

Public Participation Plan



This document was produced by Buckeye Hills Regional Council,
in partnership with the Ohio Department of Transportation.

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www.buckeyehills.org

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

BUCKEYE HILLS REGIONAL COUNCIL **SERVING SOUTHEAST OHIO FOR OVER 50 YEARS**

The Buckeye Hills Regional Council (BHRC) region encompasses eight counties in southeast Ohio, including Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington. This region is populated by approximately 260,000 residents and spans 3,695 square miles. A voluntary organization of local government political subdivisions, Buckeye Hills secures resources to translate ideas into action. Buckeye Hills Regional Council helps local communities work cooperatively to improve the lives of residents across the region.

Whether 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 serve with dedication and compassion.

Since its inception, Buckeye Hills has secured over \$ 1 billion for education, health care, infrastructure, training, and social services programs in the region.

Buckeye Hills assists communities in identifying urgent needs and securing public resources to address those needs, thereby improving the overall quality of life for residents. The staff often acts as 'adjunct staff' for communities in the district by providing technical assistance, grant writing, and project administration activities, among other services.

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.

WHAT IS A REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION?

Buckeye Hills Regional Council is a designated Ohio Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for Southeast Ohio, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). The RTPO seeks to allow greater local input in transportation decisions within the region, especially

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because local participation is critical in making responsible transportation decisions with limited state and federal budgets.

The Buckeye Hills Executive Committee serves as the RTPO Policy Committee and the Transportation Committee, composed of county engineers, community officials, stakeholder group representatives (i.e., bicycle groups, outdoor trail groups, etc.), private citizens, and other parties with interest, meet regularly to assist in transportation planning activities.

Regional transportation plans provide information on the district's 8,992 miles of road, 2,922 bridges, 147 miles of Ohio River frontage, and six airports. The RTPO program provides the opportunity to represent and characterize in a holistic manner the ongoing transportation needs of the region

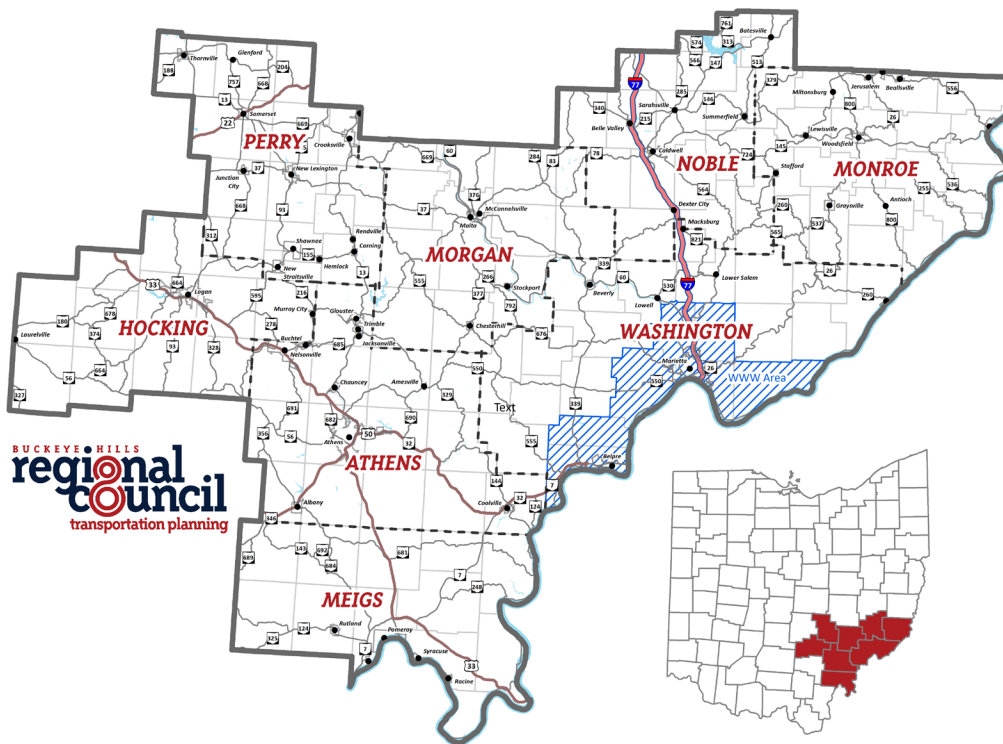
RTPO PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Buckeye Hills Regional Council participates in the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) program in partnership with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). In establishing the RTPO program, ODOT has recognized six rural multi-county planning agencies as Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs). Following the successful completion of a two-year pilot program, Ohio Governor John Kasich recognized Buckeye Hills and four other RTPO partners via official state designation on January 27, 2016.

The goal of this program is to expand transportation planning activities in Ohio, giving local parties greater input on projects and issues related to transportation in their respective regions. Through this program, ODOT and Ohio Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have assisted the state's rural regions in developing comprehensive regional transportation plans while building overall transportation planning expertise.

Buckeye Hills conducts transportation planning processes within the boundaries of Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Morgan, Monroe, Noble, Perry, and Washington counties (except Belpre, Dunham, Fearing, Marietta, Muskingum, Newport, and Warren townships in Washington County, which are served by the Wood-Washington-Wirt Interstate Planning Commission).

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Buckeye Hills completed and adopted a regional transportation plan called Long-Range Transportation Plan in 2023. The Long-Range Transportation Plan captures a wide variety of condition and analysis information regarding transportation assets and entities in the region. The analysis included sections on goals and objectives, existing conditions, future conditions, needs analysis, and general plan recommendations. A summary of the goals and objectives, regional trends, and plan recommendations is included below. To review the complete Long-Range Plan, please visit our website at www.buckeyehills.org.

THE BHRC RTPO INCLUDES

A **governing board**, the **Executive Committee (Policy Committee)**, whose 15 members comprise the mayors of the two largest cities in the district, eight county representatives appointed by County Commissioners, and five private sector representatives. The Buckeye Hills Executive Committee serves as the RTPO Policy Committee. The Executive Committee is responsible for taking official action on all RTPO documents, policies, and other activities that require signatory approval.

A **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)** made up of citizen representatives of BHRC RTPO jurisdictions and community organizations as designated by the executive committee with a focus on equity, inclusion, and community diversity.

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The TAC was formed to advise the Executive Committee on items related to transportation. The Transportation Committee is made up of individuals representing communities and organizations within the district that have an expressed interest in transportation matters facing the region. This committee includes representatives from neighborhood organizations, clubs and outdoor organizations, special interest groups, environmental groups, and individuals with specific transportation-related expertise or professional experience.

WHAT DOES THE BHRC RTPO DO?

Transportation planning affects everyone. How well a person can travel throughout the region affects their safety and quality of life. The TAC provides an independent cooperative forum for regional planning and directs the allocation of annual federal transportation funding. Creating transportation plans is the first step to create a multi-year process to fund, design, purchase land for, and construct a transportation project. In the short term, the BHRC RTPO maintains a list of funded transportation projects called the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Additionally, a far-reaching Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) looks at least 20 years into the future to outline a common vision for regional transportation needs and guides the investment of public funds for transportation facilities for people and goods in vehicles, on trains, on bikes, on buses and on sidewalks.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Buckeye Hills staff worked closely with the TAC, local public officials, and residents of the region to craft a series of goals that took into consideration the results of the analysis activities, was cognizant of public input, and consistent with MAP-21, and subsequently IJJA/BIL objectives.

Updated RTPO goals have been created as of May 2024. They will be added to the Public Participation Plan after their approval by the TAC.

COMPLIANCE

This document refers to Federal and State Regulations for public participation in the transportation planning process. These Regulations and State laws include, but are not limited to:

- Fixing American's Surface Transportation Act (IIJA/BIL)
- The Ohio Public Records Act
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
- Executive Order 12898 regarding environmental justice
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

More information on each of these regulations can be found in Appendix C: Regulations.

OUR APPROACH TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The following section outlines the goals for public engagement as shaped by BHRC RTPO philosophy and legal mandates. Each goal is divided into three sections. “What will we do?” describes recommended strategies and action to be taken, “What will we measure?” explains metrics used in evaluating our success. “What is success?” defines the trends or metrics that are consistent with a robust community engagement process.

GOAL 1- ROBUST AND CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE

Provide robust and creative opportunities for all residents to engage in planning for transportation, including people in the region who are not easily engaged because of their age, ability, language, lack of financial resources, lack of access to technology, or other reasons. What will we do?

1. Public Meetings
 - Hold all meetings at convenient, accessible times and locations
 - Provide notice of all meetings in accordance with the Ohio Open Meetings Act
 - Use maps, charts, graphs and other tools to visually convey information presented
2. Engaging Traditionally Underserved Communities
 - Offer interpretive services for public meetings and events (with advance notice)
 - Provide bilingual workshops in areas with a substantial number of people speaking a language other than English (with advance notice)
 - Host workshops and events in underserved communities when updating the Long-Range Transportation Plan
 - Partner with civic organizations that represent people who are not easily engaged to hold workshops and to share opportunities to be involved
3. Project-specific Engagement Strategies
 - Develop a public involvement strategy for the Long-Range Transportation Plan and any other plan as needed
 - Select the best tools from the engagement toolkit (Appendix B) based on the target audience and desired outcome
 - Use digital surveys, maps, and other tools to make engagement convenient for residents of the region

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- Publish the Public Participation Plan a guide to public involvement for the Long-Range Transportation Plan on buckeyehills.org before starting public engagement
- Work with local community organizers to engage and mobilize their constituents around planning topics

4. Public Comment

- Provide a comment period at every BHRC RTPO committee meeting
- Offer periods for review and comment before adopting any plan or allocation decision
- Include comments received with the proposed item in the BHRC RTPO committee agenda packet
- Summarize comments received when presenting proposals to BHRC RTPO committees

What will we measure?

- Attendance at BHRC RTPO committee meetings
- Website visits
- Attendance at public workshops and other events
- Requests for translation or interpretation services
- Number of public comments received on proposed plans and regional transportation issues
- Number of meetings held

What is success?

- Increased attendance at public meetings
- Increased website visits
- Increase in public comments received
- Growing subscriber mailing list
- Increase in requests for translation or interpretive services
- Percentage of meetings held in underserved communities equal to share of population

GOAL 2- INFORMING AND EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Inform and educate the public so they can purposefully engage and provide feedback in the transportation planning process. What will we do?

1. Media engagement

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- Actively reach out to a variety of regional media outlets with press releases, past meeting agendas, or significant board decisions
- Develop a working relationship with newspaper/magazine writers for press coverage of events or public meetings.
- Utilize local radio and podcasts for promoting public engagement events
- Continue to expand and consistently update social media accounts to build following and promote public engagement opportunities
- Take advantage of social media marketing through Facebook ads to promote the BHRC RTPO and upcoming public meetings

2. Notice of Meetings

- Use email and social media to share notices for upcoming meetings
- Ensure agenda is posted on website when sent to BHRC RTPO committee members
- Share meeting notices with partner localities for posting on their website and public spaces, including government offices and libraries
- Develop a stakeholder database to inform constituents of timely events and opportunities

3. Engagement in Regional Events

- Provide resources on current projects
- Work through member governments and partner agencies to provide regional planning resources for local events

1. Website

- Create a dedicated page for the Long-Range Transportation Plan process and other significant projects
- Ensure all pages and content are accessible
- Audit the website regularly to check for dead links and pages

2. Visualization and Document Design

- Branding
- Including logos, for plans requiring public input
- Create visually appealing and easily navigable documents
- Use plain language in all public documents

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What will we measure?

- Media hits or mentions in newspapers or magazines, online and in print
- Media attendance at public meetings
- Analytics for social media engagement: clicks, impressions, mentions, etc.
- Number of clicks for digital banners
- The number of people engaged at regional events

What is success?

- Mentions in local media
- A working relationship with journalists or reporters
- Increased social media impressions, shares, and mentions

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GOAL 3- CONTINUOUS EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Continuously evaluate our progress toward our public engagement goals and make changes to this plan's strategies and metrics as needed to increase public involvement.

What will we do?

- Continue to use metrics to track progress toward plan goals
- Review and update this plan at least every five (5) years before developing the public involvement strategy for the Long-Range Transportation Plan
- Maintain openness to public feedback and input on improvements to our engagement process

What will we measure?

- On-time review and update of plan
- Number of comments or feedback received
- Changes implemented

What is success?

- Plan reviewed and updated at least two (2) years before Long-Range Plan adoption
- Increased feedback on how to improve public outreach

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HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

As a resident of the Southeast Ohio Buckeye Hills region, you have a say in planning the transportation infrastructure that gets built. The chart below summarizes the general approval timeline for each planning process and highlights opportunities for you to be involved. All comment periods are in calendar days. A more detailed look at each process follows.

| Process | Approval | Amendment | Where to find information? |
|---|----------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Long-Range Transportation Plan | 30 days | 15 days | Newspaper; website; social media |
| Rural Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) | 30 days | 15 days | Newspaper; website; social media |
| Public Engagement Plan | 45 days | 45 days | Website; social media |
| Other Studies and Plans | 15 days | | Website; social media |

LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

The BHRC RTPO updates the Long-Range Transportation Plan every five (5) years, though the work for the update takes place over several years. This process begins with a count of the number of people, jobs, and cars in the region before developing a projection for the future based on statewide estimates and expected development. This information is used to create a plan to manage and maintain a transportation system for people on transit, in cars, on foot, and on bikes over the long term. This plan is fiscally constrained, meaning that the cost of the proposed projects in the plan is limited by the funds reasonably expected to be available over the next 20 years.

During this planning process, the BHRC RTPO offers several chances for you to be involved. The exact format and timing of these opportunities change with each cycle, as we learn from earlier plans. A guide to taking part in the LRTP will be created at the beginning of each process and posted to the BHRC RTPO website. You can also get information on our website and social media pages, or by signing up for our email notices.

When the draft plan is completed and posted to the website, the BHRC RTPO will offer a **30-day public comment period**. During this time, BHRC RTPO staff will hold public meetings throughout the region to discuss the document and gather more feedback. Copies of the draft document can be found in

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public libraries throughout the region during this review. All comments will be reviewed by staff and will receive a response. The comments and responses will be provided to the BHRC RTPO policy board before action on the plan. If the comments raise concerns which lead to a significant change in the plan, the BHRC RTPO will open a new **15-day public comment period** to receive input on the changes.

On occasion, the long-range transportation plan may need to be changed to reflect new projects and changing priorities. Whenever an amendment is needed, the proposed changes will be open for public review and comment. The BHRC RTPO will offer a **15-day public comment period** for all amendments to the plan. The changes will be posted on the website and all comments will be shared with the BHRC RTPO policy board before it acts.

RURAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (RTIP)

The Rural Transportation Improvement Program details planned transportation spending over the next four (4) years. Project phases in the RTIP are generally expected to occur within the four-year period. Existing projects are reviewed, and new projects are added where needed.

The draft of the TIP is opened for a **30-day public comment period**, generally around mid-February. All comments are reviewed by staff and will receive a response. If the comments raise concerns which lead to a significant change in the plan, the BHRC RTPO will open a new **15-day public comment period** to receive input on the changes. All comments are provided to the BHRC Executive Committee with the final draft before action on the document.

If the TIP needs to be amended, you will have the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed change. The BHRC RTPO will offer a **15-day public comment period** for all amendments to the TIP. The changes will be posted on the website and all comments will be shared with the BHRC RTPO TAC before their meeting. Minor administrative modifications will not have a formal public comment period or need committee approval.

WORK PLAN

The Work Plan contains a list of projects, programs, plans, and studies to be completed in the year. The Work Plan is also a budget document and describes the sources of funding and time frames for completing the work. The Work Plan covers a period from July 1 until June 30 of next year and must be updated every year. Each winter, the BHRC RTPO begins work on the next budget year.

REGIONAL FUNDING DECISIONS

One of the jobs of the BHRC RTPO is to decide how to spend capital funds STBG. Some funding programs need decisions every year, while others only need decisions every other year. The BHRC RTPO has

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adopted guidelines to rank potential projects and promote regional goals when deciding where to spend these funds.

Before funding any new projects, the BHRC RTPo will provide a **15-day public comment period** on the project list. All comments received will be provided to the BHRC Executive Committee before action on the item.

DATA REQUESTS

To advance public involvement activities while using limited staff resources efficiently when Buckeye Hills receives special requests for an analysis that is not considered part of the planning process, or other special data or information, the agency will determine the reasonableness of the request. This determination will consider factors such as the preparation time and costs to respond to such a request, the relevancy to the transportation planning process and the agency mission. Such requests will be considered individually. All requests shall identify or describe the records sought with sufficient specificity to enable Buckeye Hills to ascertain what is being requested. All requests should include the name and address to which Buckeye Hills should address its response.

OTHER STUDIES AND PLANS

In addition to these plans, the BHRC RTPo may also lead studies of transportation issues affecting the region. These studies are not directly tied to projects or funding sources but are often the first step in making regional decisions. The need for public involvement is determined on a case-by-case basis for each study. Before accepting the findings of a consultant-led study, the BHRC RTPo will provide a **15-day public comment period**. Staff will send all comments to the BHRC RTPo policy board along with the draft of the study before its meeting, and all comments will be summarized in the final document.

BHRC RTPo COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Beyond specific planning processes, all committees of the BHRC RTPo hold regular meetings, which include time for public comment. These meetings are a chance to learn about upcoming projects and conversations taking place in the region. Meetings are held at locations accessible and open for all to attend. The general meeting schedule for each committee is summarized below.

| Committee | Meeting |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Executive Committee | 1 st Friday of the Month |
| Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) | Quarterly |

All notices requesting public comment will be published at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the meeting date or end of the comment period. Additionally, all notices will include dates, times, and

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locations of meetings. If no meeting is required, the addresses and other information where documents will be available for review or comments will be provided.

During the comment period, documents will be available at the Buckeye Hills Regional Council office, located at 1400 Pike Street, Marietta, Ohio 45750 and electronic copies will be located on the Buckeye Hills website (buckeyehills.org). Comments may be submitted by electronic, U.S., or voice mail. All comments should be addressed to the Planning Director.

The Buckeye Hills website offers an easily identifiable place for public comment on BHRC items relating to transportation. When the public is invited to comment on the planning process, BHRC will use the website as a tool to allow for comments and collection of input.

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

We try to avoid using technical jargon and acronyms without explanations. In case we missed any, here are some commonly used acronyms and terms in transportation planning.

- TAC –Transportation Advisory Committee
- LRTP – Long-Range Transportation Plan
- RTPO-Rural Transportation Planning Organization
- RTIP – Rural Transportation Improvement Program
- STBG-State Transportation Block Grant
- WP –Work Plan

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

This appendix summarizes the main tools that can be used to raise awareness of planning efforts and to engage the public in the process. Tools are classified by potential use. Educate means the tool can be used to share information. Promote means the tool can be used to share opportunities to be involved. Engage means the tool can be used for gathering input and feedback.

| | Educate | Promote | Engage |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Brainstorming/Visioning | | | x |
| Charettes | x | | x |
| Conferences | x | x | |
| Fairs and Events | | x | x |
| Focus Groups | | | x |
| Games and Contest | x | x | x |
| Key Information Interviews | x | X | x |
| Mailing/Email List | X | x | x |
| Media Relations/Press Coverage | X | x | |
| Open Houses | X | x | x |
| Paid Advertising | | x | |
| Public Deliberation | | | x |
| Public Meetings | x | | x |
| Public Service Announcements | | x | |
| Role Playing | | | x |
| Site Visits | x | x | x |
| Small Group Technique | | | x |
| Social Media | X | x | |
| Surveys | | | x |
| Tailored Outreach | X | x | x |
| Video and Webcasts | X | x | x |
| Websites | X | x | x |
| Workshops | X | | x |
| Youth Outreach | X | x | x |

APPENDIX C: REGULATIONS

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT (IIJA) BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW (BIL)/IIJA

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), formally known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, represents a significant legislative achievement aimed at revitalizing America's transportation and infrastructure networks. Passed in November 2021, this law allocates \$1.2 trillion towards various infrastructure projects, including roads, bridges, public transit, and rail systems. A key aspect of the BIL is its continuity and enhancement of the principles laid out in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which was enacted in 2015. The FAST Act aimed to provide long-term funding certainty for surface transportation, ensuring state and local governments could undertake essential projects. The BIL builds on this framework by significantly increasing investment levels and expanding the scope of projects eligible for funding. For regional transportation, this means a more robust and interconnected network, addressing critical needs such as highway maintenance, bridge repairs, and modernization of public transit systems. Additionally, the BIL introduces new priorities, such as promoting electric vehicle infrastructure and improving climate resilience, which are crucial for adapting regional transportation networks to future demands and environmental challenges. By linking to the FAST Act, the BIL ensures continuity in policy while infusing much-needed financial resources and innovative approaches to enhance regional transportation across the United States.

THE OHIO PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

The Ohio Public Records Act, commonly known as the Sunshine Law, is based on the United States' historical principle that the records of government are "the people's records." The Public Records Act gives citizens steps to request records from any public office in Ohio while protecting specific types of records from release. This act also establishes a legal process to enforce compliance when a requester feels that a public office has failed to satisfy its public records obligations. (O.R.C. Chapter 149.)

In order to foster open, transparent and accountable government, citizens have the following rights under Ohio's Open Records Law:

- The right to request public records without providing your name or the reason for your request.
- The right to make public records requests orally or in writing.
- The right to promptly inspect public records, while allowing the office in

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question a “reasonable” amount of time to retrieve, review and redact the requested records.

- The right to receive copies of public records at cost.
- The right to get copies of public records on paper, on the medium on which they are kept or on any other medium you request (a compact disc, for example), if the keeper of the records determines that can be done reasonably as part of normal operations.
- The right to an explanation if any part of your public records request is denied.
- The right to revise a request that the recipient determined was overly broad or ambiguous with the help of that public office.
- The right to have redactions from public records made plainly visible and to be notified of the redactions.
- The right to file a lawsuit against a public office that fails to comply with the Ohio Public Records Act.
- The right to recover court costs, reasonable attorney fees and damages if you win a Public Records Act lawsuit.

All aspects of the Ohio Public Records Act will be observed and enforced during the completion of RTPO activities undertaken by Buckeye Hills, its staff, and any parties contractually obligated to Buckeye Hills during the project period.

TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of their race, color, or national origin by government agencies and programs that receive federal financial assistance.

“No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

There are many forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, or national origin that can limit the opportunity of minorities to gain equal access to services and programs.

For example, in operating a federally assisted program, a recipient cannot, on the basis of race, color, or national origin, either directly or through contractual means:

- Deny program services, aids, or benefits;
- Provide a different service, aid, or benefit, or provide them in a manner different than they are provided to others;
- Segregate or separately treat individuals in any matter related to the receipt of

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any services, aid, or benefit.

All aspects of the Civil Rights Act will be observed and enforced during the completion of RTPO activities undertaken by Buckeye Hills, its staff, and any parties contractually obligated to Buckeye Hills during the project period.

Buckeye Hills Regional Council (BHRC) fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes, executive orders, and regulations in all programs and activities. BHRC operates without regard to race, color, national origin, income, gender, age, and disability. Any person who believes him/herself or any specific class of persons, to be subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI may by him/herself or by representative file a written complaint with the BHRC Title VI Coordinator. A complaint must be filed no later than 180 days after the date of the alleged discrimination. Please contact the Title VI Coordinator via phone at 740-374-9436 for more information. The BHRC meetings are conducted in accessible locations and materials can be provided in accessible formats and in languages other than English. If you would like accessibility or language accommodation, please contact the Title VI Coordinator at 740-374-9436. If you wish to attend a BHRC function and require special accommodation, please give BHRC one week's notice in advance.

Buckeye Hills Title VI plan document can be found on the Buckeye Hills website at buckeyehills.org/transportation.

ADA COMPLIANCE

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is a civil rights statute which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all aspects of life. The ADA requires federally assisted programs to be accessible to people with disabilities of all types. All RTPO public meetings conducted by Buckeye Hills will be held at locations with accessible facilities to accommodate people with mobility limitations. Special accommodation will be made to ensure that individuals with communicative disabilities can participate in meetings. Buckeye Hills asks that requests for special communications accommodations are made one week prior to the scheduled meeting time to allow for any necessary arrangements to be made.

All aspects of the Americans with Disabilities Act will be observed and enforced during the completion of RTPO activities undertaken by Buckeye Hills, its staff, and any parties contractually obligated to Buckeye Hills during the project period.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

"Each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse

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human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations."

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994.

Public participation in the Buckeye Hills RTPO program will also take into consideration Presidential Executive Order 12898 regarding Environmental Justice. This order ensures the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, programs, and policies. Fair treatment means that no racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from the operation of industrial, municipal, and commercial enterprises and from the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies. These negative consequences can include, but are not limited to:

- Bodily impairment, infirmity, illness, or death;
- Air, noise, and water pollution;
- Soil contamination;
- Destruction or disruption of man-made or natural resources;
- Destruction or diminution of aesthetic values;
- Destruction or disruption of community cohesion or a community's economic vitality;
- Displacement of persons, businesses, farms, or nonprofit organizations;
- Adverse employment effects.

Buckeye Hills views Environmental Justice compliance as more than a set of legal and regulatory obligations. Properly implemented environmental justice principles and procedures improve all levels of transportation decision making. During the completion of RTPO activities, Buckeye Hills will:

- Support transportation decisions that meet the needs of all people.
- Design transportation facilities that fit harmoniously into existing communities.
- Strengthen community-based partnerships to provide all populations with opportunities to learn about and improve transportation quality in their lives.
- Partner with other public and private programs to leverage transportation related resources to achieve a common vision for communities.
- Avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations.
- Minimize and/ or mitigate unavoidable impacts by identifying concerns early in the planning phase and providing offsetting initiatives and enhancement measures to

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benefit affected communities and neighborhoods.

- Whenever possible, public meetings will be held in locations convenient to low-income and minority populations and that are accessible to people with disabilities. These locations may include public libraries, schools, community centers, and churches. Agencies and organizations that represent these populations will be given adequate notice of public meetings taking place in their local areas.

Within Environmental Justice, Buckeye Hills must consider three factoring groups: minority populations, populations over age 65, and low-income populations.

NOTE: This report was funded in part through grant[s] from the Federal Highway Administration [and Federal Transit Administration], U.S. Department of Transportation and the Ohio Department of Transportation. The views and opinions of the authors [Buckeye Hills Regional Council] expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U. S. Department of Transportation or the Ohio Department of Transportation.

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