



Executive Committee Meeting

BUCKEYE HILLS
regional
council



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

FEBRUARY 5, 2020

Buckeye Hills Regional Council

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order | President Ron Moore
- II. Consent Agenda | President Ron Moore
- III. Personnel Committee Report | Lenny Eliason, Chair
 - a. Resignations, Terminations, Retirement, New Hire, Promotions, Transfer Report for December 5, 2020 through February 5, 2021
- IV. Regional Transportation Planning Organization Update | Sam Wallace, Transportation Planning Manager
 - a. Ratification of Action of Executive Director to Contract with National Church Residencies for Vaccination Transportation Services
- V. Executive Director's Report | Misty Crosby
- VI. Round Table Discussion
- VII. Other Business
- VIII. Adjournment

NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 5, 2021



SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

CONSENT AGENDA	
ACTION: Minutes; Statement of Activities; Division & Director's Reports	PAGES: 4- 21
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT	
ACTION: Resignations, Terminations, Retirement, New Hire, Promotions, Transfer Report for December 5, 2020 through February 5, 2021	PAGE: 23
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION	
ACTION: Ratification of Action of Executive Director to Contract with National Church Residencies for Vaccination Transportation Services	PAGES: 28 - 29

CONSENT AGENDA

- **MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 8, 2021 MEETING**
- **STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**
 - **ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE YTD REPORT**
 - **ADMINISTRATIVE QUARTERLY REPORT**
 - **AGING & DISABILITY PROGRAM SERVICE REPORT**
- **DIVISION & DIRECTOR'S REPORTS**
 - **ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**
 - **AGING & DISABILITY DIVISION**
 - **COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR**
 - **DEVELOPMENT DIVISION**
 - **HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Minutes of the January 8, 2021
Buckeye Hills Regional Council Executive Committee
Meeting**

The Buckeye Hills Regional Council Executive Committee meeting was held by remote videoconference on January 8, 2021. Citizens were encouraged to attend the meeting via Facebook Live and submit comments by January 6, 2020. The agenda was posted to the organization website prior to the meeting.

In attendance were:

OFFICERS:	Ron Moore, President Lenny Eliason, Vice President Kevin Ritter, Treasurer	Morgan County (Private Sector) Athens County Washington County
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:	Steve Patterson Brian Howard Mick Schumacher Adam Shriver Brad Peoples Ben Carpenter Josh Schlicher	City of Athens Meigs County (Private Sector) Monroe County (Alternate) Morgan County Noble County Perry County City of Marietta
GENERAL POLICY COUNCIL:	Diane Burkhart Gary Goosman Misty Wells	Monroe County Village of Amesville Mayor Village of Caldwell Mayor
STAFF:	Misty Crosby Rick Hindman Denise Keyes Jenny Simmons Sam Wallace Jennifer Westfall Melissa Zoller	Executive Director Assistant Executive Director Fiscal Director Executive Assistant Transportation Planning Manager Aging & Disability Director Interim Development Director/ Development Specialist III
GUESTS:	Mark Cappone Tom Johnson	Voinovich Academy for Excellence in Public Service Village of Somerset

CALL TO ORDER

Ron Moore, President, called the meeting to order.

VOINOVICH SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Mark Cappone, Senior Executive in Residence, provided updates on the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs. He informed the committee that the school would be providing a nine-month Leadership Academy to the Buckeye Hills staff starting in January. The volunteers will meet once a month for three hours via Zoom but hope to have face-to-face classes later down the road.

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 4, 2020 MEETING

Steve Paterson moved to approve the Minutes of the December 4, 2020 meeting, which were sent to the committee to review prior to the meeting. Kevin Ritter seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

FISCAL DIVISION UPDATE

Lenny Eliason moved to approve the Statement of Activities, Administrative Expense Detail, Aging & Disability Program Service Report presented by Denise Keyes, Fiscal Director. Ben Carpenter seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

AGING DIVISION UPDATE

Steve Patterson moved approval to Ratify the Action of the Assistant Executive Director to execute a grant agreement for CARES Relief Funds for Local Response from the Ohio Department of Aging in the amount of \$69,000 and to authorize execution of all necessary documents to execute the scope of work. Lenny Eliason seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

Ben Carpenter moved approval to Ratify the Action of the Assistant Executive Director to execute an HVAC/Air Quality Improvement grant agreement to accept \$43,000 from the Ohio Department of Aging to assist seniors with maintenance, replacement and servicing of HVAC systems for individuals throughout the region and authorized execution of all necessary documents to execute the scope of work. Brian Howard seconded the motion. All yea. Motion carried.

Lenny Eliason moved to approve the Area Agency on Aging 8 Strategic Area Plan presented by Jennifer Westfall, Aging & Disability Director. Ben Carpenter seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

Westfall reported that Ohio Department of Aging (ODA) will be distributing more masks state-wide and will be counting on the AAA's to distribute to the counties. She asks members to let her know of areas within their counties that might need masks so she is sure to cover these areas with the new supply. She is unsure at this time when ODA will ship the masks to the AAA's.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Sam Wallace, Transportation Planning Manager, provided a 2020 LRTP update as well as a Work Plan update to the committee.

Wallace provided a Washington County Mobility Management update to the committee. He was pleased to announce that Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) approved the 2021 funding application with an A+ score. He also reported that the 2020 update of the Coordinated Transportation Plan was completed and submitted to ODOT. Finally, Buckeye Hills participated on the advisory/technical assistance committee to help develop the Meigs County Coordinated Transportation Plan, which ODOT approved on December 16, 2020.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Misty Crosby thanked Melissa Zoller for agreeing to step into an interim role to perform the Development Director duties until the position is filled.

Brian Howard moved approval to Ratify the Action of the Executive Director to apply for and accept a grant in the amount of \$5,000 from the Ohio Development Services Agency for the Morgan County Art Project and to authorize execution of necessary documents to execute the scope of work. Ron Moore seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion approved.

Lenny Eliason moved to approve the Resolution of Support for the Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA) Appalachian Assistance Fund Line Item. Steve Patterson seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

Crosby announced that she is working on drafting state and federal policy agendas to share with the Committee prior to the February meeting and will welcome their feedback and ranking of importance.

She announced that she will be reaching out to newly elected Commissioners and working with the members to seat any vacancies on the Executive Committee and General Policy Council. She also provided an update on the Development Director search and the NADO/DDAA 2021 Washington Conference.

Crosby reported that SB 310 was amended to include capital budget projects for FY 2021-FY 2022. The capital budget includes 39 projects in the Buckeye Hills region totaling more than \$28,886,327. By removing the universities and public facilities, the region received approximately \$2.8 million for community projects. She included the list of projects with her Director's report in the members meeting packet.

Crosby reported that the staff and partners are analyzing the recently passed COVID Relief package and will provide updates in the weeks ahead. The package did contain some increases in funding for programs utilized by the council and members. Also included is some funding for broadband. Unfortunately, the package did not provide direct aid to local governments, despite the advocating efforts by Buckeye Hills and many others.

The CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund was extended at the federal level and Ohio Governor DeWine quickly signed SB 310 into law on December 29, allowing the State Controlling Board to extend their deadlines. Members spoke about how the deadline wasn't extended in time and discussed the many of the questions they now have concerning the redistribution of CARES Act funding. It was decided that Buckeye Hills will draft a letter, jointly with the Mayors Partnership for Progress if possible, expressing these concerns from the region, send to the members for review, and once approved forward to the state.

RURAL DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY FUND UPDATE

Tom Reid, Reid Consulting Group, provided an update to the members on the recent Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) Phase I Auction and the potential impacts on broadband service in southeast Ohio.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Members participated in a round table discussion and provided their counties 2021 priorities, updates on projects and concerns they were facing in their counties.

OTHER BUSINESS

With no other business, Lenny Eliason moved to adjourn the meeting. Ron Moore seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

JULY 1, 2020 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2020

YEAR TO DATE ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE DETAIL

Administrative Expenses for Fiscal Year 2021 totaled \$2,632,10,08.54 at December 31. This total represents 51.66% of the Council's administrative budget utilized. Total spending for this time period is budgeted to be 50%. Some yearly expenses were paid in the first six months of the year resulting in higher than budgeted utilization of funds. We continue to monitor administrative spending closely due to current pandemic conditions.

AGING AND DISABILITY PROGRAMS SERVICES & FUNDING REPORT

The Aging and Disability Division worked with various service providers and helped administer a multitude of direct service programs to eligible residents of our eight-county region. Between July 1 and December 31, over \$6.7 million in direct service dollars were utilized to provide the units of service listed in the report. BHRC continues to support our provider network to evaluate the needs of the communities and serve area seniors in the best way possible during the current pandemic. Providers continue to utilize CARES Act funding to tailor service delivery.



Administrative Expense Detail
For the Period July 1, 2020 -December 31, 2020

	2020 YTD Actual	2021 YTD Actual	2021 Budget	% of Budget
Salary	\$ 1,413,814.80	\$ 1,495,234.93	\$ 2,912,471.60	51.34%
Fringe Benefits	\$ 557,186.86	\$ 679,297.91	\$ 1,308,679.34	51.91%
Advertising	\$ 74,581.02	\$ 46,805.90	\$ 60,250.00	77.69%
Audit Costs	\$ 13,470.00		\$ 25,000.00	0.00%
Building Maintenance	\$ 4,905.80	\$ 4,436.00	\$ 12,500.00	35.49%
Communications	\$ 38,729.13	\$ 32,999.62	\$ 64,538.00	51.13%
Conference Registration Fee	\$ 12,650.46	\$ 3,286.00	\$ 7,000.00	46.94%
Contract Services	\$ 107,482.11	\$ 43,602.00	\$ 108,416.00	40.22%
Employee/Governing Board	\$ 19,227.36	\$ 10,111.14	\$ 14,000.00	72.22%
Equipment Purchase/Maintenance	\$ 11,235.23	\$ 10,030.84	\$ 17,450.00	57.48%
Insurance	\$ 27,270.26	\$ 29,710.16	\$ 34,000.00	87.38%
Legal Costs	\$ 9,802.97	\$ 3,139.75	\$ 3,500.00	89.71%
Organizational Dues	\$ 16,849.75	\$ 12,694.42	\$ 38,544.00	32.93%
Other Costs	\$ 4,762.00	\$ 5,535.69	\$ 10,000.00	55.36%
Postage	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 9,911.55	\$ 14,000.00	70.80%
Printing Costs	\$ 3,286.79	\$ 7,541.50	\$ 9,000.00	83.79%
Software & Licenses	\$ 60,619.01	\$ 50,397.16	\$ 109,580.00	45.99%
Space	\$ 148,948.83	\$ 127,670.45	\$ 255,342.00	50.00%
Staff Training Fees	\$ 3,042.65	\$ 3,455.00	\$ 5,000.00	69.10%
Subscriptions	\$ 2,162.07	\$ 2,146.57	\$ 4,100.00	52.36%
Supplies	\$ 37,771.44	\$ 49,190.95	\$ 65,325.00	75.30%
Travel - Mileage Reimbursement	\$ 72,562.72	\$ 4,581.58	\$ 16,000.00	28.63%
Travel - Out of Town Expense	\$ 33,016.23	\$ 630.96	\$ 650.00	97.07%
TOTAL EXPENSES FOR THE PERIOD	\$ 2,676,377.49	\$ 2,632,410.08	\$ 5,095,345.94	51.66%
INDIRECT COST RATE FOR THE PERIOD	48%	40%		



Quarterly Budget Review
For the Period July 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

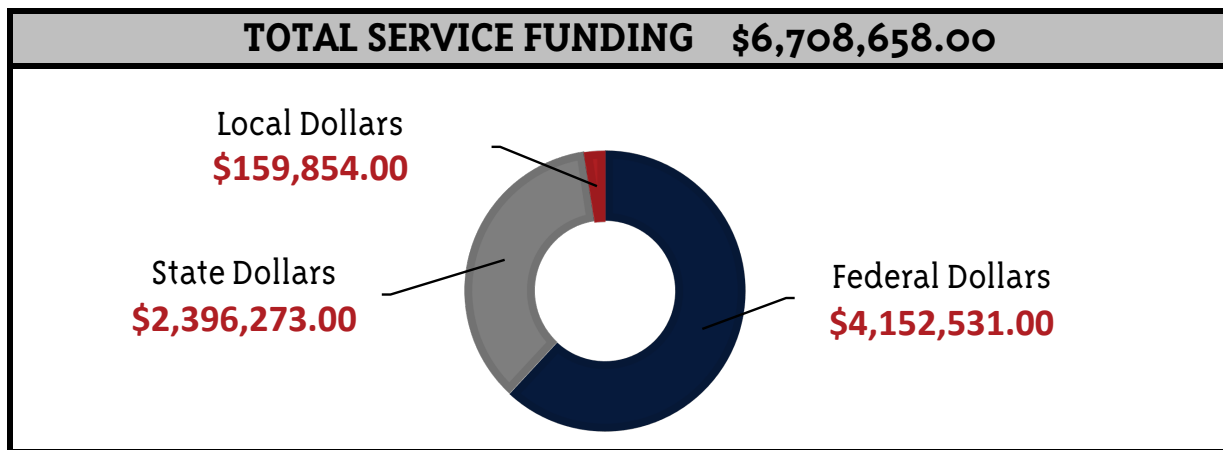
	Original Budget	07/20 - 09/20 Change	10/20 - 12/20 Change	01/21 - 03/21 Change	04/21 - 06/21 Change	Final Budget
Salary	\$ 3,908,179.60	\$ (995,708.00)				\$ 2,912,471.60
Fringe Benefits	\$ 1,546,156.34	\$ (237,477.00)				\$ 1,308,679.34
Advertising	\$ 57,949.00	\$ 2,301.00				\$ 60,250.00
Audit Costs	\$ 25,000.00	\$ -				\$ 25,000.00
Building Maintenance	\$ 12,500.00	\$ -				\$ 12,500.00
Communications	\$ 63,300.00	\$ 13,238.00	\$ (12,000.00)			\$ 64,538.00
Conference Registration Fee	\$ 20,300.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ (14,800.00)			\$ 7,000.00
Contract Services	\$ 73,350.00		\$ 35,066.00			\$ 108,416.00
Employee/Governing Board	\$ 9,000.00	\$ -	\$ 5,000.00			\$ 14,000.00
Equipment Purchase/Maintenance	\$ 105,950.00	\$ (88,500.00)				\$ 17,450.00
Insurance	\$ 30,000.00		\$ 4,000.00			\$ 34,000.00
Legal Costs	\$ 250.00	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 1,500.00			\$ 3,500.00
Organizational Dues	\$ 38,544.00	\$ -				\$ 38,544.00
Other Costs	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 12,416.00	\$ (12,416.00)			\$ 10,000.00
Postage	\$ 14,000.00					\$ 14,000.00
Printing Costs	\$ 6,000.00	\$ (1,000.00)	\$ 4,000.00			\$ 9,000.00
Software & Licenses	\$ 109,580.00					\$ 109,580.00
Space	\$ 255,342.00					\$ 255,342.00
Staff Training Fees	\$ 14,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ (10,000.00)			\$ 5,000.00
Subscriptions	\$ 4,100.00	\$ -				\$ 4,100.00
Supplies	\$ 5,325.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 20,000.00			\$ 65,325.00
Travel - Mileage Reimbursement	\$ 86,000.00	\$ (50,000.00)	\$ (20,000.00)			\$ 16,000.00
Travel - Out of Town Expense	\$ 40,000.00	\$ (39,000.00)	\$ (350.00)			\$ 650.00
TOTAL BUDGET	\$ 6,434,825.94	\$ (1,339,480.00)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,095,345.94

Buckeye Hills Regional Council

Aging and Disability Programs Services & Funding Report

July 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

SERVICES PROVIDED		
Direct Service Hours Provided	Transportation Trips	Adult Day Service Days Attended
238,180	4,201	247
Adult Day Service Miles Traveled	Meals Provided	Home Medical Equipment & Emergency Response Units
138	144,619	1,602
Legal Services Contacts	Home Accessibility Modification And Pest Control Jobs	Senior Farmers Market Coupons Redeemed
577	19	15,245
Grocery Shopping and Delivery	Telephone Reassurance	Evidence Based Classes
1,164	4,113	37
Assisted Living Days	Alzheimers Education Contacts	COVID 19 Wellness Kits
7,705	140	3,544



REGIONAL STATS		
Total Consumers Served	Total Population	Total Population Eligible for Services by Age (60+)
3,375	260,084	55,147

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- **Age Friendly/Athens** | I am continuing to work with Ohio University and several organizations throughout Athens County on this 5-year initiative that will help the city of Athens and the county as a whole to prepare, through planning and social and structural improvements, for rapid population aging. We have established nine committees around 9 domains of livability. We are in the process of conducting a Community Needs Assessment which will be followed by the development of an action and evaluation plan.

I am participating on the housing committee and on the core group. I am attempting to pull the committee members more closely into the workings of the Buckeye Fields project and introducing some tools such as land banks that could potentially be used in conjunction with the 4% tax credit program. The new stimulus program has opened more potential for use of the 4% tax credit program by establishing a floor for the program and adding value to attract investors.

- **Community Health Workers initiative** | We are implementing an initiative in partnership with Ohio University to utilize Community Health Workers (CHW) who are in the process of obtaining their certification to augment our aging programs in serving our elderly and persons with disabilities. This initiative is funded by Ohio University.

We have started with one CHW who is following up on initial contacts and referrals and assisting older persons in accessing resources and programs. In addition to ensuring a client is connected to community resources and that his/her needs are being met, the CHW is asking questions pertaining to social isolation and internet connectivity.

The CHW has met with 17 clients and has collected data on social isolation and internet access which will be beneficial to other initiatives the Agency is involved with. We have also learned of other initiatives around social isolation that are underway and are soon beginning.

- **BHSS, Inc./Buckeye Fields status** | The Buckeye Fields development team will be requesting a Housing Development Loan to assist in financing the project from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) at the February 2021 OHFA Board and Multifamily Committee meetings. The development team has had an offer from an investor that is currently under serious consideration.
- **COVID Office Protocols** | We continue to enforce prescribed operating procedures throughout the office building and property through restricting the number of employees in the office at any given time and ensuring a clean and sanitary environment. Workplace policies have been consistently updated in response to changes in CDC guidelines and to changes in the demands of our work in serving our communities and our most vulnerable residents. The 14-day length of quarantine remains in effect despite the CDC's decision to reduce its length.

- **Rural Action/True Pigments** | I am continuing to actively engage with members of the Rural Action team and members of the Ohio CDC Association and the Center for Non-profit Management on the Innovation Catalyst model program to assist a social enterprise called True Pigments to develop into a viable, for-profit business. True Pigments is currently a pilot venture that involves removing pollution (in the form of iron oxide) due to acid mine drainage from streams and converting it into a product for sale to be used in the manufacturing of pigments used in paints, fertilizer, and construction materials. The Innovation Catalyst program began on November 5, 2020 and will continue into October of 2021.

Currently, we are identifying local, regional, statewide and national markets for this product. We are also determining whether the product should be sold exclusively in its raw form, or whether we should also engage in processing the product for specific uses. Uses of the product extend to construction materials/manufacturing, art, dyes for fabrics, cosmetics, and fertilizer.

- **DDAA Substance Use Disorder/INSPIRE** | I continue to serve on the DDAA substance use disorder (SUD) project's core team and I am heading up one its two committees. The purpose of the initiative is to establish a recovery-to-work ecosystem serving Wood County, WV and Washington County, Ohio and surrounding counties. We have most recently added Athens County to our direct service area. Our initial emphasis is on developing a path for individuals in recovery from addiction to obtaining and maintaining gainful employment. We are engaging employers, expanding successful recovery-focused job training programs, and providing education and incentives through employer outreach programs. We are also targeting transportation as a major need in enabling persons to maintain employment.

The DDAA SUD team has submitted the application to ARC's Investments Supporting Partnerships in Recovery Ecosystems (INSPIRE) initiative for \$500,000. This initiative, which has a maximum of 3 years, involves an effort to further address the SUD crisis in Appalachia through assisting the movement of individuals from substance abuse treatment to recovery to employment; the focus is on support services that enable and support individual successful entry or reentry into the workforce, thereby creating an employment recovery ecosystem. INSPIRE falls right into line with what the DDAA SUD team has been engaged in for the last seven months.

The date that we are expecting notification of those successful in being awarded the \$500,000 INSPIRE funding has been delayed from January, 2021 to March, 2021.

We have also engaged the Chambers of Commerce for Athens, Wood (WV), and Washington Counties on the subject of engaging with their members on the topic of hiring persons in recovery.

CONTACT INFO: Rick Hindman, Assistant Executive Director | rhindman@buckeyehills.org | 740-376-1029

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CURRENT INITIATIVE

It has been released by the Governor's office that **Adult Day Service providers** are eligible to be vaccinated with medical staff in **Vaccine Phase 1a**. A notice will be released by the Ohio Department of Health notifying vaccination sites.

The State of Ohio has released a vaccine provider website in conjunction with the Ohio Coronavirus website. This site provides locations offering vaccines and, in some areas, provides information and links for scheduling vaccine appointments. The State has also released a centralized scheduling line available for some Ohio counties.

- <https://vaccine.coronavirus.ohio.gov/> (all 8 counties)
- 1-866-395-1588 Central Scheduling Line (Noble County only)

NEWS

Program & Service Update

Ageing front door staff are supporting all 8 counties throughout the region through the **COVID-19 vaccination process**. Governor DeWine identified the AAA network as the point of contact for vaccination information and support. If anyone needs assistance with resources they can call BHRC and our staff will provide information and support. BHRC is not responsible for administering any vaccinations.

- As of January 27th, staff have responded to 153 vaccination related calls
- ODA continues to have calls with the AAA Network to discuss the statewide vaccination process. We will keep the board informed of any changes.
- AAAs and local Mobility Managers are developing partnerships to address transportation needs to vaccination sites.
- At this time there is no plan for addressing homebound individuals. The state is working on developing a comprehensive plan and will share the plan once complete.

BHRC has partnered with **Ohio University** to provide clinical hours for the **Community Health Worker** program. BHRC has developed a program that allows the students/individuals to work with residents regionwide regarding follow up on community referrals and continuity of care. The program hopes to gather data on referral success, ongoing needs and social isolation. At this time, we have one student/individual in the program with plans to grow participation in the near future.

PASSPORT AND ASSISTED LIVING CASELOAD REGIONWIDE

The Case Managers continue to conduct visits telephonically at a minimum of every 90 days and are making face to face visits only if there is an immediate health and safety issue. We are currently case managing **869 individuals on the PASSPORT Waiver and 54 individuals on the Assisted Living Waiver**.

During routine contacts with waiver enrolled individuals, our Case Managers are providing information regarding the vaccination phases and current providers in their area.

As always, if you are aware of an individual in the community that maybe in need of assistance, a referral can be made by calling our Screening Department at 1-800-331-2644.

CONTACT INFO: Jennifer Westfall, Aging and Disability Director | jwestfall@buckeyehills.org, 740-376-1038

Dawn Weber, Home Care Director | dweber@buckeyehills.org, 740-376-1041

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- **Vaccine Information Page** | As our region's Area Agency on Aging and a primary resource for older adults in our region, our Communications team has compiled a regional COVID-19 vaccination resource page [HERE](#), with the latest updates we've received from health departments across our eight counties, as well as links to the latest updates and resources from the Ohio Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control. This resource was shared with local media across in a region-wide [press release](#) on January 15.
- **RDOF Analysis Now Available Online** | Tom Reid, broadband consultant for Buckeye Hills Regional Council and the Buckeye Hills Foundation, gave our Executive Committee an in-depth analysis of the FCC's recently completed Phase 1 Auction for the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, which in December awarded \$170 million to carriers across rural Ohio to extend service to 191,093 unserved homes and businesses over the next 10 years. The presentation gave an overview of the current state of broadband in southeast Ohio and the potential impacts of the \$38,530,483 awarded to carriers to provide service to 39,507 households in the Buckeye Hills region. You can watch the video of Tom Reid's presentation and download the slides [HERE](#).
- **Annual Report & LDD Reports** | Our partners at OMEGA, OVRDC, and Eastgate are in the process of submitting their data for the annual report and LDD Return on Investment report. The first draft of the report is anticipated to be completed by mid-February. Both the LDD report and the BHRC annual report will be presented this spring.
- **Long-Term Care Assessment Resource Guide** | The Communications Department recently completed updates to the Long-Term Care Assessment Resource Guide which is now being printed and will be available mid-February
- **HEAP Winter Outreach** | Winter HEAP outreach is ongoing throughout our eight counties through May 31. Outreach channels include billboards, advertising on radio and television, and weekly social media posts.
- **Transportation Awareness** | The Communications team has been working with Washington County Mobility Manager Brandi Hesson—and Mobility Managers across our region—to help make older adults aware of transportation options for getting to COVID-19 vaccination clinics and appointments. Additionally, social media outreach has been scheduled for Ohio Loves Transportation week, February 7-14 to promote the region's local transportation providers in general.

NEWS

- **EDA RISE Announcement** | The Communications Department worked with the OU Voinovich School, OMEGA, and JobsOhio on the recent announcement of a \$2.2M EDA RISE grant. The announcement may be found [HERE](#).

CONTACT INFO: Drew Tanner, Communications Director | dtanner@buckeyehills.org | 740-376-1030

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CURRENT INITIATIVES

- **EDA Assistance to Coal Communities (ACC) Program - Resilience Initiative for Southeastern and Eastern (RISE) Ohio** | Ohio University was awarded a \$2.2 million Economic Development Administration (EDA) investment to provide technical assistance to accelerate the economic transition to new industries in 18 counties in Appalachian Ohio. This project will support an 18-county partnership led by Ohio University, the Buckeye Hills Regional Council, and Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association that will provide technical assistance to communities affected by the decline of the coal economy.
- **FEMA-CRRTA Project Scope Statement** | At the beginning of 2020 Buckeye Hills was approached by Steve Ferryman from Ohio EMA about an opportunity to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-National Integration Center, on the Community Resilience and Recovery Technical Assistance (CRRTA) pilot program. The goal is to equip communities with more resources helping them be resilient to and recover from disasters which might challenge their communities. This program will help communities use data and analysis to better understand the community risk, vulnerabilities, and capacity gaps to increase resilience-based decision-making. Due to COVID 19, this opportunity is being postponed until late Spring to early Summer of 2021. This will hopefully give the pandemic some time to dissipate before moving forward. As we approach the “re-start” of the program FEMA can come and present briefly on the CRRTA and how it will benefit the communities we serve.
- **Formation of the Noble County Coordinated Transportation Plan Committee** | Formation will take place over the next month. Transportation is a critical component that provides access to jobs, education, health care, human services and allows all community members, including older adults and people with disabilities, to live independently and engage in community life. It is the purpose of this plan for local stakeholders to work collaboratively to do the following activities: identify all community resources, identify and prioritize community transportation needs and establish a clear plan for achieving shared goals.
- **COVID -19 Vaccine Transportation** | BHRC’s Mobility Manger conducted a meeting with Aging and Disability staff and mobility mangers across the region concerning the transportation of residents to vaccination clinics. The mobility managers were able to provide county contact information that we were able to link on the BH website and provide to the Buckeye Hills’ Information and Assistance team as phone calls are received from the community.
- **EDA CARES Recovery Funding RFP’s** | BHRC has prepared and issued three Requests for Proposals for the following activities to deliver the EDA CARES Recovery project:
 - 1st Audio/Visual Upgrades: BHRC will upgrade it’s audio-visual equipment to enable robust virtual meetings.
 - 2nd Broadband RFP: Buckeye Hills Regional Council would like to work with a third party to canvas regional businesses regarding their broadband needs, to understand the most heavily impacted sectors, jobs endangered, and outputs that are at risk if broadband services are not improved.

- 3rd WealthWorks Training: To provide three sector-focused institutes on the WealthWorks regional asset-based development model throughout BHRC service area. These workshops will target current and future economic development professionals, community members, and public sector employees seeking to incorporate asset-based community development into existing CEDS and regional resilience plans.

Total investment from EDA to support CARES Recovery planning activities was \$398,000.

NEWS

Program & Service Updates

- **ODOT Mobility Management** | Brandi Hesson, Mobility Manager, has joined ODOT's Welcome Committee as Lead and the New Mobility Managers Committee as Co-Lead for mobility managers around the state. She will be serving the region on the following county committees: Meigs County Transportation Coordinated Plan Committee; Hocking County Transportation Advisory Committee; and the Athens County Transportation Committee.
- **Myrecoverylink.org** | Work continues on the myrecoverylink.org website, as new and updated resources were gathered by Brandi Beaver and are actively being uploaded to the website.
- **Project Profiles (ARC Pre-Applications)** | The project profiles are being accepted through Buckeye Hills website portal until April 2, 2021.
- **Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Power 2021** | ARC Staff will hold a session for interested applicants on the POWER 2021 RFP and provide tips for a well-rounded application. Shortly after this session, registrants will receive links to seven prerecorded training videos, and will then have the opportunity to ask questions of ARC staff during a live Question & Answer Session on Thursday, February 25 at 11:00 a.m. Understanding POWER 2021 and the live Question & Answer Session are free to attend, although registration is required by 5:00 p.m. Friday, January 29.
- **Natural Resource Assistance Council (NRAC)** | Applications are due February 5, 2021. Requests for additional information or questions can be sent to Michelle Hyer at mhyer@buckeyehills.org or 740 376-1025.
- **Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC)** | Round 35 Project Approval Meeting will be held by remote videoconference on Wednesday, February 3, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. The public is invited to attend the meeting via Facebook Live. Visit the Buckeye Hills Regional Council Facebook page to watch the livestream: <https://www.facebook.com/BuckeyeHills/live>. Those projects that are not funded with a population of 5,000 or less can apply for Small Government. Questions can be addressed to Michelle Hyer mhyer@buckeyehills.org or 740 376-1025.

CONTACT INFO: Melissa Zoller, Development Specialist | mzoller@buckeyehills.org | 740-376-1028

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Here is additional information that we can share

FEMA-CRRTA Project Scope Statement:

At the beginning of 2020 Buckeye Hills was approached by Steve Ferryman from Ohio EMA about an opportunity to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-National Integration Center, on a pilot program called Community Resilience and Recovery Technical Assistance (CRRTA). The goal is to equipped communities with more resources helping them be resilient to and recover from disasters which might challenge the communities. This program will help communities use data and analysis to better understand the community risk, vulnerabilities, and capacity gaps to increase resilience-based decision-making.

In addition to empowering our communities to be more resilient, another outcome/benefit of the technical assistance FEMA is providing is access to a dedicated Buckeye Hills region Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT), which is a free GIS web mapping tool that allows federal, state, local, tribal, territorial emergency managers, and community leaders to examine the interplay of census data, infrastructure locations, and hazards, including real time weather forecasts, historic disasters and projected hazard risk.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic we were working with the EMA directors from Hocking, Meigs, Morgan, Noble, and Washington counties to create a cohort to participate in the FEMA CRRTA training opportunity. We had initial scoping calls with the counties to learn what sort of challenges they all face regarding resilience. Over the past few months, we have been unsuccessful engaging the county EMA directors beyond those initial calls. Therefore, this opportunity is being postponed until late Spring to early Summer of 2021. This will hopefully give the pandemic sometime to dissipate before moving forward. As we approach the “re-start” of the program FEMA can come and present briefly on the CRRTA and how it will benefit the communities we serve.

Project Stakeholders:

- County or City EMA Management/Supervisor Personnel

Project Timeline:

- 12 months beginning in late May/early June 2021
 - 6-10 hours per month
-

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- **Development Director Search** | Interviews have begun for the Development Director position. Of the 26 candidates, 7 have been interviewed. Interviews and the selection process will commence in the next couple weeks.
- **Buckeye Hills Regional Council Leadership Academy** | There are 12 employees participating in the Leadership Academy in partnership with the Ohio University Voinovich School. The sessions kicked off on January 27.
- **Ohio Master of Public Administration Partner Program** | The Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs works with numerous state agencies, municipalities, professional associations and private corporations. These relationships are not just limited to a wide variety of partnerships and projects, but regularly see many employees of these partners become students in the Ohio University Executive Master of Public Administration (OEMPA) and OMPA Online Master of Public Administration graduate programs. BHRC will formalize a partnership with the Voinovich School. Any staff enrolled will receive a \$1,000 Incentive Scholarship for their second academic term.
- **Dell Member Purchase Program** | Buckeye Hills is pleased to be able to make available to staff the ability to purchase Dell products through the Dell Member Purchase Program. Through the dedicated Buckeye Hills portal, employees can make purchases of TV's, cameras, laptops, monitors, and more at up to a 30% discount. Member benefits also include free expedited shipping, price match guarantee, and free & easy returns. As an added benefit, ProSupport is available with purchases and employees have access to a dedicated sales team for any required assistance. Employees will also be made aware of exclusive sale events that will be forwarded from Jamie Lewis, IT Director.

STAFF UPDATES

"I just got off the phone with an 87-year-old female that Kara was able to help set up her vaccination appointment at Kroger's and I was able to assist her with transportation. I just wanted to pass along how appreciative she was of the Area Agency on Aging. She said that she tried to call people for days to get some support and she just left messages with no response. We were the first individuals that she was able to talk to and receive help in getting her vaccine. She was so thankful for Kara and all of her hard work. I just wanted to pass along how grateful she was of our support. Great Job Kara!!!" - Brandi Hesson

"Thank you for allowing us to work from home it took some getting use to but on days like this it's so perfect. I was able to work over a little then come upstairs make dinner with my girls and just be present with them and enjoy my time with them. Once we were done they went downstairs to play by themselves. I was able to then log back in and review submitted applications. It was relaxing to be able to be home and get work done. Finding a balance between work and home is so hard and I usually feel like I am letting one of them down but having all of stuff at home has allowed me to find a better balance." - Melissa Zoller

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Thanks to our staff who helped with the Morgan County CARES food distribution over the holidays! We distributed 300 holiday meal bags in partnership with the Morgan County Commissioners, Morgan County Senior Center, and Morgan County Food Pantry. I'm so proud of all of you!

Melissa Zoller, who spearheaded the effort, had this to say about the team:

*"**Brandi Hesson** was so helpful as she created the mailing labels, printed the vouchers and wrote the names on each, put together vouchers and mailed the envelopes, called those who had the envelope sent back, helped load and unload the supplies, came to help all three times to the food giveaways. **Anthony Iachini** came and helped load and unload supplies and came to help at food giveaways. **Jason Pyles** came and helped load and unload supplies and came to help at food giveaways. **Michelle Hyer** helped at the food giveaway. **Bret Allphin** came to load the food and came to help at the food give away. **Sam Wallace** came to load and unload food and came to help at the food giveaway. **Jenn Westfall** came to the senior food giveaway for Christmas. **Drew Tanner** did all the designs for the vouchers and one-page Morgan County CARES information. **Jamie Lewis** drove to the grocery store to bring the credit card. Such an awesome team! I truly appreciate them all and they were so happy to help."*

STAFF UPDATES

We will begin preparing for a virtual all-staff meeting to be held at the end of February.

CONTACT INFO: Angie Lawrence, Human Resources Manager | alawrence@buckeyehills.org | 740-376-1031

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT



PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT
December 5, 2020 through February 5, 2021

RESIGNATIONS/TERMINATIONS

Bret Allphin Development Director 12/31/20

RETIREMENT

None

NEW HIRE

None

PROMOTIONS

None

TRANSFERS

None

RTPO UPDATE

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- **Mid-Ohio Valley Workforce Committee (a.k.a. Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) Substance Use Disorder (SUD) initiative)** | the BHRC RTPO team joined the work group for the committee's Goal #3 to Develop innovative solutions to reduce transportation barriers for high risk individuals when seeking and/or maintaining employment. Group activities include the better alignment of existing services to the needs of employers and high-risk individuals, and identifying network enhancement opportunities and best practices. Update: The work group for Goal #3 has begun engagement with a focus group of social service case managers with an on-line survey and interview to identify key gaps, barriers, and best practices.

NEWS

Program & Service Updates

- The Biennial Sub-Award Grant Agreement (FY 2022-23) for the RTPO program has been received from ODOT requesting comment and feedback by 2/28. Board acceptance, signatures, and resolution are not required at this time. BHRC will be providing feedback to ODOT making a case for a nominal budget increase that has not changed in 7 years to account for increased program scope and overhead costs since inception.
- 2020 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Development Update
 - Plan section, data, and mapping updates underway with roughly 93% completed.
 - On 12/15 a conversation with ODOT Central confirmed that there is no official deadline for LRTP submission, and that Buckeye Hills can take whatever time is needed.
 - Regardless, Buckeye Hills RTPO is motivated to preserve the 5-year cycle of the LRTP as much as possible so will move forward as quickly as possible to finalize.
 - The plan is to finalize as quickly as possible; upon internal completion, the public comment process, RTPO Committee approval, and Board approval will then take place. ODOT will be provided a final draft prior to public comment and Board approval to demonstrate progress with the final version submitted following any public comment revisions and subsequent Board approval.
 - A number of competing agency business priorities for the RTPO and GIS have hindered dedicated time to the LRTP.
- RTPO Work Plan SFY2022 Update
 - ODOT has requested submission of the 2022 RTPO Work Plan due on 3/3, 2021.
 - Internal budget and work allocations are currently under review for modification.
 - The final draft of the Work Plan will be presented to the RTPO Committee for review, feedback, and approval.
 - Executive Board approval will be sought in February at the earliest, March at the latest. The Board will be prepped with updates in advance of approval similar to previous years.
 - Update: the total budget of the RTPO Work Plan FY2022 will remain the same as previous years with no change. The only changes to the Work Plan from previous years may be individual resource time allocation for particular work classifications.
- Washington County Mobility Management Update:
 - ODOT approved the 2021 funding application with an A+ score.
 - The 2020 update of the Coordinated Transportation Plan was completed and submitted on time to ODOT on 12/1; submitted to Washington County Board of Commissioners and approved on 11/19; ODOT

- approved the plan on 12/1; the BHRC Executive Board approved a resolution on 12/4; ODOT has been updated with all required resolutions and signature pages.
- The BHRC Mobility Management, RTPO, and GIS groups are actively supporting Mobility Management programs in Athens-Hocking, Perry, Meigs, Morgan Counties. The Meigs County Coordinated Transportation Plan was developed with BHRC participation on the advisory/technical assistance committee and was approved by ODOT on 12/16.
 - The aforementioned BHRC groups has begun the development of a Coordinated Transportation Plan (CP) for Noble County with the first tasks of researching and creating a transportation stakeholder committee and developing a commuter user survey to identify local needs and gaps in transportation. Completion and submission to ODOT must be occur by 11/20 of 2021. The Morgan County CP development is anticipated to begin in 2021 as well, but planning and start-up has not yet been coordinated with the County's Mobility Manager.
 - The BHRC Mobility Management team has been tasked with coordinating transportation for COVID-19 phase 1B vaccinations in Washington County. At this present time, senior citizens 80+ years of age are being coordinated, expansion to ages 75+ and to those with severe congenital, developmental, or early-onset medical disorders, and who have a developmental or intellectual disability is anticipated in the coming week(s). Thus far, transportation service provider National Church Residences has been an exemplary partner in providing vital transportation; other transportation providers have been unwilling/unable to provide flexible transportation options for the at-risk citizens.
- Perry County-Village of New Lexington: BHRC RTPO is leading the reset and development of a Pedestrian Safety Improvement project for 2021 to increase safety in a high volume commercial and school area on Carroll Street. Update: project scoping, cost estimates, local match fundraising, and preliminary preparation for ODOT grant submission are all underway.
 - The Washington County Engineer has requested BHRC RTPO/GIS operational and stakeholder committee support of a Hydrologic Study to be conducted for 1.47 square miles of the Muskingum Watershed on the southeast side of Marietta as well as within County around Morris Run Loop and along SR 7 to determine the causes of recurrent flooding. Funding for the study was awarded as part of a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant. The study will be conducted in 2021. BHRC GIS will provide mapping and data assistance to the consultant; RTPO will support the study on a stakeholder committee and assist with strategic engagement with other public/private stakeholders.
 - In the last month, the BHRC RTPO has been solicited, and provided response for, assistance and support for: Morgan Co Active Transportation Plan development guidance/consulting; Meigs Co coordination for implementation of USDA grant for rural transportation technical assistance; Village of Caldwell (Noble Co) Township Road funding program support/guidance.

OTHER

- **ODOT State Innovation Council (STIC)** | RTPO Transportation Planning Manager, Sam Wallace, has been appointed to the FHWA sponsored and ODOT administered State Innovation Council (STIC) as a voting member representing the RTPOs of Ohio. The mission of the STIC is to facilitate the rapid implementation of technology, tactics and techniques among transportation program delivery professionals at the local, state, and federal levels throughout the private and non-profit sector to ensure smart, efficient investment in their state's transportation infrastructure. The objectives and duties of the STIC shall be to identify and recommend ways to ensure that Ohio responds to key issues and challenges that impact the transportation program. In addition, Sam has also become a member of the STIC sub-committee for Incentive Funding who is tasked to administer, review, and score STIC incentive funding applications for presentation to the Council for approval. This role will allow Buckeye Hills to be well-positioned to inform and promote any funding innovation and incentive opportunities to our membership.



Washington County Mobility Management Program
CARES Act Supplemental Funding for COVID -19 Impact Mitigation
Vaccination Transportation Service Contract

THIS AGREEMENT made this 21th day of January, 2021 with National Church Residences, having their local primary address as 711 Belrock Ave. Box 318 Belpre, Ohio 45714, herein after called the Contractor, and Buckeye Hills Regional Council (BHRC), having their primary address as 1400 Pike Street, Marietta, Ohio 45750, herein after called the BHRC. The date of final completion for all activities outlined in this document is December 31, 2021.

WITNESSETH, that the Contractor and the BHRC for the considerations stated herein mutually agree as follows:

ARTICLE 1
STATEMENT OF WORK

The Contractor shall furnish all insurance, supervision, technical personnel, labor, materials, machinery, tools, equipment and services, as well as perform and complete all work as outlined in the project; namely, per trip reimbursement for transportation services for Washington County residents to-and-from COVID-19 vaccination site(s). The transportation service would include customer pickup, delivery to vaccination site, post-vaccination reaction wait-time, and return to a location of the customer's choice.

ARTICLE 2
THE CONTRACT PRICE

The BHRC will pay the Contractor for the total quantities of work performed at the per trip stipulation. The total sum of reimbursement is not to exceed \$5,000.00 (five thousand dollars) for the term of the contract. Reimbursement requests for amounts not meeting these per trip or overall project totals will not be accepted.

ARTICLE 3
CONTRACT

The executed contract documents shall consist of the following:

- a. This contract agreement

These items form the Contract between the parties hereto. In the event that any other provision in a component part of this Contract conflicts with any provision of any other component part, the provision of the component part first enumerated in this Article 3 shall govern, except as otherwise specifically stated.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this agreement to be executed on the day and year first above written, and as indicated below.

Contractor

BHRC

Signature: *Peggy Hickenbottom*

Signature: *Misty Crosby*

Name: Peggy Hickenbottom

Name: Misty Crosby

Date: 2/01/2021

Date: February 1, 2021

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Voinovich School, OMEGA, Buckeye Hills awarded \$2.2M EDA grant to boost community economic growth** | Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs was awarded a \$2.2 million investment from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration to accelerate the region's transition from a coal economy through a new initiative called Resilience Initiative for Southeastern and Eastern Ohio (RISE Ohio).

RISE Ohio is a \$2.7 million, two-year program led by Ohio University's Voinovich School, in partnership with the Buckeye Hills Regional Council (BHRC) and Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA), focused on helping communities in an 18-county region make an economic transition to new industries and ensuring continued job creation, as well as economic growth and diversification. The new funding will enable these communities to engage in Opportunity Zone planning, along with assisting them with the impacts of coal-fired power plant closures.

- **2021 Public Policy Agenda** | The draft 2021 Policy Agenda is being circulated for review by BHRC Directors and Executive Committee. Efforts are being made to align with like-minded Associations and Partners.
- **2021 Executive Committee and General Policy Council** | I have met with several new members of the Executive Committee and General Policy Council. Meetings will continue to be scheduled as calendars allow.
- **Development Director Search** | We received 26 applications for the position of Development Director and conducted interviews with seven competitive candidates in mid-January. Samantha Miller has accepted the position and her first day will be February 22, 2021. We look forward to welcoming Sam to the BHRC team.
- **Preparing Midwestern Communities for Power Plant Closures** | On January 13, I participated as a panelist in a Virtual Kick-Off Meeting for the Midwestern Governor's Association's initiative to prepare Midwest communities for power plant closures. This is the first in a series of meetings to harness the collective wisdom, ideas, and lessons learned from state and local government, industry, workers, the advocacy community, and economic development interests to develop solutions to assist communities and support workers through nation's energy transition. You can find an overview of this initiative [HERE](#).

CURRENT POLICY INITIATIVES

- **OARC Broadband Working Group Update** | The Ohio Association of Regional Councils is seeking support from like-minded state associations for a budget proposal to include a dedicated line item for broadband funding in the state's upcoming biennial budget. OARC's proposal is an innovative approach to funding and administering the accelerated rollout of high-speed broadband across Ohio and is a complement to former HB 13/as introduced SB 8. The proposal seeks to place local governments at the forefront of broadband planning and prioritization for their communities by designating existing OARC members as Regional Broadband Councils that would work with Broadband Ohio to coordinate broadband deployment and provide technical support to local entities and their members at the regional level. It also requests additional funding to assist local communities to leverage federal funding and calls for a program to support accessibility by low income households. **Attached is the budget proposal for your reference and support.**

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- **OCBC Update** | The Ohio Children’s Budget Coalition held a webinar with the Ohio Legislative Children’s Caucus to present information and discuss how to advance a whole child budget agenda for the 2022-2023 biennium. BHRC co-authored the issue brief on Broadband Access which can be found on the OCBC website at <https://ohiochildrensbudget.org/policy-issue-briefs>.

STATE UPDATES

- **Vaccine FAQs and Myths vs. Facts Resources** | BHRC has provided members with Myths vs. Facts regarding the COVID-19 Vaccine to help you in conversations with your community members. These were developed by the Ohio Department of Health and cover a range of concerns. A PDF with these facts with supporting details can be found [HERE](#), and a Frequently Asked Questions guide can be found [HERE](#).

In addition, the National Association of Counties just released a [toolkit for media outreach](#), including a customizable press release, media advisor, op-ed templates, talking points, social media guidance, and more. If you need help tailoring these tools for your county and local media, or would just like to have another set of eyes on the information you’re putting out with regard to the vaccine distribution, our Communications Director, Drew Tanner, is available to help. You may email him at dtanner@buckeyehills.org

We will continue to add updates, as we get them, to our Vaccine Information page at buckeyehills.org/vaccine-information and in our weekly member emails.

- **Broadband Ohio Connectivity Grant Deadline Extended to December 31, 2021** | On July 28, 2020, Lt. Governor Jon Husted shared the state’s plan to expand broadband services in Ohio. The Lt. Governor announced that the state will set aside \$50 million of state funding through the federal CARES Act to provide hotspots and internet-enabled devices to students for purchases made between July 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020. Federal legislation has extended the grant opportunity through December 31, 2021. Learn more [HERE](#).
- **Ohio BWC Announces 10% Average Rate Reduction for Public Employers** | The Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation announced a 10 percent average rate reduction for public employers that went into effect January 1st. Learn more [HERE](#).
- **Ohio’s Operating Budget** | Ohio Governor DeWine will release the state’s operating budget at 1:30p.m. on Monday, February 1, 2021. BHRC will review the budget for impacts to programs and services.

FEDERAL UPDATES

- **President Biden Unveils National COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy** | the Biden administration released a five-part plan to increase the U.S. COVID-19 vaccinations, which includes additional funding to local governments and support for the public health workforce. The administration has taken immediate steps to enact these proposals in the first hours following the inauguration, however further action will need the support of Congress. Read the National Association of Counties’ summary of the plan [HERE](#).
- **Immediate Actions Taken by Biden Administration** | Senator Sherrod Brown’s office shared summaries with Buckeye Hills of the [Executive Orders issued by President Biden](#), as well as a [list of agency actions](#).
- **NACo Analysis of President Biden’s Coronavirus Rescue Plan** | On January 14, President Joe Biden unveiled his [nearly \\$2 trillion coronavirus relief package](#), the first of a two-part strategy designed to support

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households, businesses and state and local governments through the pandemic. [NACo's analysis](#) outlines provisions of significance for county governments. Learn more [HERE](#). The plan includes:

- **\$350 billion in emergency funding for state, local, and territorial governments** to ensure that they are in a position to keep front line public workers on the job and paid, while also effectively distributing the vaccine, scaling testing, reopening schools, and maintaining other vital services.
 - **\$20 billion to mount a national vaccination program**, in partnership with states, localities, tribes, and territories, including launching community vaccination centers around the country and deploying mobile vaccination units to hard-to-reach areas. The program would also help states ensure all Medicaid enrollees would be vaccinated.
 - **\$50 billion to scale up COVID testing** in order to safely reopen schools and protect at-risk populations.
 - **\$15 billion in grants to small businesses**
 - **\$1,400 direct payments** to individuals
 - **\$400 per week unemployment benefits** through September 2021
 - **An extension and expansion of emergency paid leave benefits**
 - **An extension of the eviction and foreclosure moratoriums** until the end of September 2021.
 - **A federal minimum wage of \$15/ hour**
- **Upcoming Webinar on Federal Resources for Creative Community Development** | On **Tuesday, February 9 at 4:00 p.m.**, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, the National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations, and Metris Arts Consulting are offering a free web seminar on [Federal Resources for Creative Community Development](#). This seminar is designed to help you access federal funds and harness the power of arts and culture for community development. The seminar will feature the new [Creative Placemaking Public Resources Guide](#) and will discuss a curated selection of federal funding sources that can be used to advance equitable community development, examples of initiatives that have transformed community development through create partnerships, and practical tips on accessing federal grant programs. To view the complete session details and register, click [HERE](#).

CONTACT INFO: Misty Crosby, Executive Director | mcrosby@buckeyehills.org | 740-376-1034

Delivering Statewide Broadband: A Regional Approach

Fund Regional Broadband Councils: \$4.5 million per year to fund broadband teams at OARC regional councils to provide project oversight, coordination and technical assistance.

Expand Federal Impact: \$30 million per year to provide a 15% match that can leverage up to \$200 million in federal funding annually for broadband infrastructure across Ohio.

Address Affordability: \$3.6 million per year to create a subsidy program supporting 15,000 low-income households.

Urgency: Broadband is an essential utility for 21st century commerce, education and healthcare. Yet a staggering 567,000 Ohio households, almost 1 in 8, have no internet access at all¹, contrary to the overstated coverage claims in FCC maps. In Ohio's nine largest central cities, about one household in five lacks basic internet service. Among unserved rural households, 80 percent are in the hard-to-reach, rugged terrain of Appalachian Ohio. Even those with service often endure connectivity speeds too low and connectivity too unreliable to support distance learning, remote work and essential business operations. The problem is one of both availability – the inadequacy or absence of broadband infrastructure – and affordability – the inability of low-income households to pay for service. Closing the digital divide in Ohio requires meaningful financial resources and collaboration among all levels of government working in partnership with providers and communities. HB13 is a helpful start, but to truly solve the problem, Ohio needs an ongoing, dedicated budget line item for broadband. We are recommending a unique, regionally driven approach that can effectively leverage and administer an expanded and critically needed statewide effort.

Expand Federal Impact through a State Match: Elimination of the digital desert will require multi-year infrastructure projects. By offering a 15% match to winners of federal funds, the state can magnify the impact of its outlays, improve competitiveness for those funds and extract service-level commitments from providers. This approach would align funding with the long-term nature of federal programs and deployment projects. State-designated Regional Broadband Councils would be ideal candidates to administer such a match program.

Address Affordability: Even where broadband is available, one in five Ohio households cannot afford to connect. The requested \$3.6 million would provide a \$20 per month subsidy to support broadband affordability for an initial 15,000 Ohio households. When combined with existing FCC Lifeline subsidies of \$10 per month, many low-income households would be able to afford adequate service.

Fund Regional Broadband Councils: Ohio-based members of the Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) offer a unique set of proven attributes and capabilities that qualify us to serve as the Regional Broadband Councils for the state. As multi-service entities that already deliver a variety of federal, state and local programs, regional councils serve as effective tools through which federal and state governments provide planning and financial resources at the local and regional level. Using regional councils for broadband management, the state can capitalize on our strong community relationships, administrative capacity and decades of experience administering federal and state funding. Importantly, many of us are already heavily engaged in broadband access initiatives for our regions. Our natural role as conveners, resource conduits and technical experts lends itself seamlessly to regional broadband deployment management:

¹ U.S. Census Bureau (2019). *Internet Subscriptions in Household American Community Survey 1-year estimates*.
17 November 2020

➤ **Regional Councils as Conveners & Coordinators**

- Regional councils are the only multi-jurisdictional entities representing the individuals and communities we serve. As such, we are uniquely positioned to act as conveners of the local governments, subject matter experts, and resource providers in our regions for broadband planning.
- As regional organizations, we can easily identify important players and guide the involved parties toward a common solution. Our public focus allows us to work with a constant eye for equity and the public interest, sometimes as the only participant with a truly neutral perspective.

➤ **Regional Councils as Conduits for Resources**

- Regional councils already act as dedicated recipients and administrators of a variety of state and federal funding programs and grants. As Areawide Agencies, we accept Ohio EPA funds to prepare water quality management plans for our regions. In the transportation space, we use federal funding to perform transportation planning as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs). We also serve as federally designated Economic Development Districts (EDDs), performing critical economic development work of which broadband is a crucial part.
- Regional councils conduct research and advocacy efforts that have already done much to inform policymakers and spur positive action by the FCC on broadband accessibility.
- Our existing internal infrastructure is well-suited to aggregate demand, prioritize funding and distribute resources within our regions. We can serve as fair resource conduits for any future broadband funding allocated to our jurisdictions.

➤ **Regional Councils as Technical Experts**

- Regional councils are staffed with highly capable project developers and expert planners with the technical knowledge necessary to assist local governments with all of the programs under our purview. We can help applicants understand regulatory requirements, develop expertise necessary to be capable partners, and navigate grant processes.

Return on Investment: This regional approach provides a comprehensive and efficient formula for Ohio to compete in the 21st century by delivering reliable, high-speed broadband throughout the state. The return on investment from this budget request will exceed its cost. Meta-analysis from the International Telecommunication Union indicates that, at a minimum, annual GDP increases by \$10,000 per household after broadband adoption. The proposed line items would thus generate \$725 million in additional annual GDP and yield \$180 million in increased annual tax revenues (all levels of government combined). Line-item funding in the biennial budget will deliver key resources and predictability to achieve this long-term benefit for the state.



January 19, 2021

To Director Murnieks, Governor DeWine, and Auditor Faber:

The members of the Mayors' Partnership for Progress, Buckeye Hills Regional Council, Ohio Valley Economic Development Commission, Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association, and Eastgate Council of Governments are grateful for your support of the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund extension and the swift action that your offices have taken in response to the last-minute extension that was eventually passed by Congress and signed into law on December 27, 2020.

The CARES Act CRF extension comes as our members, who represent local governments across southeast Ohio, are currently dealing with an acute increase in COVID-19 cases and related community impacts. These impacts are being felt in our rural communities much later than they appeared in the state's urban centers. While we had advocated for an increase in available federal funding in tandem with the extension of the spending deadline, as you know this was ultimately not included in the final package that Congress passed.

For our members, the last-minute nature of the CARES Act CRF extension has resulted in unintended consequences. In many cases, our members spent down the funds that were allocated, in good faith, to address the local community needs they could identify ahead of the December 30 deadline. Now that cases are surging, they have few resources to draw from to respond to the growing needs and provide robust support for the local distribution of vaccines and other public health needs. In other cases, local communities returned their allocations for a variety of reasons: the lack of COVID-19 cases and identifiable expenses at the time, concern that the compressed timeline would not allow them to make the most of their allocations, concern about their administrative capacity to make use of the funds in such a short amount of time, etc. Several of the communities that did successfully spend down their allocations have indicated they would have spent differently—and more strategically—if they had known there would be a one-year extension. If they had more time, they could have planned more effectively.

Additionally, our communities continue to ask for greater flexibility and regional support. Our member governments would like the flexibility to utilize those dollars for planning, engineering/design, technical expertise, and technology needs to connect our region. Our members want to ensure the solutions they are implementing are of lasting value to their communities in the long-run. Short-term solutions are helpful, but they do not go far enough to address our region's disparities, which existed before the pandemic and have only been exacerbated since it began.

To help our communities move forward and make the most of the one-year extension—just as the full force of the pandemic is now being felt in our region—we are hoping the Office of Budget and Management can provide timely answers and guidance with regard to the following:

1. How much of the CARES Act CRF is still available for local governments?
2. What is the State of Ohio's plan for redistribution?

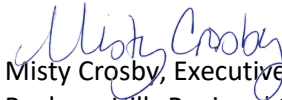
3. If additional funds are available, will there be additional flexibility in how the funds are spent?

We appreciate your support and commitment to our communities and your prompt attention in addressing these questions so we can best serve our citizens.

Sincerely,



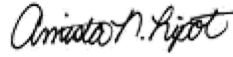
Ron Moore, President
Buckeye Hills Regional Council



Misty Crosby, Executive Director
Buckeye Hills Regional Council



Mayor Steve Patterson, President
Mayor's Partnership for Progress



Amista Lipot, Executive Director
Mayor's Partnership for Progress



Jim Kinnick, Executive Director
Eastgate Regional Council of Governments



Jeannette Wierzbicki, Executive Director
Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association



John Hemmings, Executive Director
Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission