Affairs
Department

TRANSPORTATION

Robert Lawler
Assistant Director

Ahmad Al-Akhras
Assistant Director

Erika Witzke
Intermodal Programs
Engineer

Nicholas Gill
Principal Engineer

Mary Ann Frantz
Principal Planner

Ethan Ortman
Principal Planner

Bernice Cage
Principal Planner

Nancy Reger
Manager, Transportation
Data

Tony Hull
Associate Planner

Christopher Gawronski
Associate Planner

Rebekah Anderson
Associate Engineer

Letitia Nelson
Associate Engineer

Lubna Shoaib
Associate Engineer

Sonja Simpson
Senior Project Coordinator

Cheri Mansperger
Senior Planner

Carrie Love
Associate Planner

Jason Kaper
Assistant Planner

Dina Lopez
Associate Planner

Brenda Noe
Senior Administrative
Assistant

Yvette Williams
Program Assistant

RIDESOLUTIONS

Lynn Jones
Program Manager

Janet Berardi
Community Outreach
Coordinator

David Abel
Project Coordinator

Bonnie Love
Program Assistant

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Laura Koprowski
Senior Communications
Coordinator

Edward Wedig
Senior Graphic Designer