

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

DECEMBER 2013

*This plan completed by the Buckeye Hills – Hocking Valley Regional
Development District as part of the RTPO Pilot Program funded by the Ohio
Department of Transportation.*

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This document produced by Buckeye Hills – Hocking Valley Regional Development District, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Transportation.

December 2013

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Introduction and Acknowledgements

The Buckeye Hills-Hocking Valley Regional Development District (BH-HVRDD) assists local communities, and works cooperatively to improve the quality of life for residents in the region. As a voluntary organization of local government political subdivisions, Buckeye Hills serves eight counties in southeastern Ohio (*Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington*), securing financial resources and translating ideas into action.

Buckeye Hills assists communities in identifying urgent needs while assisting in securing grant/ loan funds to improve infrastructure and the overall quality of life for local residents. The staff often acts as the 'adjunct staff' for communities of the District by providing technical assistance, grant writing, project administration, and other assistance services which may otherwise be lacking.

Since 1968, Buckeye Hills has secured over \$500 million in funding for education, health care, infrastructure, training, and social service programs in the region.

From reaching out to the region's aging in need of in-home assistance, providing communities with planning support, or serving as advocates at the state and national level, the professional staff at Buckeye Hills serves with dedication and compassion.

VISION STATEMENT

The effective utilization of public and private resources for an improved quality of life for our constituents.

MISSION STATEMENT

Buckeye Hills will improve the socioeconomic conditions of the region by promoting the interests and needs of our constituents to persons and agencies empowered to create positive change.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Program Background and Purpose

The most recent surface transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) was signed into law on July 2, 2012. Language from MAP-21 influenced the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to create the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) pilot program to expand transportation planning activities in the state. In order to facilitate the expanded transportation planning activities, ODOT has designated rural multi-county planning agencies as Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) to provide a mechanism for rural communities to participate in the transportation planning process.

The pilot program includes the following action items to be undertaken by Buckeye Hills:

- The formation of three transportation related advisory committees – Policy, Technical, and Citizens, to provide input throughout the planning process;
- The creation and adoption of a public participation plan;
- The creation and adoption of a comprehensive regional transportation plan inclusive of all modes of transportation;
- The moderation of a continuous and comprehensive public participation process, which will last the duration of the pilot program period.

In order to fulfill the role of liaison between local governments, constituents, interested parties, and our partners at the state and federal level, Buckeye Hills will utilize a decision making process that has proven to be successful in other regional endeavors in the past.

At the end of the two year pilot program, this Public Participation Plan will be reviewed and/or amended as needed. Updates may take place at any time to ensure compliance with surface transportation legislation that may supersede or replace the current bill.

This document will provide the structure by which local governments, local elected officials, businesses, organizations, private citizens, and any other interested parties from across the region can participate in the continuous comprehensive transportation planning process.

Buckeye Hills will abide by all applicable Federal and State regulations during the execution of this program. These regulations include, but are not limited to; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the American with Disabilities Act, the Federal Highway Administration – public involvement requirements, the Executive Order requiring Environmental Justice, and the Ohio Public Records Act (sunshine Law).

Note: Please refer to the Appendix for further information on legal and statutory requirements.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Public Involvement Process

Public participation is key to the success of the RTPO pilot program in Ohio and central to inclusive local government and strong decision making. Maintaining an open and flexible public participation process will promote collaboration between all parties and mitigate stakeholder alienation. This document and the activities described within will produce a lasting contribution to the well-being of our neighborhoods, cities, counties, and the region through collaborative goal setting, analysis, and policy decisions.

OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure that stakeholders are identified and given the opportunity to become part of Buckeye Hills' transportation planning process through a variety of methods.
2. Utilize available media outlets for wide circulation of public meeting notices, plan documents, and publication availability, to provide notice of public comment periods as well as any other timely information regarding the transportation planning process. These outlets will include but are not limited to; television, radio, newspapers, newsletters, and internet websites.
3. Provide transparency of all information gathered and developed during the transportation planning process.

Identify and Engage Stakeholders

Public involvement is an opportunity for the public to positively influence transportation decision making. Buckeye Hills will work with its committees, staff, board representatives, members, and other partners to ensure that the needs of all segments of the population are represented in this effort. Stakeholder interest in this process can be public, private, or professional, and representative of any transportation mode. In order to facilitate collaboration in implementing transportation improvements it is the responsibility of Buckeye Hills to provide government, industry, and citizens with the information needed to understand what the problems are, what improvements are necessary, what the effects will be, and when each element of the program will be ready for public use and/or input.

During the stakeholder identification process, it is important to identify low-income, minority, elderly, and disabled populations within the region. Ensuring that the planning process does not result in disproportionate negative impacts for these populations is called Environmental Justice. In order to accurately communicate the state and existence of Environmental Justice populations within the region, a series of GIS maps have been created utilizing current population and housing information from the U.S. Census Bureau. These maps illustrate the relative locations and the regional distributions of the following citizenry – minorities, seniors, impoverished individuals, and total factors in all groups. The table below illustrates some of the Environmental Justice statistics for the region.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: REGIONAL TOTALS AND PERCENTAGES

DESCRIPTION	INDIVIDUALS OVER 65	MINORITY INDIVIDUALS	INDIVIDUALS IN POVERTY
Regional Total	37,400	11,452	29,920
Pct. Of Population	14.39%	4.41%	11.51%

Source: 2011 ACS 5 Year Estimate (2007-2011)

Comparing these regional averages to the values found in Census Block Groups in the region found that 93, or 43.9%, of the region's 212 Block Groups are over the regional average for individuals over 65 years of age; 76, or 35.8%, are over the regional average for minority individuals; and 88, or 41.5%, are over the regional average for individuals in poverty. In total, 189 of the 212 total Block Groups in the region were above average in at least one factor, 106 were above average in at least two factors, and 26 were above average in all three factors. For reference, the population of the Buckeye Hills region during the time reflected for the data above was 260,054.

Any activities undertaken as part of, or resulting from the RTPO pilot program will take all available steps to minimize any disproportionate negative impacts to areas with identified Environmental Justice factors in the region.

For further information about Environmental Justice regulations, please visit the link below on the Federal Highway website;

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/ej_at_dot/order_56102a/index.cfm

Media Outlets for Wide Circulation of Information

Meeting notices, press releases, notices of plan documents and publications, and invitations to submit comments will be published in newspapers of circulation and other media outlets in the eight county region to provide information to the public. Information regarding media outlets in the Buckeye Hills region is found below.

COUNTY	RADIO	TELEVISION	NEWSPAPERS
Athens	WATH AM 970 WXTQ FM 105.5 WOUB FM 91.3 WOUC FM 89.1 WOUZ FM 90.1 WSEO FM 107.7 WJKW FM 96.9 WYWH FM 104.5 WEAK FM 106.7	WOUB TV Columbus WBNS Columbus WCMH Columbus WSYX Columbus WTTE	Athens Messenger Athens News OU Post
Hocking	WKNA FM 98.3 WLOH FM 99.3 WWTL FM 106.3	Columbus WBNS Columbus WCMH Columbus WSYX	Logan Daily News

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	WLGN AM 1510	Columbus WTTE	
Meigs	WNTO FM 93.1 WVRR FM 97.1	Parkersburg WTAP Huntington WOWK Huntington WSAZ Charleston WCHS Charleston WVAH	Daily Sentinel
Monroe	WBVN FM 93.5	Parkersburg WTAP Wheeling WTRF Steubenville WTOV	Monroe County Beacon
Morgan	WOUZ FM 90.1 WJAW FM 100.9	Parkersburg WTAP Zanesville WHIZ	Morgan County Herald
Noble	WWKC FM 104.9 WILE FM 97.7	Parkersburg WTAP Zanesville WHIZ	Journal & Noble County Leader
Perry	WWJM FM 105.9	Zanesville WHIZ Columbus WBNS Columbus WCMH Columbus WSYX Columbus WTTE	Perry Tribune
Washington	WVV FM 96.1 WCMO FM 98.5 WDMX FM 100.1 WHNK AM 1450 WLTP AM 910 WNUS FM 107.1 WMOA AM 1490 WVRB FM 102.1 WVVV FM 96.9 WRZZ FM 106.1 WXIL FM 95.0 WHBR FM 103.1 WGGE FM 99.0 WADC AM 1050 WVNT AM 1230 WMRT FM 88.3 WRRR FM 93.0	Parkersburg WTAP Huntington WOWK Huntington WSAZ Charleston WCHS Charleston WVAH	Marietta Times Marietta A.M. The Anchor

Information regarding the transportation program will also be disseminated using other forms of communication including public meetings, conference calls, webinars, one on one presentations, newsletters, flyers, agency websites, as well as social media outlets.

Program notices may also be posted at various community gathering places such as village offices, senior centers, and other community locations in order to ensure the widest possible level of communication.

Advocacy groups and other regional partners may be utilized to help engage their respective constituencies in RTPO planning processes.

Public meeting notices, and other notices seeking public comment will be published at least 15 days prior to the meeting date or end of the comment period. All notices will include at a minimum the date, time, and location of meetings; or dates, times, addresses, and other information where documents will be available

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

for review or comments. Following public meetings or other public notices, individuals will be given 45 days from the date of the notice being published to comment on documents or plans presented.

During all comment periods, physical copies of documents and plans will be made available for public review at libraries, county courthouses, ODOT district offices and Buckeye Hills' offices. Electronic copies will be available on the Buckeye Hills website at www.buckeyehills.org. Comments may be submitted on Buckeye Hills' website (www.buckeyehills.org), by electronic mail, or US mail. Written comments may also be delivered in person to the Buckeye Hills office. All comments should be addressed to the Transportation Planning Manager, P.O. Box 520, Reno, Ohio 45773.

Transparency of Information

All documents, plans, maps, tables, comments and other information gathered or created as part of this project are available for public review upon request. All requests for copies or duplication of materials must be provided in writing and must refer to information that is already in existence. Requests should be addressed to the Buckeye Hills Transportation Planning Manager. Buckeye Hills staff will require a reasonable amount of time (up to 10 business days) to respond to any request.

Public Meetings

All public meetings held as part of the RTPO pilot program will be free and open to the public. A sign-in sheet will be provided to allow participants leave their name and contact information in order to facilitate communication between themselves and Buckeye Hills staff. Attendees at public meetings will be given opportunities to provide comments directly, in writing, or through interactive methods such as the completion of surveys, viewing and editing of maps, and any other method deemed effective by Buckeye Hills staff. Handouts and other materials may be provided if necessary. If the meeting is formal or if time is limited, participants who wish to speak may be time limited as necessary to ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to comment on plans or documentation. Buckeye Hills will continue to encourage municipalities and state agencies to coordinate their outreach activities, when possible, with relevant Buckeye Hills meetings to consolidate and enhance public outreach opportunities.

RTPO COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

RTPO Committee Structure

In order to facilitate input during the transportation planning process, Buckeye Hills will convene and maintain three standing transportation related committees:

- Policy Committee
- Technical Advisory Committee
- Citizens Advisory Committee

These committees will provide input, advice, and oversight to Buckeye Hills' staff as the RTPO pilot program activities are carried out.

The Technical Advisory Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee will meet quarterly at a minimum. The Policy Committee will meet on the first Friday of each month, coinciding with the Buckeye Hills Executive Committee. Additional meetings of each committee can be held if circumstances require. Meetings are generally expected to last one to two hours.

A conceptual diagram illustrating the activities of the committees is shown below:



RTPO COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

POLICY COMMITTEE

The Policy Committee will consist of Buckeye Hills' existing Executive Committee. As established in the bylaws of Buckeye Hills, the Executive Committee consists of a total of 15 persons. The members are composed of 2/3 duly elected public officials and 1/3 private citizens who are neither elect public officials of, nor employees of, a general purpose unit of government. Each county shall appoint an elected public official and an alternate, with the mayors or their designated alternates of the districts' two largest cities, serving on the Executive Committee. At no time shall any county have more than two representatives on the Executive Committee. Members of the Executive Committee shall remain members of the Policy Committee for the duration of their term with Buckeye Hills. Removal or resignation from the Executive Committee constitutes simultaneous removal from the RTPO Policy Committee.

This committee, upon recommendations from the Technical Advisory and the Citizens Advisory committees, can take action on items related to transportation policy or transportation activities being undertaken by Buckeye Hills as part of the RTPO program. The Policy Committee will be responsible for the final review and adoption of all RTPO planning documents. A permanent standing agenda item has been added to the Executive Committee agenda for RTPO related business. The Buckeye Hills Executive Committee meets the first Friday of every month at the Buckeye Hills offices in Marietta, Ohio. All meetings advertised within the region are free and open to the public.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Technical Advisory Committee is formed to provide specific technical input on topics such as design standards, best practices, materials input, construction or engineering techniques, and other detail related information that will be of use to Buckeye Hills staff as they complete the comprehensive transportation plan for the region. Members of this committee will generally be individuals with relevant experience that is technical in nature who can serve as subject matter experts in any mode of transport.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be initially comprised of members of the Ohio Public Works Commission District 18 Executive Committee. Additional stakeholders will be appointed to ensure all modes of transportation are represented. All recommendations made by members of the Technical Advisory Committee will be presented to the Policy Committee and relevant Buckeye Hills' staff.

Members of the Technical Advisory Committee are asked to serve a two year term of service. There is no limit on how long a member may serve as long as they remain active and in good standing with other members and Buckeye Hills staff. Members of this committee can be recommended by members of the Policy Committee, local elected officials, or Buckeye Hills' staff. Resignation from the committee will be accepted in writing 30 days prior to a meeting of the committee. This committee will meet quarterly, with regular communication taking place via email, web conference, telephone, and physical mail. Typical meetings are expected to last one to two hours. Additional meetings can be held to satisfy member issues or to address special issues that may arise during the program.

RTPO COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Membership Goals

Current members of the Ohio Public Works Commission District 18 Executive Committee (with the exception of Belmont and Muskingum counties) will initially serve as members of the Technical Advisory Committee. This committee is typically composed of county engineers, township, and village representatives from across the region.

Moving forward, the Technical Advisory Committee will be comprised of members with the following qualifications:

- One representative or designee from each county engineering department.
- At least one representative with relevant engineering, planning, or professional experience, with a goal of having all modes of transportation represented including highway, bicycle/ pedestrian, rail/freight, maritime, aviation, and transit.
- One representative from City (or Village) Safety Service, Planning, or Engineering.
- At least one currently serving Mayor or their designee.
- At least one County Commissioner or their designee.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Citizens Advisory Committee is formed to allow citizens who are interested in transportation planning activities an opportunity to provide input on the planning process. Members of this committee will represent contingents of the population in the region including neighborhood groups, clubs and enthusiast groups (such as hiking or mountain biking), special interest groups (such as wildlife, agricultural, and conservation groups), or any other engaged citizens who have transportation interests.

It is our goal to represent as many modes of transportation on this committee as possible, with a goal of having each county represented by at least one member. All recommendations made by members of the Citizens Advisory Committee will be presented to the Policy Committee and relevant Buckeye Hills' staff.

Members of the Citizens Advisory Committee will be asked to serve a two year term of service. No limit will be set on how long a member may serve as long as they remain active and in good standing with other members and Buckeye Hills staff. Resignation from the committee will be accepted in writing 30 days prior to a meeting of the committee. This committee will meet quarterly, with regular communication taking place via email, web conference, telephone, and physical mail. Typical meetings are expected to last one to two hours. Additional meetings can be held to satisfy member issues or to address special issues that may arise during the program.

Membership Goals

- One representative from transportation disadvantaged or environmental justice populations.
- At least one representative for non-highway modes of transportation including bicycle/ pedestrian, rail/freight, maritime, aviation, and transit.

RTPO COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

- At least one representative from an agricultural organization (i.e. National Farmers Organizations, Farm Bureau, Department of Agriculture, or other Forestry interests).
- At least one representative from business, commerce, real estate, economic development, or other planning organizations.
- At least one representative from a transportation provider organization.
- At least one representative from conservation groups, environmental advocacy organizations, outdoor recreation, watershed protection or other similar groups.

GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

Committee meetings will generally be held at the Buckeye Hills offices in Marietta, Ohio. If needed or desired meetings can be held at alternate locations to allow for additional participation or to facilitate special presentations to committee members. Meeting times will be dictated by the availability of members to attend and participate. All committee meeting dates, times, and locations will be posted on all agency websites and social media.