



## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

MARCH 7, 2025

Buckeye Hills Regional Council

### AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order** | Lenny Eliason, President
- II. **Roll Call** | Chasity Schmelzenbach, Secretary
- III. **Consent Agenda** | Lenny Eliason, President **TAB #1**
- IV. **ARC Pre-Application Update** | Sam Miller, Development Director **TAB #2**
- V. **Executive Director Report** | Chasity Schmelzenbach **TAB #3**
- VI. **Member Round Table**
- VII. **Legislator and Partner Agency Updates**
- VIII. **Citizen Participation**
- IX. **Other Business**
- X. **Adjournment**

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THE NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MAY 2, 2024.

**Minutes of the February 7, 2025  
Buckeye Hills Regional Council Executive Committee Meeting**

The Buckeye Hills Regional Council (BHRC) Executive Committee meeting was held February 7, 2025. The meeting was held at Buckeye Hills, Marietta, Ohio.

In attendance were:

<b>OFFICERS:</b>	Ron Moore, Vice President	Morgan County
	James Booth, Treasurer	Washington County
	Chasity Schmelzenbach, Secretary (non-voting member per Bylaws)	BHRC
<b>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:</b>	Steve Patterson	City of Athens
	Jason D'Onofrio	Hocking County
	Ken Stewart	Monroe County (Private Sector)
	Mick Schumacher	Monroe County - Alternate
	Heidi Maxwell	Morgan County
	Allen Fraley	Noble County
<b>GUESTS:</b>	Allie New	Office of U.S. Representative Rulli
<b>STAFF:</b>	Angie Lawrence	HR & Payroll Manager
	Aaron Martin	Program Manager
	Christa Myers	Transportation Planning Manager
	Denise Keyes	Fiscal Director
	Emma Yeager	Development Specialist
	Kate Dunn	Senior Planner
	Kimy Porter	Fiscal Assistant
	Jen Huck	Fiscal Assistant
	Jennifer Westfall	Aging & Health Director
	Jenny Simmons	Executive Assistant
	Misty McConnell	Assistant Fiscal Director
	Melissa Zoller	Planner Director
	Sam Miller	Development Director

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ron Moore, Vice President, called the meeting to order.

**ROLE CALL**

Chasity Schmelzenbach, Secretary, conducted roll call.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Jason D'Onofrio moved to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes from the January 10, 2024, meeting; Statement of Activities; Administrative Expense YTD; Aging and Disability Programs Services and Funding Report for period July 1, 2023, through December 31, 2024, and Division and Director's Reports. Allen Fraley seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

**MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

Denise Keyes, Fiscal Director, reported the FY' 24 audit report is completed. She can provide hard copies to committee members that request a copy. She announced that it will be time for a new audit firm next year.

James Booth moved to approve and recommend the FY 2026 Administrative Budget to the General Policy Committee at the Annual Meeting. Ken Stewart seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

James Booth moved to approve the Solicitation Requirements of the Purchase Policy update presented by Denise Keyes. Ken Stewart seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

Jason D'Onofrio moved to approve the Management Committee Report presented by Angie Lawrence, HR Director. Allen Fraley seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

Steve Patterson moved to approve the evaluation process update presented by Angie Lawrence. James Booth seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

### **MEDICAID HCBS ARPA RESOLUTION**

Allen Fraley moved the resolution of the BHRC to approve Ohio Department of Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Subgrant in the amount of \$762,843 for a period of January 1, 2025, through April 1, 2026. Jason D'Onofrio seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Director Schmelzenbach provided the following updates to the committee:

#### **Congratulations in the Region:**

- Washington & Monroe counties are the first in Ohio fully implement Next Generation 9-1-1
- Community Housing Impact and Preservation (CHIP)

#### **State Updates:**

- ODNR Recreational Trails Program & Clean Ohio Trail Application Deadline is 03/15/25
- The ODOD released program guidelines for the second award period of the Brownfield Remediation Program. An informational webinar to cover updates, eligibility requirements, and the application process will take place on 02/12/25 at 10 am.
- Ohio University's Voinovich Academy will provide "Governing Essentials for Local Elected Officials" program on 02/28/25.
- Continuing to support the Appalachian Community Grant Program (ACGP) projects.
- Schmelzenbach mentioned the Governors Officer of Appalachia (GOA) reaching out for help on a project in Middleport and she will provide more details as the project developments.
- Schmelzenbach spoke briefly about the state budget and how we are leaning into terms "Rural" partnerships versus "Appalachian" ones.

#### **Mark Your Calendars**

- Buckeye Hills Forward Open House
  - February 11: Pomeroy
  - February 12: Logan
  - February 20: Woodsfield
- Monroe County Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting: February 12
- Noble County Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting: February 13
- Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Apps Due: February 14
- Washington County Way2Go Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting: February 18
- NRAC Nominations Due: February 28
- Bricker Graydon Procurement for Public Entities: May 8

#### **Federal Updates**

- The federal government is not currently looking at the programs we administer right now.

- We want to see ARC funding go back to “boots on the ground” type projects.
- We might have to rework the Community Change Grants applications to meet the new criteria for funding, but the overall project is mostly economic development. We are creating a white paper and will continue to advocate for it.

### **MEMBER ROUND TABLE**

Each member had the opportunity to share updates from their county. This open-floor format allowed members to discuss their current initiatives, challenges and successes.

### **LEGISLATIVE & PARTNER AGENCY UPDATES**

Allie New, Office of U.S. Representative Rulli, provided updates to the committee.

### **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

No citizens present wished to address the committee.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no other business, Steve Patterson moved to adjourn the meeting. James Booth seconded the motion. All yeas. Motion carried.

Approved By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chasity Schmelzenbach, Secretary

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**

July 1, 2024, through January 31, 2025

### **YEAR TO DATE ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE DETAIL**

Administrative Expenses for Fiscal Year 2025 totaled \$4,091,762.62 on January 31. This total represents 57.35% of the Council's administrative budget utilized. Total spending for this period is budgeted to be 58%. Individual line-item budgets and expenses are monitored monthly to ensure funds are utilized appropriately and budget revisions are requested from funding agencies as needed. The cumulative Indirect Cost rate for this period is 45%. The Projected Indirect Rate for Fiscal Year 2025 is 46%.

### **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 January 31, more than \$11.4 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.



**Administrative Expense Detail**  
**For the Period July 1, 2024 - January 31, 2025**

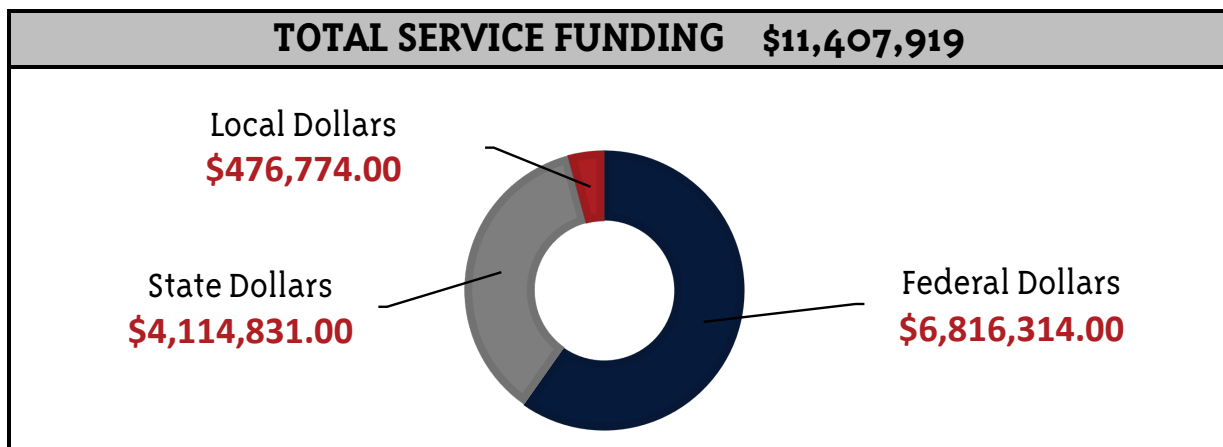
	2024 YTD Actual	2025 YTD Actual	2025 Budget	% of Budget
Salary	\$ 1,892,079.15	\$ 2,142,793.69	\$ 3,674,155.18	58.32%
Fringe Benefits	\$ 987,655.46	\$ 1,074,390.35	\$ 2,047,753.49	52.47%
Advertising	\$ 157,233.56	\$ 78,103.26	\$ 128,785.00	60.65%
Audit Costs	\$ 20,110.00	\$ 20,110.00	\$ 32,000.00	62.84%
Building Maintenance	\$ 4,467.00	\$ 15,433.33	\$ 26,000.00	59.36%
Communications	\$ 50,141.44	\$ 55,043.38	\$ 101,875.00	54.03%
Conference Registration Fee	\$ 28,027.80	\$ 28,216.02	\$ 44,200.00	63.84%
Contract Services	\$ 33,056.66	\$ 137,339.26	\$ 194,752.76	70.52%
Employee/Governing Board	\$ 16,720.56	\$ 11,700.53	\$ 15,000.00	78.00%
Equipment Purchase/Maintenance	\$ 46,213.27	\$ 9,069.49	\$ 19,800.00	45.81%
Insurance	\$ 32,571.74	\$ -	\$ 41,000.00	0.00%
Legal Costs	\$ 1,831.25	\$ 2,075.00	\$ 4,500.00	46.11%
Organizational Dues	\$ 34,665.90	\$ 54,375.66	\$ 55,180.00	98.54%
Other Costs	\$ 9,398.45	\$ 12,513.09	\$ 13,600.00	92.01%
Postage	\$ 6,054.10	\$ 9,748.72	\$ 13,000.00	74.99%
Printing Costs	\$ 1,207.68	\$ 2,076.00	\$ 6,000.00	34.60%
Software & Licenses	\$ 60,737.10	\$ 63,453.69	\$ 110,815.00	57.26%
Space	\$ 148,948.83	\$ 148,948.73	\$ 255,340.00	58.33%
Staff Training Fees	\$ 11,841.80	\$ 5,881.19	\$ 9,000.00	65.35%
Subscriptions	\$ 7,197.30	\$ 8,308.47	\$ 8,500.00	97.75%
Supplies	\$ 50,308.59	\$ 42,788.18	\$ 95,966.00	44.59%
Travel - Mileage Reimbursement	\$ 86,343.30	\$ 102,178.21	\$ 137,628.81	74.24%
Travel - Out of Town Expense	\$ 47,460.09	\$ 67,216.37	\$ 100,000.00	67.22%
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES FOR THE PERIOD</b>	<b>\$ 3,734,271.03</b>	<b>\$ 4,091,762.62</b>	<b>\$ 7,134,851.24</b>	<b>57.35%</b>
<b>INDIRECT COST RATE FOR THE PERIOD</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>45%</b>		

# Buckeye Hills Regional Council

## Aging and Health Programs Services & Funding Report

July 1, 2024 - January 31, 2025

SERVICES PROVIDED		
Direct Service Hours Provided	Transportation Trips	Adult Day Service Days Attended
<b>248,816</b>	<b>8,489</b>	<b>1,393</b>
Adult Day Service Miles Traveled	Meals Provided	Home Medical Equipment & Emergency Response Units
<b>14,430</b>	<b>225,957</b>	<b>1,257</b>
Legal Services Contacts	Home Accessibility Modification And Pest Control Jobs	Senior Farmers Market Coupons Redeemed
<b>312</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>26,343</b>
Grocery Shopping and Delivery	Assisted Living Days	Evidence Based Classes
<b>354</b>	<b>10,741</b>	<b>428</b>
	Alzheimers Education Contacts	
	<b>229</b>	



REGIONAL STATS		
Total Consumers Served	Total Population	Total Population Eligible for Services by Age (60+)
<b>5,381</b>	<b>249,172</b>	<b>65,746</b>

## PROGRAM UPDATES

**HEAP Outreach** | Regular HEAP promotion is continuing through March 31st. Billboards are up in all eight counties directing people to contact their local Community Action Agency for application assistance. Bi-weekly social media posts are being shared with links to the full press release and additional information on the program. Brochures are being distributed at in-person outreach events and to consumers during home visits.

**Aging Outreach** | Our spring outreach calendar is filling up and we will be attending many community events where handouts and information will be made available.

Outreach events include:

- March 14- Perry County Senior Expo (Silver Sponsors)
- March 20- UpBEAT Food for Thought Group Presentation
- March 26- Matter of Balance Presentation
- March 29- Veterans Welcome Home Event
- April 4- Hocking County Senior Expo (Silver Sponsors)

If there is an upcoming outreach event in your community that we should attend or a civic group that would like to have a speaker on Aging topics, please contact Amanda Reeder at [areeder@buckeyehills.org](mailto:areeder@buckeyehills.org).

**Medicare Outreach** | General Medicare posts and information on Extra Help, Medicare Savings Programs, and Preventative Services are running on a weekly basis across our social media channels. Our Medibag prescription bags are being distributed to a total of nine different pharmacies this month to promote the Extra Help Savings Programs. Newspaper ads are scheduled to run in conjunction with the bags for Monroe County as we could not secure a pharmacy location in that region. We are continuing our partnership with Senior Medicare Patrol and educating seniors about Medicare Fraud and Safety measures.

**Buckeye Hills Forward** | The Communications Team assisted Development over the past several weeks to publicize and promote registration for the series of Buckeye Hills Forward Open Houses in each of our eight counties, which runs through February. The sessions invited feedback on our updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and were promoted through local media releases, our website, email newsletter, and social media. Over 120 individuals attended and contributed some 80 comment cards or completed online feedback surveys. The effort also garnered significant media coverage across the region, making residents aware of the process.

**Local Development District Return on Investment Report** | The Communications Director worked with staff from our sister Local Development Districts to draft the 2024 Return on Investment report, highlighting the impacts of investments by the Appalachian Regional Commission and Governor's Office of Appalachia across the 32 counties of Appalachian Ohio. In 2024, state and federal investments of \$19.6 million supported 60 projects totaling \$133.8 million. In the Buckeye Hills region, 21 projects totaling \$44.4 million received \$7.6 million from the Appalachian Regional Commission's Area Development program, while the Governor's Office of Appalachia invested \$1.7 million in the region. This report will be shared with our region's Congressional representatives and their staff on March 11 during the NADO-DDAA Washington Conference. Copies will be available at our General Policy Council meeting on April 4.

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**Media Relations Training** | The Communications Department worked with Dan Farkas of Pass PR to conduct an on-site media relations training with 16 Buckeye Hills staff who are frequently called upon to speak to the media or whose work takes them to community events where media is present. Trainees were given several tips and tools for handling media interactions and participated in a recorded mock interview on which they received feedback. The training was well-received and will improve our staff's ability to speak to the impact and value of the council's work on behalf of the communities and individuals we serve.

**Ohio University Documentary Project** | The Communications Department is working with our counterparts at Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission and students from Ohio University's Media Production for the Community class to document some of the projects supported by the Appalachian Community Grant Program in the region. This will be a multi-semester project resulting in several 3-5 minute profiles of projects.

## RECENT MEDIA

- **February 1, 2025 – The Marietta Times:** Nearly \$4 million awarded to Monroe
- **February 1, 2025 – AVC Communications (YourRadioPlace.com):** Noble County Recognizes Ohio Loves Transit Week
- **February 6, 2025 – Monroe County Beacon:** The First Success for a Decades Old Problem
- **February 6, 2025 – Monroe County Beacon:** Celebrating Nearing Completion of the Monroe Theatre Picture
- **February 15, 2025 – Logan Daily News:** New Economic Development Plan Taking Final Shape
- **February 19, 2025 – Perry County Tribune:** New Economic Development Plan Taking Final Shape
- **February 22, 2025 – The Marietta Times:** Southeastern Ohio Port Authority acquires former AMP-Ohio Gorsuch Site
- **February 27, 2025 – Monroe County Beacon:** Big Plans from Buckeye Hills Forward

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**CONTACT INFO:** Drew Tanner, Communications Director | [dtanner@buckeyehills.org](mailto:dtanner@buckeyehills.org) | 740-376-1030

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## PROGRAM UPDATES

**New Funding Formula** | The Ohio Department of Aging is in the process of evaluating and releasing a new funding formula for Older Americans Act federal funding. The funding formula is based on current census data and is re-evaluated by the state. Areas experiencing a decrease in population growth may experience a cut in funding for OAA programming such as home delivered meals, transportation and personal care. Various factors can influence the formula such as age of the population, demonstration of need and access to services.

**MyCare Academy Series** | The Ohio Department of Medicaid is hosting a MyCare Academy series to assist the AAAs in transitioning to the MyCare program in 2026. MyCare will move PASSPORT consumers to a home and community-based program that is managed through four managed care organizations (MCO). The AAAs will continue to provide waiver service coordination for the members of the MCOs. BHRC staff will be attending and participating in the MyCare Academy. If you have an interest in the webinars, please contact Dawn at [dweber@buckeyehills.org](mailto:dweber@buckeyehills.org).

**Data & Software Systems** | The Ohio Department of Aging is re-evaluating, replacing and enhancing data and software systems over the remainder of 2025. Wellsky (OAA documentation), PIMS (PASSPORT documentation), OBLTSS (front door services) and several other systems are slated to be replaced or enhanced over the coming months. It is our hope that there will be little to no disruption in workflow or service delivery.

**The Alzheimer's Respite RFP** | The RFP is complete and will be available to applicants beginning March 4<sup>th</sup>. The deadline to apply is April 4<sup>th</sup> with implementation beginning July 1, 2025, until June 30, 2027.

**Senior Farmers Market Program** | The program is slated to go live May 15, 2025, through the Department of Aging. BHRC staff are still working to maintain a paper version of the program that best serves the residents of the region. It is possible that some areas will transition to an electronic version of the program for the 2025 season.

**O4A Advocacy Conference** | The conference will take place on March 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Renaissance Columbus Downtown Hotel, 50 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Columbus. The agenda will include information regarding advocacy efforts, state budget and include visits to legislators. A Legislative Reception will also be held on the evening of March 4<sup>th</sup> beginning at 5pm. If you have an interest in attending the conference or the reception, please reach out to Jenn Westfall at [jwestfall@buckeyehills.org](mailto:jwestfall@buckeyehills.org).

## PASSPORT AND ASSISTED LIVING CASELOAD REGIONWIDE

PASSPORT: 809 individuals

Assisted Living Waiver 62 individuals

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**CONTACT:** Jenn Westfall, Aging and Health Director | [jwestfall@buckeyehills.org](mailto:jwestfall@buckeyehills.org) | 740-376-1038  
Dawn Weber, Home Care Director | [dweber@buckeyehills.org](mailto:dweber@buckeyehills.org) | 740-376-1041

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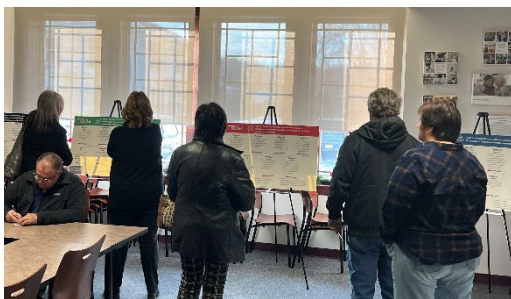
## CURRENT INITIATIVES

**ARC Pre-Application for Area Development Funding** | Buckeye Hills Regional Council will release its 2024 pre-application on March 24 for communities and organizations seeking funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission's (ARC) Area Development Program. Completing the pre-application is the first step for local officials working with Buckeye Hills to pursue project funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission and other state and federal partners. Buckeye Hills Regional Council is committed to assisting stakeholders across Southeast Ohio with identifying and securing resources that strengthen the region's communities.

To assist communities with the pre-application and align their projects with the ARC goal areas, the Development team will host a webinar and three county-specific workshops. The workshops specifically target counties where we have seen a lack of applications in the last five years.

- March 14: Pre-Application Webinar at 2:00 p.m.
- March 17: Noble County Pre-Application Workshop - OSU Operations: Caldwell Office, 16714 Wolf Run Rd., Caldwell, OH 43724 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- March 19: Hocking County Pre-Application Workshop - Hocking Hills Chamber of Commerce, 96 W. Hunter Street, Logan, OH 43138 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- March 22: Meigs County Pre-Application Workshop - Pomeroy Public Library, 216 W. Main Street, Pomeroy, OH 45769 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Projects should focus on supporting local business, workforce development, community infrastructure, and regional culture and tourism. Projects must serve residents in one or more of the eight counties served by Buckeye Hills: Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington. Pre-applications may be submitted online at [buckeyehills.org/arc](https://buckeyehills.org/arc). **Pre-applications must be submitted by April 25, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.**



**Buckeye Hills Forward: A Regional Economic Plan** | In January and February, Buckeye Hills Regional Council hosted a series of community open house sessions, listed below, to provide the opportunity for individuals, local officials, private industry, and other stakeholders to review Buckeye Hills Forward, a set of economic development goals and objectives that will help shape Southeast Ohio over the next five years. Buckeye Hills Forward was drafted with the input gathered from residents in a series of Community Workshops that Buckeye Hills hosted in early 2024.

Input from the open house sessions will help shape the final draft that will be presented to Buckeye Hills Regional Council's General Policy Council for approval at its annual meeting in April. The plan will then be forwarded to the EDA for its approval.

## NEWS

### Program & Service Updates

**BroadbandOhio Opens Capacity Grant Application** | The Ohio Digital Inclusion Grant Program is now live. Qualifying organizations can apply for funding up to \$1 million to support projects that serve Ohioans with the skills and devices they need to safely use the internet. The program supports the continued implementation of

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Ohio's Digital Opportunity Plan. Projects must address a digital opportunity barrier, such as having access to affordable broadband and devices, digital skills training and technical support, and accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services. Projects will also impact at least one digital inclusion outcome area such as economic and workforce development, education, health, civic and social engagement, or delivery of other essential services. Funding goes through 2029, and awards are contingent on funding availability. To find out if your entity is eligible for funding and for additional application links, visit the Ohio Digital Inclusion Grant Program page on the BroadbandOhio website. Applications close on Friday, April 11, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. Please reach out to [bbohgrants@development.ohio.gov](mailto:bbohgrants@development.ohio.gov) with any questions.

**Save the Date: May 13, 2025, Appalachian Ohio State of the Region Conference** | The Appalachian Ohio State of the Region Conference brings public officials, economic development experts, business and organizational leaders, and others to discuss different issues related to economic growth in the Appalachian Ohio region. Hosted by Ohio University's Voinovich School for Leadership and Public Service in collaboration with the Local Development Districts that serve Appalachian Ohio, the event is part of OU's U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) University Center project. Topics at this year's conference include Housing, Childcare, Tourism, and Downtown Development. Watch [sotr.ohio.edu](http://sotr.ohio.edu) for agenda details and registration information.

**\$10 Million in Drought Relief Funding Available to Ohio Farmers** | The Ohio Department of Agriculture's sign-up period for farmers to apply for state drought relief funding began February 15, 2025, and will close April 1, 2025. Extreme weather conditions throughout the spring and summer significantly impacted Ohio's agricultural producers. Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts will help administer the relief funding to 28 counties designated as primary natural disaster areas by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) between August 19 and September 16, 2024, due to drought. Funding is available to any livestock producer participating in the USDA FSA Livestock Forage Disaster Program in a county designated as a primary natural disaster area.

The 28 counties are: Athens, Belmont, Carroll, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Highland, Hocking, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Licking, Madison, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pickaway, Pike, Ross, Tuscarawas, Vinton and Washington. Livestock producers located in the 28 impacted counties are encouraged to contact their local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to discuss eligibility and to apply for funding. For more resources and information please visit ODA's drought resource webpage.

**2025 ARC States' Co-Chair Elected: Maryland Gov. Wes Moore** | Elected by his fellow Appalachian state governors, Maryland Governor Wes Moore is now ARC's 2025 States' Co-Chair. He is the 72nd States' Co-Chair in ARC's history. In his year-long position, Gov. Moore will work alongside ARC's Federal Co-Chair and his fellow governors to continue investing in economic growth and innovation across the region. In fiscal year 2024, ARC invested nearly \$365 million in 583 projects, which attracted an additional \$5 billion in private investments across Appalachia.

**Monroe Theatre Kick Off** | BHRC Development Staff recently visited Woodsfield to join the celebration of the kick-off of renovations at The Monroe Theatre. The nearly \$4M renovation, made possible through the Ohio Department of Development Appalachian Community Grant Program, will allow the historic theatre to become fully ADA accessible, expand its capacity to 500 patrons with the addition of balcony seating, and improve its heating, cooling, and plumbing systems. These renovations will open up even more opportunities for the theatre, which reopened in 2019, to grow and draw residents and visitors alike to downtown Woodsfield.

**Ohio & Lee Township Water and Sewer Authority Celebrate Improvements** | The Ohio & Lee Township Water and Sewer Authority held a festive ceremony on January 28 to celebrate the completion of wastewater improvements in Duffy and to start the next phases to improve wastewater service in Hannibal and Sardis. This project is made possible with funding and technical assistance from the Ohio Department of Development, OhioWater Development Authority, Appalachian Regional Commission, Monroe County Commissioners, Ohio EPA,

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Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), and Buckeye Hills Regional.

**Caldwell Prepares for ACGP Revitalization Project** | Exciting plans for Caldwell are taking shape. Buckeye Hills Development staff visited Caldwell on January 28 to discuss the village's downtown revitalization project. Made possible with a \$4M grant from the Ohio Department of Development and Ohio Governor's Office of Appalachia Appalachian Community Grant Program, Caldwell's downtown square will undergo streetscape, placemaking, and walkability enhancements to help improve resident and visitor access to downtown businesses. This project will also revitalize the downtown courtyard into a community gathering and performing arts space. Work on the project is expected to start this spring.

## STAFF UPDATES

- **Michelle Hyer** has been working closely with staff on the Appalachian Community Grant Program (ACGP) with the administration of 16 projects. She has also been preparing for the upcoming Region 12 OneOhio Committee meeting. Michelle has also been actively working on three Ohio Department of Development monitoring visit/reviews for Meigs and Washington counties.
- **Kylee Nichols** has continued to support her ACGP projects, including the Southeast Ohio History Center, Village of McConnelsville and Village of Caldwell.
- **Jada Riley** wrapped up the Buckeye Hill Forward Open Houses and is currently aggregating feedback received from those sessions.
- **Emma Yeager** is working to open the pre-application for ARC Area Development Funding and planning the informational webinar three in-person.

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**CONTACT:** Sam Miller, Development Director | [smiller@buckeyehills.org](mailto:smiller@buckeyehills.org) | 740-376-1028

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## PROGRAM & SERVICE UPDATES

**USEPA Brownfields Assessment Grant Program Update** | To date, the USEPA Brownfields Assessment grant awarded to Buckeye Hills has provided services to 13 projects in 6 of the 8 BHRC counties. Projects have been completed in Athens, Hocking, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington Counties and have included 9 Phase I ESAs, 2 Phase II ESAs, 1 Document Review, 4 Remedial Action Plans, 3 HAZMAT reports, 2 Asbestos Reports, and 1 Site Sampling and Analysis Plans. 4 of the 10 projects were included in applications to the Ohio Department of Development Brownfield Remediation and Building Demolition and Site Revitalization programs. Additional projects are being provided services and quarterly reporting is up to date.

## STAFF UPDATES

- **Melissa Zoller (Planning Director)** and senior planners had a virtual meeting with ODOT to review the upcoming annual workplan. She collaborated with senior planners, county engineers, and EMA directors on the PROTECT application before learning that the application had been pulled. However, the information gathered will be valuable for other applications and the development of the regional RIP. Melissa and Sam are currently working on a Climate Smart application. Additionally, she attended the R8 Regional Steering/Advisory quarterly meeting. She participated in Mobility Legislative Day at the Statehouse alongside the Regional Mobility Manager and Mobility Managers. Melissa and Christa also held a virtual meeting with Age Friendly Athens. Furthermore, she, along with other staff members, attended the SERDI Leadership Development Training.
- **Christa Myers (Transportation Planning Manager)** led the R8 Regional Mobility/Transportation Steering Committee at BHRC and welcomed some new members. She attended Legislative Day on Tuesday, February 11 at the Statehouse in Columbus. She met with state elected officials or their staff and supported the public transit testimonials on HB 54 to the House Transportation Committee. She worked on amplifying all the Ohio Loves Transit social media posts in the region (BHRC's and our partners'). She attended Noble and Washington County TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) meetings. She attended a ride-along with Meigs Public Transit and met with the JFS management about mobility transition plans. She participated in a discussion with Amy Lipka about the Age-Friendly Athens program and then followed up with Serena Anderson (Region 2 Regional Coordinator) to find out more information about their fellowship and programs in their region. She attended BHRC's Hocking County Active Transportation Plan virtual meeting with Toole Design and the Hocking County Scenic Trail meeting in Logan. She assisted Julia Hinzman with a CarFit training for a Driver's Ed class at the Washington County Career Center. She has been distributing the print version of the regional Mobility and Transportation newsletter, Hills and Highways, to stakeholders. She viewed webinars: Enhancing Transparency: Best Practices for FTA Section 5310 Programs and Digital Accessibility for Transportation Providers. She attended OARC's Transportation Committee meeting in Columbus.
- **Kate Dunn (Senior Planner)** has successfully completed the application requirements with the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) for two Brownfield Remediation grants in Noble County, as well as Demolition and Site Revitalization projects in both Noble and Hocking Counties. The two Noble County Brownfield Remediation projects have received grant agreements, and Requests for Qualifications (RFQs)

have been issued to secure an Environmental Consultant to support Buckeye Hills staff. The RFQ responses are due by March 7th. Buckeye Hills staff are still awaiting grant agreements for the Demolition and Site

Revitalization projects in Noble and Hocking Counties. Once received, RFQs will be released to obtain an Environmental Consultant for these projects as well. In addition, Kate continues to administer the US EDA (US Economic Development Administration) grant awarded to the Athens County Port Authority for the construction of a Speculative Building at the Bill Theisen Industrial Park in The Plains, Athens County. The building is currently 90-95% complete. She is also managing the USEPA (US Environmental Protection Agency) Brownfields Assessment grant awarded to Buckeye Hills. Buckeye Hills is currently accepting project submissions for participation in this grant, with a submission deadline of June 30th.

- **Eric Wade (Senior Planner)** recently completed the draft version of the FY26-29 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), submitted to ODOT for approval. In addition, he is actively working on multiple GIS projects alongside the OU intern, supporting internal partners such as the Aging Division, Regional Transportation, and Mobility Management. Eric, with Melissa, is finalizing the draft FY26 work plan for the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO). Furthermore, he is leading the STBG (Surface Transportation Block Grant) application process and overseeing the Hocking County Active Transportation Plan (ATP) Master Plan study. Throughout February, Eric's primary efforts have been focused on RTPO-related initiatives and GIS projects, contributing significantly to the region's transportation planning efforts.
- **Kelly Isaly and Julia Hinzman (Mobility Managers)** - This month, we focused on Ohio Loves Transit across all three counties. Commissioners in Monroe, Noble, and Washington signed proclamations declaring February 9-15 as *Ohio Loves Transit Week*. To celebrate, all three transit systems offered free fares throughout the week. On February 11, we traveled to Columbus to meet with Representatives Ritter, Ferguson, and an aide for Representative Jones to discuss the importance of public transit. Followed by a reception hosted by the Ohio Public Transportation Association (OPTA), further advocating for transit support.

Additionally, we held Transportation Advisory Committee meetings in all three counties for the third quarter, where discussions centered on the completion timeline for the Coordinated Transportation Plan. We also challenged each committee to help expand Mobility Management outreach within their respective counties.

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## Executive Committee Ranking of ARC Investment Priorities for FY2025-26

Annually, the Development Team brings the current Appalachian Regional Commission Investment Priorities before members of the executive committee for review and ranking. The average ranking of each investment priority informs the criteria Buckeye Hills utilizes to score pre-applications for Area Development funding. A project that aligns itself with a highly ranked investment priority is more likely to score higher than projects that align with a lower ranked investment priority.

We would like each member of the executive committee to rank the ARC Investment Priorities below in importance from 1 to 5; 1 being of greatest importance to you and your constituents.

**County Representing** *(required-please print)* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ **Building Appalachian Businesses:** projects that support the creation of new businesses and jobs or support entrepreneurs.

\_\_\_ **Building Appalachia's Workforce Ecosystem:** projects that focus on work readiness, technical skills, or remove barriers to employment, such as transportation, healthcare, housing, childcare, or recovery services.

\_\_\_ **Building Appalachia's Infrastructure:** projects that address built infrastructure needs, such as water, sanitary sewer and storm wastewater; energy (including electric, heat, oil and gas, and alternative energy sources).

\_\_\_ **Building Regional Culture and Tourism:** projects that focus on downtown revitalization, develop and connect outdoor experiences to the surrounding rural communities to drive job creation.

\_\_\_ **Building Community Leaders and Capacity:** projects that support technical assistance and planning efforts, and offer leadership development and educational programming that empowers residents to participate in the strengthening of their communities.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**RSVP: General Policy Council Annual Meeting April 4** | Buckeye Hills Regional Council members and partners are invited to join us for the 2025 annual meeting of the General Policy Council on Friday, April 4, at 11:00 a.m. The meeting will feature Matt Abbott—the new President and CEO at OhioSE—as our keynote speaker, regional updates, highlights from our 2024 Impact Report, and more! Registration is \$25 and includes lunch. General Policy Council members will receive a complimentary registration code by email. Space is limited. Registration will open on March 7 and close on March 28. You can RSVP on our website at [buckeyehills.org/events](https://buckeyehills.org/events).

**Save the Date: May 13, 2025, Appalachian Ohio State of the Region Conference** | The Appalachian Ohio State of the Region Conference brings public officials, economic development experts, business and organizational leaders, and others to discuss different issues related to economic growth in the Appalachian Ohio region. Hosted by Ohio University's Voinovich School for Leadership and Public Service in collaboration with the Local Development Districts that serve Appalachian Ohio, the event is part of OU's U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) University Center project. Topics at this year's conference include Housing, Childcare, Tourism, and Downtown Development. Watch [sotr.ohio.edu](https://sotr.ohio.edu) for agenda details and registration information.

**Issue 2 Resources to Support Renewal of State Capital Improvements Program** | Late last year, House Joint Resolution 8 cleared the Ohio General Assembly with overwhelming bipartisan support, making way for the renewal of the State Capital Improvements Program to be placed before voters in the May 6, 2025, election. The program, which must be renewed by voters about every 10 years, funds vital road and bridge improvements and critical water safety projects across all 88 counties. On February 11, a coalition called Strong Ohio Communities officially launched its campaign to support a YES vote on what is now known as State Issue 2. Resources for the campaign are available in our March 3 Member & Partner Update email.

**Hocking Hills, City of Marietta Receive Media Recognition** | Attractions in the Buckeye Hills region have received some national attention in recent weeks. Hocking Hills was named as one of "The 50 Most Beautiful Places in America" by Conde Nast Traveler. Meanwhile, HGTV named Marietta among "50 of the Most Charming Small Towns in America." Congratulations to our members and partners in Hocking County and the City of Marietta!

## CURRENT INITIATIVES

**March 14: ARC Area Development Pre-Application Webinar** | The pre-application period for 2025-2026 ARC Area Development funding opens on March 25, 2025. Applicants seeking ARC Area Development funding must submit a pre-application by April 25, 2025. Information about the timeline, eligibility, requirements, and applicant resources are now available on the ARC page at [buckeyehills.org](https://buckeyehills.org). Buckeye Hills will host a webinar on March 14, 2:00-3:30 p.m., to review the timeline, eligibility, and requirements for submitting a pre-application for 2025-2026 ARC Area Development Funding.

**Environmental Assessments of Contaminated Buildings and Sites** | Buckeye Hills Regional Council is excited to announce an opportunity for projects in need of Environmental Assessments across our eight-county region. In 2022, BHRC was awarded a United States Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Assessment Grant, providing resources for assessing brownfield properties through September 2025. This funding can support a wide range of projects, including:

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- Buildings with potential contaminants such as asbestos, lead-based paint, or mold
- Former gas stations that may contain petroleum or oil products
- Vacant industrial sites, factories, or former dry cleaners
- Old school buildings or any site with potentially hazardous materials

With this grant, Buckeye Hills can offer essential services like Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments, Remedial Action Plans, Redevelopment Plans, Contaminant Assessment Plans, and HAZMAT reports, among others. Assessing a site for potential contaminants and developing a cleanup strategy are crucial first steps in successful redevelopment. Currently, BHRC is in the project-finding phase. We encourage you contact Kate Dunn, Senior Planner, at [kdunn@buckeyehills.org](mailto:kdunn@buckeyehills.org) to receive and submit a Property Intake Form for each site as soon as possible, but no later than June 30, 2025.

## STATE UPDATES

**Biennial Operating Budget Introduced in House Bill 96** | The start of each General Assembly is begun by the Governor's introduction of the state's biennial budget bill. This General Assembly's budget bill is House Bill 96, which was introduced just last week. The House is the first of the two chambers to hold hearings and make changes to the Governor's proposal. Once the House passes its version of House Bill 96, the bill will then be considered by the Ohio Senate, which is also expected to make additional changes. The budget process will end with a conference committee in June where the two chambers will come together with the governor to craft a final bill for enactment. The Ohio Legislative Service Commission has provided an overview and line-item breakdown of the bill. The schedule of committee hearings is available on the Ohio Legislature's website. Links to both are available in our February 21 Member & Partner Update. Buckeye Hills and our partner associations are monitoring the budget's investments in home- and community-based services for older adults, infrastructure, transportation, community and economic development, and broadband as they pertain to Southeast Ohio.

**Ohio House Passes Transportation Budget, Drops Local STBG Grant Dollars** | The Ohio House passed its version of House Bill 54, the \$11.4 billion two-year state transportation budget, which is sponsored by Rep. Brian Stewart (Ashville). The bill will now move to the Ohio Senate. A final bill analysis is not yet available, but the Legislative Service Commission has released a comparison document of provisions. Of note, House Bill 54 does not include funding for the Surface Transportation Block Grant program. While the funding was included in Governor DeWine's Executive Budget Proposal, the House removed this funding from its version of the transportation budget. There are ongoing conversations with Senators to reinstate the STBG funding and have the House concur. If this does not happen, the current project applications submitted to Buckeye Hills for STBG funding will be on indefinite hold as there will be no program funding available.

**\$10 Million in Drought Relief Funding Available to Ohio Farmers** | The Ohio Department of Agriculture's sign-up period for farmers to apply for state drought relief funding began February 15, 2025, and will close April 1, 2025. Extreme weather conditions throughout the spring and summer significantly impacted Ohio's agricultural producers. Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts will help administer the relief funding to 28 counties designated as primary natural disaster areas by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) between August 19 and September 16, 2024, due to drought. Funding is available to any livestock producer participating in the USDA FSA Livestock Forage Disaster Program in a county designated as a primary natural disaster area.

The 28 counties are: Athens, Belmont, Carroll, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Highland, Hocking, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Licking, Madison, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pickaway, Pike, Ross, Tuscarawas, Vinton and Washington.

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Livestock producers located in the 28 impacted counties are encouraged to contact their local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to discuss eligibility and to apply for funding. For more resources and information, please visit ODA's drought resource webpage.

**BroadbandOhio Opens Capacity Grant Application** | The Ohio Digital Inclusion Grant Program is now live. Qualifying organizations can apply for funding up to \$1 million to support projects that serve Ohioans with the skills and devices they need to safely use the internet. The program supports the continued implementation of Ohio's Digital Opportunity Plan. Projects must address a digital opportunity barrier, such as having access to affordable broadband and devices, digital skills training and technical support, and accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services. Projects will also impact at least one digital inclusion outcome area such as economic and workforce development, education, health, civic and social engagement, or delivery of other essential services. Funding goes through 2029, and awards are contingent on funding availability. To find out if your entity is eligible for funding and for additional application links, visit the Ohio Digital Inclusion Grant Program page on the BroadbandOhio website. Applications close on Friday, April 11, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.

**Ohio Mayors Alliance Proposes State Fund for Local Public Safety** | Over the last few years, there's been a growing consensus among both mayors and state lawmakers about the importance of investing in public safety. For cities, public safety is often the largest budgetary expense. Some cities spend as much as two-thirds of their budgets on police and fire. To make matters more challenging, the costs to cities for effective public safety services are increasing, while federal grants and support are decreasing. To address these challenges, the Ohio Mayors Alliance is proposing a new, dedicated state fund to support public safety and our local first responders.

## FEDERAL UPDATES

**House Passes Budget Resolution** | The House narrowly passed a budget resolution endorsed by the White House, and House Republicans now need to negotiate with their Senate counterparts. The Senate passed a slimmer, competing proposal the week before, and both chambers must agree on a final resolution before taking up a reconciliation bill that enacts the resolution's proposals. The proposals could result in historic funding cuts to Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services, SNAP, and others that support older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. The National Association of Counties has provided an analysis of the impacts of the budget reconciliation process and what it means for counties at [naco.org](http://naco.org).

**USDA Community Connect Program Applications Due April 21** | USDA Rural Development provides funds to establish high-speed internet networks that will foster economic growth and deliver enhanced educational, health care and public safety benefits. You can learn more and apply by April 21 at [www.rd.usda.gov/community-connect](http://www.rd.usda.gov/community-connect)

**USDOT Updates DOT Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program Opening to March 18** | The U.S. Department of Transportation issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for up to \$27 million in no-match grants on a first-come, first-served basis, with applications accepted beginning March 18, 2025, at 2 p.m. This is rescheduled from the originally announced opening date of March 4. The application portal will close on April 17, 2025, at 4:59 p.m.

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES & EVENTS:

- **March 13, 10:00 a.m. – BHRC Regional Transportation Planning Organization Committee** | Buckeye Hills Regional Council, Marietta
- **March 14, 2:00 p.m. – Pre-Application Webinar for ARC Area Development Funding** | Virtual. Register at [buckeyehills.org/events](http://buckeyehills.org/events)

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- **April 4, 11:00 a.m. – BHRC General Policy Council Annual Meeting & Luncheon** | Buckeye Hills Regional Council, Marietta. RSVP at [buckeyehills.org/events](http://buckeyehills.org/events)

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**Keynote by Matt Abbott**  
OhioSE President & CEO

# YOU'RE INVITED

## 2025 GENERAL POLICY COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING

**Friday, April 4, 2025, 11:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.**  
**1400 Pike Street, Marietta, OH**

Buckeye Hills Regional Council members and partners are invited to join us for the 2025 annual meeting of the General Policy Council on Friday, April 4, at 11:00 a.m. The meeting will feature a guest keynote by Matt Abbot, President and CEO of OhioSE, regional updates, highlights from our 2024 Impact Report, and more! Registration is \$26 (free for GPC members) and includes lunch. Space is limited.

The General Policy Council functions as the overall governing body of Buckeye Hills Regional Council. The Council is comprised of representatives from across the region, two-thirds of whom are elected public officials. The remaining one-third represent various interests such as business, industry, agriculture, education, health, and vulnerable populations, including low-income individuals, older adults, and people with disabilities.

**RSVP by  
March 28**



General Policy Council  
Members Register for FREE  
with code GPCMEMBER

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# 2024 Snapshot: Impact of Investments in Older Adults in Southeast Ohio

**1,121**

## Provided In-Home Care

More than \$16 million in services were provided through Ohio's PASSPORT and Assisted Living Medicaid Waiver Programs, allowing individuals to age in place in their homes and communities.



**8,402**

## Total Seniors Served

This number includes seniors provided meals, transportation, adult daycare services, caregiver support, and more totaling \$18.8 million from the Ohio Medicaid Waiver Program, Older Americans Act, and Senior Community Services Line Item



**4,261**

## Calls for Assistance

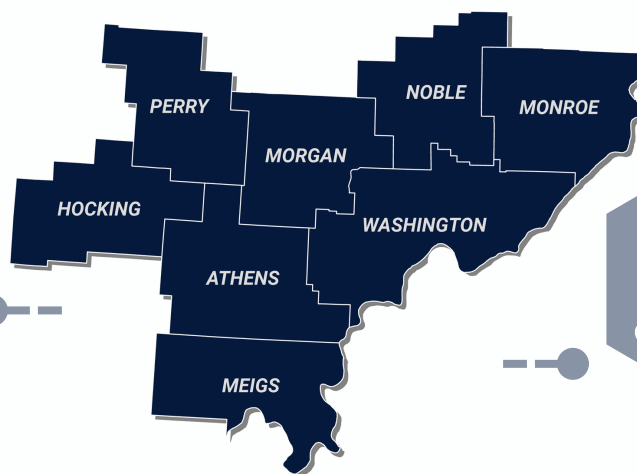
Our information assistance team helped individuals in need connect with local services.



**14,346**

## Transportation Trips

Transportation assistance was provided to individuals needing rides to medical appointments, grocery stores, pharmacies and more.



**282,691**

## Total Meals Served

Includes home-delivered meals provided through Ohio's PASSPORT Medicaid Waiver and the Older Americans Act Congregate Meals provided through Older Americans Act and Senior Community Services Line Item.



**\$150,300**

## In Fresh Local Produce

Supported by the USDA and Ohio Department of Aging, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program provided 3,006 with \$50 in vouchers to purchase fresh local produce from more than 40 local farmers and markets.



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Referenced programs funded by Senior Community Services Line Item, Older Americans Act, & Medicaid Waiver

# Policy Priorities for Older Adults in Southeast Ohio and Across the State

## **Congress is proposing a \$880 billion dollar cut to Medicaid:**

- This could eliminate the Medicaid Expansion 8 Group that supports low-income working adults
- However, even elimination of the Medicaid Expansion 8 Group may not be enough to account for the \$880 billion cut to Medicaid.
- While there has been consideration of Block Grants to support Medicaid programs to accommodate cuts
  - This could result in caseload caps that would limit enrollments into the PASSPORT Medicaid Waiver at the local level
    - This means individuals could be "wait-listed" until the death or disenrollment of a current enrollee.

## **Federal reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA)**

- Ohio's Aging network continues to seek reauthorization of the OAA, which expired on December 31, 2024.
- Reauthorization is imperative to the continued delivery of services to support older adults through nutritional services, transportation, in-home services, caregiver support, and education.

## **Increase Federal funding levels for the Older Americans Act (OAA)**

- The OAA has typically been level-funded, experienced minimal increases, or is cut.
- Funding increases are needed to support the growing aging population through home-delivered meals, congregate dining, transportation, personal care, and caregiver support.
- OAA funding supports senior centers and community actions that employ local people to provide localized services.

## **State of Ohio increase to Senior Community Services (SCS) Line Item**

- Increase SCS funding by \$10 million dollars per year for a two-year cycle.
- SCS provides local flexibility and allows entities to serve older adults where they are and how they want to be served.
- SCS funding allows Area Agencies on Aging to match federal OAA funding, drawing more monies to the local region.
- Without stable and substantial SCS funding to serve as matching funds, federal OAA funds for local communities may be more limited than current levels.



# ARC Pre-Application Webinar

## March 14 | 2:00 p.m.

The pre-application period for 2025-2026 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Area Development funding opens on March 24, 2025. Applicants seeking ARC Area Development funding must submit a pre-application by April 25, 2025. In this webinar, Buckeye Hills Regional Council Development staff will review the timeline, eligibility, and requirements for submitting a pre-application for 2025-2026

[buckeyehills.org/arc](https://buckeyehills.org/arc)

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