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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MORPC raises Awareness on Air Quality and the Impact on Health Air Quality Awareness Week April 27 – May 1

(Columbus-April 27) The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) encourages Central Ohioans to learn more about the impacts of air quality on their health as we mark the U.S. EPA's Air Quality Awareness Week, April 27 through May 1. Air Quality Awareness Week is designed to raise public awareness about respiratory health, active lifestyles, and transportation options. Poor air quality affects everyone; however, some individuals are particularly sensitive to air pollutants, including children and adults who are active outdoors, the elderly, and those with respiratory illnesses, such as asthma.

To mark Air Quality Awareness Week, MORPC now offers information in Spanish on the air quality hotline. The hotline informs the public in the event of an Air Quality Alert and can be accessed at (888) 666-1009. MORPC uses the national AQI scale to inform the public about daily ozone and particle pollution levels in Central Ohio. The AQI scale runs from 0 to 300 - the higher the AQI value, the greater the health concern. When levels reach above 100, air quality is considered to be Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups. MORPC issues an Air Quality Alert to the public when pollution levels reach 101 or higher. You can sign-up online to receive Air Quality Alert notifications delivered straight to your inbox at <http://airquality.morpc.org>.

"The good news is that the region has gone 439 days without experiencing an Air Quality Alert," said Evelyn Ebert, MORPC's Air Quality Program Coordinator. "While we are headed in the right direction, Central Ohio may soon be faced with stronger federal regulations consistent with recent health studies that show more improvements are required to adequately protect public health."

Improving our region's air quality will dramatically improve the lives of Central Ohioans living with respiratory illnesses. Air pollution can be a contributing factor to the development of respiratory illnesses like asthma, and increased levels of air pollution can aggravate these conditions. Nationwide Children's Hospital cites asthma as its most frequent admitting diagnosis. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 242,000 people in the Central Ohio region have been diagnosed with asthma. In Franklin County alone, 16.5 percent of children are living with asthma, which is slightly higher than the national rate of 14 percent.

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Working to Build a Better Region

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MORPC and the Ohio Air Quality Development Authority recommend that individuals and businesses take actions to continue the air quality improvement trend in Central Ohio. Take an air-friendly action for each day of Air Quality Awareness Week!

- Monday:** Be Air Aware this Summer!
Sign up to receive Air Quality Alerts by e-mail at <http://airquality.morpc.org>.
- Tuesday:** Travel by carpool, combine trips, ride COTA, bicycle or walk to your destinations.
For more information contact RideSolutions at (888) 742-RIDE.
- Wednesday:** Contact the Ohio Air Quality Development Authority for financing programs to assist large and small Ohio businesses in the purchase, construction and installation of new facilities and equipment that improve energy efficiency and conservation and help abate air pollution. More information is available at www.ohioairquality.org.
- Thursday:** Participate in No Drive-Thru Thursday. Turn off your engine and go inside to order food, coffee, or pick up prescriptions. Vehicle exhaust from unnecessary engine idling contributes to the formation of harmful ground-level ozone.
- Friday:** Take Five for Clean Air! Learn more actions you can take to improve air quality when you Take Five for Clean Air. More information is available at <http://airquality.morpc.org>.

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The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is a voluntary association of local governments and regional organizations which envisions and embraces innovative directions in economic prosperity, energy, the environment, housing, land use, and transportation. Our transformative programming, services and innovative public policy are designed to promote and support the vitality and growth in the region.