

Buckeye Southeast Transit: A Fresh Start for Monroe, Morgan, and Noble Counties

As of July 1, 2025, public transportation in the three counties of the northeast part of our region has a new name: Buckeye Southeast Transit. Previously known as Morgan County Public Transit, the system has expanded to serve Monroe, Morgan, and Noble Counties under a unified regional brand. This change represents more than just a new name. It reflects a renewed commitment to providing accessible, reliable transportation that connects residents to jobs, healthcare, shopping, and community resources throughout Southeast Ohio.

Success stories were shared with local leaders in Noble County. One story highlights a rider who began using the service shortly after it launched and now schedules rides nearly every day. What started as a way to get to medical appointments has grown into a reliable source of transportation for errands, social visits, and work opportunities. Stories like this show how vital public transportation is in supporting independence, connection, and opportunity in rural communities.



Ohio Travel Trainers Gathering

Mobility professionals from Southeast Ohio attended the Ohio Travel Trainers’ spring meeting, hosted by the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) in Columbus. The event featured informative sessions and tours of COTA facilities, offering insight into innovative tools, programs, and inclusive mobility efforts shaping transit across the state. Attendees explored topics like Safe Routes to School programming, regional planning updates, and COTA’s LinkUS mobility and transit expansion initiative, even experiencing an augmented reality demonstration.

The afternoon wrapped up with an in-depth look at COTA’s Mobility Services and Assessment Center, including on-demand services like COTA//Plus. This statewide event provided valuable opportunities to share ideas, explore best practices, and learn how both urban and rural transit systems can work together to improve accessibility and promote independent travel for riders of all ages and abilities.

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SCAN FOR
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As I write this, it marks my final introduction for Hills and Highways, and I want to take a moment to share how meaningful this journey has been. Over the past few years, it’s been an honor to highlight both the successes and the ongoing challenges of transportation and mobility in rural Southeast Ohio. This region is unique in its geography, resilience and the dedication of those working every day to improve access for all.

While my time in this role is ending, my gratitude for the partnerships, conversations, and shared successes we’ve built together will stay with me. I remain hopeful for the future of mobility in Southeast Ohio.

Please note that this edition of the newsletter is a little different. There was so much exciting content to share, we’ve produced two versions: a print version with select articles, and a full digital edition. You can scan the QR code at the top of this page to see the online edition.



Until we meet again,
Christa Myers
Transportation
Planning
Manager

**Lifting a Voice for Transit at the
Statehouse**



Ben Ziff, HAPCAP’s Mobility Manager for Athens and Hocking Counties, joined transit partners from across Ohio this spring to advocate for continued state funding for public transportation. As part of the biennial budget process, Ben provided testimony before both the Ohio House Transportation Committee in February and the Senate Finance Committee in March, underscoring the essential role transit plays in connecting rural communities.

In March, he also spoke on a transportation panel during Developmental Disability Awareness & Advocacy Day at the Ohio Statehouse.

Joined by Davey McNelly, Executive Director of SOCIL, the two emphasized the importance of accessible, inclusive transit options that support independence and quality of life for all Ohioans.



Travel Training with a Twist

In Nelsonville, public transit is becoming more familiar and less intimidating thanks to a recent travel training initiative. After discovering that local seniors were interested in using transit for social outings, HAPCAP and the Athens City-County Health Department organized a special group trip from the Nelsonville Senior Center to the Southeast Ohio History Center in Athens.

With fare passes sponsored by AmeriHealth Caritas, participants learned how to use the nearby hail zone stop, boarded the bus, and enjoyed a guided historical tour. The outing not only built confidence but also connection. Surveys showed 80% of participants felt more confident using transit afterward, and all said they would consider riding Athens Public Transit in the future.



Noble County Seniors Benefit from New Accessible Transportation Bus

Noble County senior citizens are now enjoying improved transportation services thanks to a new vehicle provided by the Noble County Board of Commissioners. The bus is used to transport local seniors to the Joyce M. Davis Senior Center for congregate meals and to help with other needs of the senior community.

The driver noted that the new bus offers ample space and comfort for all passengers, including accommodations for two wheelchair users. This investment enhances accessibility and supports the county’s ongoing commitment to meeting the mobility needs of its older adult population.



Walk Audit Highlights Accessibility Gaps Across Hocking County

The HAPCAP Mobility team recently conducted a comprehensive walk audit in Hocking County to assess pedestrian infrastructure and identify barriers to safe, accessible travel. Findings from the audit are expected to be available by the end of August and will directly inform the development of the Hocking County Active Transportation Plan, led by Toole Design Group and funded by Buckeye Hills Regional Council.

Using cell phone traffic data to identify the 20 most-traveled one-mile trips throughout the county—in Logan, Laurelville, and Carbon Hill—the team conducted on-the-ground assessments of each route, walking both sides of the street for a total of 40 audited segments. Each route was documented through photos, detailed field notes and basic data collection, with special attention to ADA accessibility, pedestrian safety and ease of navigation.

Preliminary observations revealed significant concerns. Sidewalk availability and conditions were inconsistent, and in many cases, sidewalks were impassable or absent entirely. Road crossings were often poorly marked and overwhelmingly inaccessible to individuals using wheelchairs, walkers, or strollers. On several occasions, wheelchair users were observed traveling in roadways due to sidewalks being non-rollable or blocked. While recent streetscape improvements in Downtown Logan have enhanced accessibility for certain routes, widespread gaps remain across the county.

In addition to supporting the Active Transportation Plan, the audit aims to provide actionable data for local stakeholders pursuing grants and other initiatives to improve infrastructure. The full findings will be made available upon request to community organizations, task forces/coalitions and planning committees.



Expanding Food Access Through Partnerships

On April 10, six local organizations partnered to help Perry County residents at Sugar Tree Terrace access healthy food through a visit to The Market—a supermarket-style food pantry. Unlike traditional pantries, The Market allows participants to choose fresh produce, proteins, and shelf-stable items, promoting dignity and independence.

The collaborative effort was sparked by a single transit-assisted food trip, which inspired a larger group visit supported by Perry County Transit, Mobility Management, United Way, the Perry County Health Department, HAPCAP, and the Southeast Ohio Foodbank.

Six residents took part, with transportation costs covered by United Way. During the outing, Mobility Manager Lisa Leckrone and HAPCAP’s Jacynta Jackson shared information on food access and transportation options.



Spotlight

The O’Neill Senior Center, serving Washington County, was awarded a FY26 Specialized Transportation Program (Section 5310) grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). This competitive funding will support the purchase of a replacement vehicle and updated computer hardware to enhance senior transportation services.

O’Neill Senior Center is the only agency in the Buckeye Hills Regional Council (BHRC) region to receive 5310 funding for vehicle purchase this cycle. Connie Huntsman, Executive Director of the O’Neill Senior Center, expressed her appreciation for the grant and emphasized its impact on the center’s ability to continue providing safe, reliable transportation for older adults in the county.

IMPACT STORY



In April 2025, during National Library Week, Athens County Public Libraries sponsored free rides on Athens Public Transit and Athens On Demand Transit. A call came in from a family in The Plains who had no way to get food—no transportation, no support system, and no money to buy groceries. Because of the library’s free rides, the local mobility manager was able to show them how to take the bus to the Athens County Food Pantry at Jobs & Family Services. That simple connection made all the difference, and it really highlighted how vital access to transportation is for meeting basic needs.