

NEEDS ANALYSIS

Regional Trends

When investigating the transportation needs of the Buckeye Hills region, several current and future trends were identified. These identified trends will have impacts on the overall transportation system in the region; and while those impacts and needs will be stated here, possible solutions and recommendations will be addressed in the Plan Recommendations section. Officials and residents of the region must continue to work together to identify actions to mitigate these impacts. Taking no action in the face of these trends could lead to serious consequences for the transportation network of the district.

POPULATION DECLINE AND AGING

The Buckeye Hills region is both decreasing in population and growing in age. As the rate of new residents to the region slows (both through births and in-migration), the impact of aging on existing residents increases. As it relates to transportation, the potential of fewer drivers on the road could signal a decrease in transportation funding generated through gasoline taxes and other applicable fees, while an aging population also could signify a greater need for transit services. Without expanding these services, general mobility could become problematic for seniors who are unable or unwilling to operate a motor vehicle or otherwise impaired.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

The outlook for job growth in the region over the next 25 years is generally positive, however the projected number of residents available in the local workforce to fill those new positions is not expected to increase. This could signify a rise in the net commuting into the region, as workers come to the Buckeye Hills region to work. If this proves true, a greater level of demand will be placed on the transportation system, specifically the highway network.

MULTI MODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

It is expected that the Buckeye Hills region will continue to rely heavily on motor vehicles as the primary means for both commercial and personal travel. There are also indications that additional transportation options and linkages between existing modes

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are needed in the district. As the population of the region changes over time, reliance on transit and other public transportation is likely to grow.

The region is also rich with outdoor recreational resources, which will likely lead to a continued growth in walking and cycling activities. These activities are projected to grow both for recreation and as a mode of transportation.

As the economy of the region continues to expand to support new opportunities, it is clear that maritime and rail infrastructure requires increased focus in order to capitalize on those opportunities.

The need for overall coordination and connectivity of transportation resources will grow in importance for local governments and public agencies in region during the next 25 years. This will be especially true as available resources for transportation become increasingly scarce and weaker in buying power.

SAFETY

Participants in the planning process have placed great emphasis on the fact that all transportation systems need to be safe in order to be efficient and effective. Cooperation and coordination between interested parties in the region can help reduce the number of deaths and injuries resulting from transportation related accidents. Increased input on the design and maintenance of transportation assets can help alleviate some safety concerns. It is also important to provide corresponding outreach and educational activities to encourage users to travel in a safe manner.

Areas of particular concern are the intersections of Seventh Street and Greene/Pike Street in Marietta; US 33 and East State Street in Athens; Fourth Street and Greene Street in Marietta; and City Street and SR 32/Maine Street in Belpre.

Crash concerns for the county and local roads (in segments) are: Two separate segments on Athens County Road 4; Seventh Street in Marietta; Athens County Road 512: and Athens County Road 503.

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PRESERVATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Federal and state transportation budgets have been slowly dwindling, and are projected to continue this trend in to the foreseeable future. Faced with this reality, participants in this planning process have firmly stated that it is imperative to preserve the condition of existing highways, bridges, transit systems, multi-use paths, rails, and airports. In 2013, ODOT sponsored a Transportation Opinion Survey for residents in the region. Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that maintaining the existing transportation system should be a top priority for local officials.

One existing funding program which provides resources for transportation improvements in the Buckeye Hills region is the Ohio Public Works Program (OPWC) Local Transportation Improvement Program (LTIP). This program provides funding for basic local transportation primarily road and bridge rehabilitation (e.g. paving, guard rail installation). Buckeye Hills has served as the local liaison for this program since inception in the late 1980s. While this program has provided significant benefit to the region, there remains a significant unmet need for basic transportation infrastructure repair and maintenance. The eight counties combined had unmet needs of nearly \$13.2 million in the last five years from the OPWC program alone. Approximately \$100 million or more is needed to address the preservation of the infrastructure within the Buckeye Hills region.

FUNDING

Potential funding for future transportation developments and improvements is becoming increasingly uncertain at both the state and federal level. The availability of funds and the method for raising those funds are unsteady at this point, and concentrated policy actions will be required to remedy these issues. Issues with gas tax collection at all levels is just one example of how federal issues are trickling down to have significant impacts on local transportation projects. If these issues remain unresolved, they may pose serious roadblocks to improving the transportation system in the Buckeye Hills region, and may hinder future economic growth in the area.

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TRENDS	CONCERN	OBJECTIVES
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Losing population - Population aging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase transit opportunities - Make signals and signs more easily readable - Combine and coordinate human services mobility options - Increase senior driver awareness
Employment and Job Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16 to 65 age cohort decline - More jobs in the region taken by non-residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase system reliability and affordability - Identify and provide transportation networks around economic development - Work with major regional employers to provide transportation options
Multi-Modal Transportation System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connection between modes is minimal - Lack of a public Ohio River port in the region - Lack of adequate networks to move goods to major freight hubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build public ports along the Ohio River throughout the region - Create freight networks to be able to move goods more efficiently - Make access and connections easier between the modes
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher percentage of the serious and fatal crashes as compared to Ohio - Human error majority of region's crashes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create more multi use paths - Develop driver awareness programs - Implement improvements to the transportation system that reduce fatalities and serious injuries
Preservation of Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PCR and Bridge ratings will decline near activity centers - Increased # of many individual on-demand transit trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the % of roadway miles from fair to good and bridges to a General Appraisal of 5 and above - Strengthen the coordination of human services transport trips
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a long term transportation program from the Federal Government - Gas tax no longer sufficient to construct or maintain transportation systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use monies wisely by investing in preservation and maintenance of current transportation systems - Collaborate with partners to advocate for a long term transportation program - Encourage more public/private project to meet transportation needs

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Regional Needs

Based on information and analysis summarized in the Existing Conditions and Future Conditions sections, the transportation needs identified for the Buckeye Hills region are identified below.

REGION-WIDE

- Actively engage local officials and residents in curating a list of desired transportation projects that will provided a high level of benefit to the transportation network of the region.
- Continue the pattern of actively engaging residents, officials, and interested parties in the transportation planning process to ensure that the unified voice of the region is heard by state and federal officials.
- Actively engage local officials and interested parties to gain insight on local development conditions including land use, employment, and housing.
- Continue to work with local agencies to collect locally verified transportation data that can augment existing state and federal resources.

ROADWAY NETWORK

- Interstate 77 is a crucial asset to the regional highway network, and a crucial link to the larger nationwide network. It is imperative that this asset remains in the highest state of repair in order to ensure its continued value to the regional economy. Ensure that highway facilities serving the cities of Marietta and Athens are also in the highest state of repair possible due to their importance as activity centers for the regional economy.
- Enhanced way-finding to accommodate the growing number of older drivers.
- Over 1500 bridges are over 50 years old will need to be closely examined and may need to be replaced in the next 25 years
- 47 bridges in the region are approaching or past their lifespan and are located in or near high Activity Density Centers

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BIKE/PEDESTRIAN

- Increase the connectivity between existing multi-use paths.
- Increase connections between transit services/facilities and multi-use paths/facilities.

TRANSIT

- Meigs and Noble counties lack a completed coordinated transit plan.
- The overall transit system is fragmented and lacks coordination.
- Residents have indicated an increased need for scheduled transit services.
- Residents have indicated a need for increased levels of coordination for on demand transit services.

MARITIME

- Additional trans-loading and public port facilities needed to increase maritime utilization.
- Locks and dams are deteriorating and cannot facilitate large freight movement.
- Barge traffic is significantly single use (predominately coal).

FREIGHT

- Additional attention is needed on the system of two lane highways component of the freight network, specifically those that serve areas where freight enters and exits.
- Further information and analysis regarding freight movement across the region is needed.

RAIL

- Rail facilities are not well integrated in to the overall transportation system in the region.
- Rail capacity in the region is not sufficient to capitalize on existing portfolio of business.

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SAFETY

- Additional driver education programs and opportunities are needed.
- Additional safety funding is needed in order to reduce crashed in the region.