



Hills & Highways

“Transportation News in Southeast Ohio”

Summer/Fall Edition

Hello! I'm excited to introduce myself as your new Region 8 Transportation Planning Manager. A few years ago, ODOT launched a regional approach to enhance mobility and transit, creating regional staff positions to develop coordinated transportation plans.

This initiative started in two regions and has now expanded to include six regional coordinators across Ohio.

I come from the mobility management field, having spent two years as the Hocking County Mobility Manager for HAPCAP (Hocking Athens Perry Community Action). I'm eager to bring my experience to Region 8 and work together to improve transportation in our community.

I hope you find the first edition of Hills and Highways enjoyable and informative. Stay tuned for many more updates and stories.

Looking forward to collaborating with all of you!



Christa Myers
Transportation
Planning
Manager

Mobility Managers Attend Grant-Writing Training



Gwynn Stewart, Assistant Professor of Community Development at Ohio State University Extension in Noble County, offered free grant-writing training in March to residents of Ohio's Appalachian counties. Four mobility managers from Athens, Hocking, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, and Washington counties attended to learn how to support their communities' mobility needs. Ben Ziff of the HAPCAP Mobility team, serving Athens and Hocking counties, found this training particularly valuable. He said he appreciated the grant-writing booklet and the presenter's offer to review a future grant. Mobility managers often hear from individuals needing mobility ramps installed or fare assistance, and local grants can help address these needs.

Increasing Knowledge of Mobility – Ohio's Mobility Manager Conference

Mobility managers from Region 8 attended the Ohio Mobility Manager conference in Newark, Ohio. Representatives from Athens, Hocking, Morgan, Perry, Noble, and Washington counties learned from peers and national leaders like Judy Shanley from NCMM and Easterseals. The conference was hosted by ODOT and the Licking County mobility and transit team, with meals sponsored by NeoRide. The conference featured Perry County's mobility manager discussing leveraging local JFS funds for transportation. Buckeye Hills Mobility Manager Julia Hinzman served on the planning committee. Morgan County Mobility Manager Bobby White says he looks forward to this conference each year for networking and learning about new trends and grants.



Washington County Transit & Partners Field Trip

Representatives from Washington County recently visited Delaware County Transit for a field day to learn about their daily operations. Delaware County Transit has switched from a fixed route system to county-wide demand response. Organized by Nelson/Nygaard as part of the Washington County Transit Development Plan Study, the trip included a memorable transit ride through the historic downtown area. Stay tuned for exciting changes coming to Washington County!



Longtime Logan Public Transit Manager Retires from HAPCAP

Rog Stivison retired as manager for Logan Public Transit in April after leading the public transit program for 15 years. Some of his accomplishments, as shared in an interview with the Logan Daily News, include tripling the number wheelchair accessible vans in the fleet, more than doubling annual ridership and expanding transit service to the entire county. His most challenging experience was making the expansion decision to cover Hocking County, which is rural and has a dispersed population. Because this happened in in late February 2020 he had to quickly re-adjust as ridership plummeted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rog shared that throughout the public health crisis, LPT never missed a day of business. He also didn't suffer from the shortage of drivers that many other public transits around the state experienced. Ridership has bounced back quickly from a low of 14,000 rides in 2020 to a record high in 2023. He shared two main

indicators that their growth is sustainable: regular services outside Logan, particularly in Laurelville area, are gaining momentum and their ridership is diversifying. A majority of their riders are from the senior and disabled populations, but an increasing number of the customer base are from the general public. HAPCAP is open to new ventures, such as their current offering of a complimentary seasonal weekend loop route to Hocking Hills State Park with support from Hocking Hills Tourism Association.

Ohio Loves Transit

Every February, the Ohio Public Transportation Association selects a week to celebrate public transportation across the state, culminating in a Legislative Day at the Ohio Statehouse. This year, mobility managers and public transit staff led events in their communities, rode buses and vans to collect rider stories, and met with state elected officials to highlight the importance of public transportation in both urban and rural areas. Colleagues from Buckeye Hills Regional Council, Hocking Athens Perry Community Action, Morgan County Economic Development, and Perry County JFS attended Legislative Day in Columbus. Public transit is an integral part of our communities, particularly for seniors and individuals with disabilities, and supports all residents who do not own or operate vehicles.



Get on The Bus: Advocating for Riding Public Transit

Featuring excerpts from “How We Travel”
by Ben Ziff, HAPCAP Mobility Manager

I go to the grocery store fairly regularly, as do many of us. Most often, I drive my car. I would argue that most often, nearly all of us car owners drive our car. We live in an incredibly car-focused world, and thus that becomes our “standard” of travel. It’s direct, it’s accessible exactly when we want it, its cost is something we have accepted, and most importantly, it’s the comfortable standard for a large number of people. But what if, hear me out, you didn’t drive there? What if you tried something you hadn’t tried before?

Public transit has an inherently intimidating feel about it. Those of us who haven’t used it before are often nervous to try it, worried by what could go wrong. What if I miss my stop? What if I get on the wrong bus? What if there’s someone on the bus I don’t know and have to sit near? All of these fears are fair and valid for someone to initially worry they will experience. But are they a fair representation of what we’re going to actually encounter or experience? I contend that they are not. Before I had my job as the Mobility Coordinator in Athens and Hocking Counties, I had never ridden Athens Public Transit (APT). I never bothered to ask myself “what if I just give it a try?”. Having ridden it extensively now, I can and will argue until I am blue in the face that public transit is easy to use, affordable, convenient, and dare I say it, life changing.

For me, it isn’t life changing in the way that many people in the world of public transit like to bill it, myself included. It hasn’t given me an independence I was lacking before. It hasn’t afforded me the opportunity to finally have access to a grocery store, or a doctors’ office, or a new job. I’m not one of the thousands of people in our county for whom public transit is an absolute necessity. But it has given me the opportunity to appreciate the world around me when I’m

traveling. When I ride an APT bus, I’m not watching the car in front of me, or worrying about the driver behind me. I’m looking out the windows. I’m looking at the place that I call home from a perspective I hadn’t been able to enjoy before. I’m leaving behind the “comfort” of my own car, and allowing myself to experience something new and different. What was once an intimidating prospect, a frightening idea of being thrust into an unfamiliar situation, is now something else entirely: relaxing, enjoyable, exciting, and enriching.

NEW

**Ben Ziff & Paige Gates
joined the HAPCAP
Mobility Team in
January 2024**

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In Case You Missed It...



Mobility Manager, Julia Hinzman was recently awarded the Distinguished Service Award at the Washington County Veterans Hall of Fame and Award Ceremony.

Julia was honored due to her diligent work and dedication to assisting local veterans with rides to their medical appointments. We are very proud of her accomplishments and work within the community.

IMPACT STORY



Kelly Isaly, Mobility Manager and Courtney Briggs, Community Health Worker, have been making a positive impact through visits to the various food pantries throughout Monroe County. Kelly shared: “During our visit to Sardis, we were able to identify needs, educate, and assist a resident who needed transportation for treatments. Our efforts have touched many lives, while distributing valuable information in the communities of Sardis, Woodsfield, and Lewisville.”

Perry County Public Transit and Partners Support Local Dog Shelter

Perry County Public Transit, Job and Family Services, and Mobility Management teams teamed up with a local fundraiser to fill a transit vehicle for the Perry County Dog Shelter. The community responded generously, donating dog food, toys, blankets, and cleaning supplies. This event not only supported the shelter with essential resources but also showed how the community could rally together for a worthy cause. The Perry County Dog Shelter expressed deep gratitude, emphasizing how these donations will significantly improve the lives of dogs awaiting adoption.



Appalachian Regional Commission's ARISE Planning Grant to Assess Transportation Challenges

The ARC is collaborating with Ohio University and other partners to study transportation barriers affecting workforce training, jobs, and healthcare in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Five counties in the Buckeye Hills Regional Council Region 8—Athens, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, and Washington—are involved. Mobility managers from these counties and the HAPCAP Transit director attended the initial meeting to discuss transportation gaps

in the Appalachian region. Buckeye Hills Regional Council Executive Director, Chasity Schmelzenbach, noted that transportation barriers impact workforce access to education, training, and jobs, healthcare access for aging residents, children, and families, and residents' ability to engage in community activities. The planning team will meet with stakeholders in Pennsylvania and West Virginia and will share their report in fall 2024, aiming to apply for funding to address the identified needs.

Mark Your Calendar

CarFit Washington County
August 16 | 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Buckeye Hills Regional Council, Marietta
For registration, contact 1-800-331-2644 Ext. 6
jhinzman@buckeyeohio.org or kisaly@buckeyeohio.org

CarFit Noble & Guernsey County
August 23 | 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Pritchard-Laughlin Event Center
For registration, contact 740-623-2564
tracyhaines@coshoctoncounty.net

This newsletter was created by

BUCKEYE HILLS
regional
council

in partnership with Southeast Ohio's
Mobility Management agencies.