



## Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission Regional Policy Roundtable Meeting Minutes

Date: November 29, 2023  
Time: 1:30 p.m.  
Location: MORPC Room 101 (Board Room)

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### **Members Present in Person**

David Scheffler (Chair)  
Lourdes Barroso de Padilla (Vice Chair)  
Todd Bailey  
Bob Bitzenhofer  
Mike Schadek  
Steve Tugend  
Jason Warner

### **Commission Members Attending Remotely**

Stacey Boumis  
Camryn Reitz (for Columbus Partnership)  
Trenton Weaver

### **MORPC Staff Present in Person**

Todd Bradley  
Joseph Garrity  
Eileen Leuby  
Kyle Probert

### **Guests Present in Person**

Caitlan Flis, Assistant Policy Director, Office of Governor Mike DeWine

### **Guests Attending Remotely**

None

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### **Call to Order** - Mayor David Scheffler, Regional Policy Roundtable Chair

The meeting was called to order at 1:37 p.m.

### **Welcome and Introductions** – Mayor David Scheffler, Regional Policy Roundtable Chair

Each member present (including remotely) provided an introduction.

### **Special Update** – Caitlan Flis, Assistant Policy Director, Office of Governor Mike DeWine

Ms. Flis provided a special update on the activities of the Governor's office and her role. She highlighted that her main mission in the DeWine administration is federal funding, and Ohio is in the top 10 in the nation in the amount of funding secured. She also noted the administration is putting together a webinar to educate the public on the \$300 million in CHIPS Act funding coming available soon. She also works on transportation, tax, and lottery issues in the Governor's office.

Ms. Flis also mentioned the passenger rail applications from the Ohio Rail Development Commission, and the expectation of announcements in the coming weeks. Further, she highlighted the importance of housing policy to the Governor, specifically ensuring Ohio is welcoming, especially for immigrants and refugees. Lack of housing in these communities is a critical issue the Governor wants to emphasize.

Mr. Bailey asked whether Ohio was a logical candidate for upcoming CHIPS Act funding, and about the timing of the funding. Ms. Flis said conversations have occurred that having a formal consortium would be helpful in directing that money to the state. The Governor wants the public to be involved – Intel has taken a lead role with the consortium. JobsOhio and the Ohio Grants Alliance will be hosting a webinar in January.

Mr. Garrity highlighted Money Mondays and invited Ms. Flis to participate. He also noted MORPC is noticing a lot of smaller communities do not have bandwidth to compete or have an idea of what federal programs they can compete for. He asked whether that is something the governor's office is thinking about. He also noted that with the Senate Select Committee on Housing, MORPC advocated for a housing and growth planning grant. He asked if there is a way MORPC can help local governments with zoning.

Mr. Tugend noted that in the Governor's budget there was an allocation for that but it did not make it to the end of the budget process. He relayed that House Bill 315 will have language in it to accomplish this, and that the bill sponsor and the Governor expressed support.

Mr. Bailey asked about timing on potential funding for Amtrak.

**Legislative Update** – Joseph Garrity, MORPC Senior Director of Government Affairs and Community Relations; Steve Tugend, Kegler, Brown, Hill & Ritter

Mr. Garrity began his update in response to Mr. Bailey's question, saying FRA has made the decision, but it is not public yet and they will be announced before the end of the year. He added MORPC expects word as soon as the following week, that 3C&D and Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit, as well as Midwest Connect are in the mix, and that MORPC is optimistic about Central Ohio's chances.

Mr. Tugend added that Mayor Bibb had a good conversation with FRA.

Mr. Garrity further added that MORPC's team is working hard to brief members of congress, and that the Columbus Region Coalition also sent a letter to the congressional delegation.

Mr. Garrity then provided several updates:

- Central Ohio's Tech Hubs application was not awarded, but many partners are still going to be working together.
- MORPC recently hired our Economic Development Director, and now has an Economic Development District designation from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Central Ohio is the only major metro in Ohio to have this designation. It opens tools and resources from EDA for the future.
- The deadline to submit capital budget projects to the Columbus Partnership for consideration in their priority list was November 17<sup>th</sup>. MORPC can be helpful to advocate for projects on that list. State Representative Jeff LaRe will be on Money Mondays next week. The House's deadline is December 18<sup>th</sup> for OTSCIF and Capital Budget, April 18<sup>th</sup> on Senate side.
- The congressional staff visit has been rescheduled due to volatility in Speaker's race and potential government shutdowns. MORPC is looking at Q1 or Q2 2024 to reschedule. This is a unique opportunity for all Ohio congressional staff to visit the region.

Mr. Tugend continued the update:

- House Bill 315 includes language to fund zoning and housing technical assistance. An amendment will broaden the current version to include all political subdivisions (including MORPC), rather than just townships.
- HB 257 – which would authorize virtual meetings for some entities – was voted unanimously out of committee. It will be on the floor today and is expected to pass, but faces an uncertain future in

the Senate, as some Senate members conflate virtual meetings and COVID-19 emergency measures. Many guardrails were added to the bill, including an on-screen participation requirement, for example. As written, the bill would apply to regional planning commissions, but would not apply to elected bodies like city councils, county commissions, etc.

- The Senate Select Committee on Housing continues its hearings around the state. Marietta and Lima are next. There will be a hearing in Cleveland in January, and a wrap-up meeting in Columbus thereafter. MORPC wants to call for resources for local governments to alter their zoning codes.
- State issue 2 passed overwhelmingly, even in rural areas – results were fairly consistent across geographies, indicating a consensus. Gary Click’s bill would allow local governments to impose additional taxes. Talks are underway between House and Senate to move a bill quickly next week.
- House Bill 79 has picked up opposition from Americans for Prosperity, an influential conservative think-tank.
- House Bill 197 (establishes a community solar pilot program) not expected to move because of large amounts of federal funding coming.
- On Senate Bill 102 (public utility rate reform), Kegler is working on language to ensure that utilities can negotiate with providers of energy efficiency and weatherization services.

Vice Chair Barroso de Padilla asked about funding for law enforcement related to State Issue 2, and asked if that was based on other states’ data. Mr. Tugend replied that Rep. Cindy Abrams has indicated she has heard from law enforcement that they are concerned about the provisions in Issue 2.

Mr. Bailey asked if there would be changes to the law regarding prior drug convictions, expressing concern for workers whose records may prevent them from securing jobs. Mr. Tugend replied that there is discussion ongoing about criminal justice reform on that front more broadly. There is some legislation coming that may address that issue.

Mr. Schadek asked whether federal laws affect municipalities’ ability to dismiss former charges. Mr. Tugend responded that legislation passed at the end of last year gives prosecutors standing to get expungements for low-level misdemeanor drug offenses. The state cannot expunge federal records, but the federal government also does not strongly enforce.

Chair Scheffler asked whether MORPC had any interest in HB 296 (Increase certain contributions to the Police and Fire Pension Fund). Mr. Garrity responded that MORPC has not received any feedback from members directly.

Ms. Boumis asked whether any consideration was given to the Rickenbacker Area with respect to House Bill 340 (Authorize an employee mobility grant program). Mr. Tugend responded that the bill is confined to counties with population under 50,000, but the transportation budget did contain job-related transit funding.

### **Drive Investment Update – Dr. Todd Bradley, MORPC Regional Investment Officer**

Dr. Bradley provided an update on MORPC’s Drive Investment efforts, including:

- Money Mondays – be sure to tune in. State Representative Jeff LaRe is our guest along with Stacey Massey from the Office of Budget and Management.
- We have many grants we’re applying for at MORPC as either lead applicant or co-lead:
  - MORPC’s HUD PRO Housing Grant application was submitted on November 6<sup>th</sup>. Up to \$10 million is available per applicant with \$85 million total available nationwide.
  - MORPC’s Brownfields Assessment Grant application, which is for South Linden, Mount Vernon, and the West Broad Street corridor is being considered and a decision is expected in May 2024.

- An award date is expected next month for MORPC's EV Charger Reliability and Accessibility Accelerator Program grant application.

Vice Chair Barroso de Padilla asked for more details on the brownfields grant application. Dr. Bradley responded that the grant is for assessment and implementation. Mr. Garrity added that MORPC is specifically looking at brownfield sites along the LinkUS corridor. The PRO Housing grant is also related to that area.

**Defense Update** – Joe Garrity, MORPC Senior Director of Government Affairs and Community Relations; Steve Tugend, Kegler, Brown, Hill & Ritter

Mr. Garrity began the update by recapping MORPC's activity in defense community spaces. MORPC has been very intentional in recent years about enhancing Central Ohio's defense assets via the Central Ohio Defense Group. Two years ago, MORPC also joined the Association of Defense Communities, which focuses on how communities can enhance these assets. MORPC has also learned more about procurement agreements through our work and will be facilitating those with the 121<sup>st</sup> Refueling Wing at Rickenbacker. They will focus on procurement, training, and energy.

Mr. Tugend also highlighted the work of the 121<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing to retrofit the KC-135, which will be over 100 years old when retired.

**Other Business** – All Members

Mr. Warner relayed that the brownfield grant window opens next week, and runs through April 1. Greater Ohio Policy Center will be hosting a webinar on December 11<sup>th</sup> from 11:00-12:30. Registration is available on their website. Staff from the Ohio Department of Development will be on hand to answer questions and provide information.

Vice Chair Barroso de Padilla noted that two city council meetings remaining this year. A hearing was held today on zoning code changes, how Columbus does traffic studies, and putting more teeth on responsibilities for developers. Monday, Council continues the housing conversation – they are proposing a citywide CRA and are working on Open Streets to put safety of people first. The Short North Holiday Hop will take place this Saturday – portions of High Street will be shut down. Next year there will be 3 open-street events around the city.

Mr. Bailey shared that the Huntington Regional Impact Fund will work outside of Franklin County on affordable and workforce housing. Other banks are investing as well.

Mr. Bitzenhofer shared that on Monday, CMHA opened Harret's Hope Project for victims of human trafficking. Fourteen funding sources came together for the project. Residents will be moving in any day now. CMHA is attempting to close four other deals by the end of the year.

Chair Scheffler noted he has 32 days left in office. Entirely new leadership coming in Lancaster (Don McDaniel will be mayor) and a new service safety director is coming onboard as well.

Ms. Reitz shared the first Columbus Partnership capital budget committee meeting is December 4<sup>th</sup>. Anyone should feel free to submit projects and reach out with questions.

Ms. Boumis stated that how housing is funded in smaller communities should be discussed at a statewide level, and that zoning is the easiest impediment to fix and is one of the biggest.

Mr. Weaver shared that Gahanna is working on a total zoning code rewrite, and they hope to pass it in the first quarter of 2024. He also shared that Karen Angelou is retiring after 34 years of service.

Mr. Bailey moved to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting. Mr. Bitzenhofer seconded the motion. The minutes were adopted without objection.

**Thank You, Mayor Scheffler** – Joe Garrity, MORPC Senior Director of Government Affairs

Mr. Garrity provided remarks thanking Chair Scheffler for his service and offering congratulations on his retirement.

The committee adjourned at 3:00pm