

2025

ANNUAL
REPORT





SERVING SOUTHEAST OHIO

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on 2025, we are proud to share the impact Buckeye Hills Regional Council continues to make across Southeast Ohio. Through collaboration, strategic investment, and a commitment to strengthening our communities, we continue to expand access to essential services, resources, and opportunities across our eight-county region.

In 2025, Buckeye Hills invested \$73.1 million in the region to help communities advance critical infrastructure, environmental stewardship, and long-term planning efforts. We also released Buckeye Hills Forward, our new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, to help guide regional growth and resilience in the years ahead. At the same time, we continued to support older adults and families across the region through programs that promote independence, improve access to services, and strengthen quality of life.

From housing assistance and access to nutritious food to information, referral services, and in-home supports, our work remained focused on meeting real needs in our communities. These efforts reflect our broader initiative to strengthen the region not only through economic and community development, but also by helping people remain safe, connected, and supported where they live.

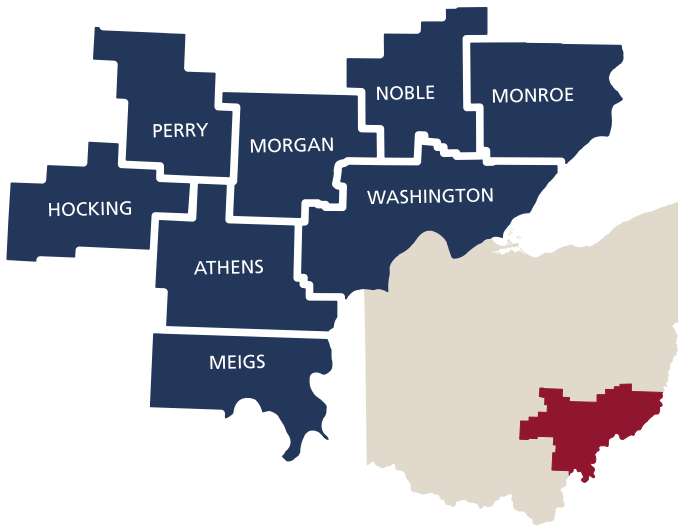
This year also brought national recognition, as Buckeye Hills received two 2025 NADO Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Awards for innovation and impact. These achievements are possible because of the dedication of our staff, local officials, and community partners who share our vision for a stronger Southeast Ohio. As we look ahead, we remain committed to advancing solutions that improve quality of life across our region.

Thank you for your continued support.

Ron Moore
President

Chasity Schmelzenbach
Executive Director





Our Membership & Leadership

Buckeye Hills Regional Council’s mission is to 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.

»»»
SERVING RESIDENTS
& COMMUNITIES
across
8
counties

The General Policy Council functions as the overall governing body of Buckeye Hills. 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 issues related to the needs of our vulnerable populations including low-income, older adults, and disabled persons.

The Executive Committee The 15-member Executive Committee consists of regional representatives including: four non-elected representatives; one minority representative; mayors of the district’s two largest cities; and eight representatives appointed by the eight boards of county commissioners.

2025 General Policy Council & Executive Committee

Membership reflects 2025 service, including midyear transitions. Executive officers are highlighted by their roles at the close of 2025, with prior 2025 officer roles noted below where applicable.

Athens County

Charlie Adkins
County Commissioner

Tom Cangemi
City of Nelsonville
City Manager

Chris Chmiel
County Commissioner

Sam Crowl
City of Athens
City Council President

Lenny Eliason
Former BHRC Pres.
County Commissioner

Gary Goosman
Village of Amesville
Mayor

Jeff Jenkins
Private Sector

Neill Lane
Private Sector

Steve Patterson
City of Athens
Mayor

John Simpson
Private Sector

Solveig Spjeldnes
City of Athens
City Council Member

Hocking County

Jason Despetorich
Common Pleas Judge

Jeff Dickerson
Private Sector

Jason D’Onofrio
BHRC Vice President
County Commissioner

Greg Fraunfelter
City of Logan
Mayor

Meigs County

Don Anderson
Village of Pomeroy
Mayor

Brian Howard
Private Sector

Zachary Manuel
County Commissioner

Jimmy Will
County Commissioner

Monroe County

Diane Burkhart
County Commissioner

Carol Hehr
Village of Woodsfield
Mayor

Mick Schumacher
County Commissioner

Ken Stewart
Private Sector

Morgan County

John Finley
Village of McConnelsville
Mayor

Cecil Mayle
County Commissioner

Ron Moore
BHRC President
Former BHRC Vice Pres.
Private Sector

Heidi Maxwell
County Commissioner

Noble County

Darrell Crum
Village of Caldwell
Village Administrator

Allen Fraley
BHRC Treasurer
County Commissioner

Perry County

Ben Carpenter
County Commissioner

Eric Emmert
Village of New Lexington
Village Administrator

Dick Newlon
Private Sector

Scott Owen
County Commissioner

Fred Redfern
Village of Crooksville
Village Council Member

Bev Trovato
Private Sector

Washington County

Susan Abdella
City of Belpre
Mayor

James Booth
Former BHRC Pres.
Former BHRC Treasurer
County Commissioner

Ben Rutherford
City of Marietta
City Council Member

Josh Schlicher
City of Marietta
Mayor

Brad Webb
Private Sector

* Executive Committee
Members noted in red

2025 Snapshot



\$53.4 million

TOTAL PROJECT COSTS

Local communities and private business leveraged \$14.8 million (28%) against the \$38.6 million (72%) provided through state and federal funding resources for planning and community development to support 39 local projects.



3,840 households

The Appalachian Regional Commission and Governor's Office of Appalachia supported 6 projects totaling over \$3.9 million that brought improved water and sewer service to more than 3,840 households and 212 businesses in communities across the region.

WATER & SEWER



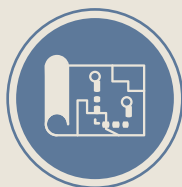
122 acres



CLEAN OHIO

The Clean Ohio Greenspace Conservation program provided grants totaling \$1.1 million for 2 projects in Hocking and Monroe counties to preserve and improve access to green space and enhance river and stream corridors.

114 miles of road



OHIO PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION

More than 114 miles of local roads in Ohio Public Works Commission District 18 were resurfaced or improved in round 39 of the program, which awarded \$9.2 million in the district for 28 projects totaling \$30 million. These projects also helped the villages of Thornville, Barnesville, Frazzysburg, and Roseville make improvements to their drinking water and wastewater systems.

3 projects



TRANSPORTATION

The Surface Transportation Block Grant program provided \$750,000 in support to 3 projects totaling \$3.6 million that helped improve safety, accessibility, and active transportation in Coolville, Murray City, and Hocking County.



**2,989
enrollees**

**SENIOR FARMERS' MARKET
NUTRITION PROGRAM**



In partnership with the Ohio Department of Aging and U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program provided 2,989 individuals with \$50 in vouchers to purchase fresh, nutritious, local produce from more than 40 local farmers and markets across Southeast Ohio.

**4,123
calls**

Our Information & Assistance team answered 4,123 calls from individuals seeking assistance and guidance on Medicare enrollment, Medicaid Waiver eligibility, long-term care options, caregiver support, and more.



**54
homes**

HOME MODIFICATION & MINOR REPAIR



The Ohio Department of Development's Housing Assistance Grant Program provided emergency repairs and home modifications that improved accessibility and safety, enabling 32 individuals to remain in their homes. The PASSPORT Medicaid Waiver program supported minor home modifications for another 22 individuals.



**1,166
individuals**

WAIVER PROGRAMS

More than \$17 million in services were provided through Ohio's PASSPORT and Assisted Living Medicaid Waiver Programs. These services allow individuals to age in place in their own homes and communities—and at a significant savings to taxpayers and families when compared to the cost of care in a nursing facility.



**6,110
older adults**

OLDER AMERICANS ACT

The Older Americans Act provided 6,110 older adults across the eight-county Buckeye Hills region with more than \$2.1 million in services, including meals, in-home support, transportation, adult day care, support for family caregivers, and more.

\$73.1 MILLION

**INVESTED IN
SOUTHEAST OHIO**

2025 Highlights



ACGP Projects Move from Vision to Visible Progress

In 2025, Appalachian Community Grant Program projects across the Buckeye Hills region moved from planning into visible progress. Groundbreakings, site preparation, and active construction marked an important shift for communities across Southeast Ohio as long-envisioned investments in downtown revitalization, recreation, tourism, and public spaces began taking shape. Buckeye Hills Regional Council is working with lead applicants Ross County and the Ironton-Lawrence Community Action Organization to administer and support 16 projects across the region totaling more than \$95 million.

That progress could be seen across the region throughout the year. In Athens County, work advanced on the Chauncey Streetscape Project, the Mount Zion Baptist Church Project, and the Southeast Ohio History Center Project. In Hocking County, the City of Logan Streetscape Project moved forward. Meigs County saw continued activity tied to riverfront improvements in communities such as Pomeroy and Racine. In Monroe County, both the Monroe Theatre Renovation Project in Woodsfield and the Ecotone project near Sardis advanced during the year. Morgan County also saw movement on the McConnellsville Streetscape and Riverfront Project, while Washington County celebrated continued progress on the Beverly Marina Trail Project and Marietta's Levee Park improvements.



Several projects also gave communities visible moments to celebrate. Public groundbreaking events were held in communities including Marietta, Sardis, Chauncey, McConnellsville, and Beverly as projects moved from concept to construction. Together, these investments reflect the range of work underway across the Buckeye Hills region, from historic preservation and downtown improvements to waterfront redevelopment, trail connections, and new community gathering spaces. Within the region, the Appalachian Downtowns and Destinations Initiative included seven projects totaling \$38 million, while the Wonderful Waterfronts Initiative supported projects such as Marietta's Levee Park Improvements and Racine's Riverfront Redevelopment.

In 2025, Buckeye Hills also helped tell the story of these projects through a partnership with Ohio University and the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission. Working with professor Andie Walla and students in Ohio University's Intermediate Video Production course, the partnership produced documentary-style video profiles highlighting selected ACGP projects and the community engagement behind them. As construction and additional improvements continue into 2026, these projects will keep advancing community visions and shaping long-term transformation across the region.

Buckeye Hills Receives Two National Impact Awards



Buckeye Hills Regional Council received two 2025 Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Awards from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), recognizing the agency's work in regional planning and digital inclusion. One award honored Buckeye Hills Forward: A Regional Economic Plan for its community engagement efforts, including outreach and input gathered through regional meetings and planning discussions held across Southeast Ohio. The second recognized the Introduction to Tablets, Internet, and Email program for expanding digital access for older adults in Monroe and Noble counties.

Presented annually by NADO, the Aliceann Wohlbruck Impact Awards recognize projects that strengthen communities and promote innovative regional solutions. Buckeye Hills was recognized among 90 award-winning projects led by 79 organizations across 24 states, highlighting the agency's continued commitment to collaboration, service, and long-term regional resilience.

The national recognition reflects Buckeye Hills' work to engage local partners, respond to community needs, and develop practical strategies that improve quality of life across Southeast Ohio. Award recipients were recognized during NADO's 2025 Annual Training Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Athens County Opens New 911 Emergency Communications Center



Athens County marked a major public safety milestone in 2025 with the opening of its new 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center. Buckeye Hills Regional Council helped facilitate a \$500,000 investment from the Appalachian Regional Commission in support of the project, which was part of a broader effort to modernize emergency response infrastructure in the county.

The new center replaces an older dispatch and emergency management setup that had operated from the basement of the sheriff's office. County leaders described the upgraded facility as a significant step forward for emergency communications, bringing dispatch and emergency management functions together in a modern space designed to better support first responders and the public.

The project reflects the value of long-term planning, regional partnership, and infrastructure investment in strengthening essential community services. By helping support this effort, Buckeye Hills contributed to a project that will improve coordination, expand capacity, and enhance public safety for Athens County residents for years to come.

Satellite Congregate Meal Program Expands in Monroe County



GMN Monroe County Senior Services launched its first satellite congregate meal site in 2025, expanding access to nutritious meals and social connection for older adults in Monroe County. The new effort was made possible through the continued support of the Monroe County Commissioners and funding provided through Buckeye Hills Regional Council.

The first satellite meal was held at the Sardis Community Center and marked the beginning of a broader effort to bring congregate dining opportunities to additional communities throughout the county. By offering meals in more local settings, the program helps reduce transportation barriers and makes it easier for older adults to participate in regular meal service and fellowship closer to home.

The launch also reflected strong local collaboration, with support from county leaders, senior services staff, volunteers, and community partners. In addition to meal service, the event included health information and blood pressure screenings, further connecting participants with resources that support wellness and independence.

CarFit Partnership Earns Statewide Recognition



Buckeye Hills Regional Council, Memorial Health System, and the Ohio State Highway Patrol were honored in 2025 with an Outstanding Partnership Award from the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging for their work bringing the CarFit program to Southeast Ohio.

CarFit is an educational program designed to help older adults better understand how they and their vehicles work together for safety and comfort. At each event, trained technicians and occupational therapy professionals help drivers check key factors such as seat position, mirror placement, line of sight, and steering wheel distance. Participants also receive guidance on safe driving practices, adaptive equipment, and community resources that can help them remain safe and independent on the road.

What began as a local partnership has grown into a broader regional effort serving older drivers across Southeast Ohio. Through collaboration between Buckeye Hills' Mobility Management program, Memorial Health System's Occupational Therapy team, and the Ohio State Highway Patrol, CarFit continues to promote safety, confidence, and quality of life for older adults throughout the region.

Broadband Expansion Advances in Meigs County



In 2025, a broadband infrastructure project moved forward in Meigs County that will expand high-speed internet access to more than 200 homes. Supported by a \$352,000 Appalachian Regional Commission grant and an \$88,000 contribution from New Era Broadband, the project focuses on areas that currently do not have cable or fiber internet service. The grant was awarded to the Meigs County Community Improvement Corporation with support from the Meigs County Commissioners and is administered by Buckeye Hills Regional Council.

The project began construction in 2025 and is expected to serve homes in the Long Bottom area and along Ohio 681 between Reedsville and Tappers Plains. By helping extend reliable internet service to underserved parts of the county, the project supports greater access to education, employment, business services, and daily connectivity. It also reflects the value of regional collaboration in addressing infrastructure needs and strengthening quality of life in Southeast Ohio.

Grocery Cart Program Improves Access and Independence



Buckeye Hills Regional Council's Mobility Management program launched a new grocery cart initiative in 2025 to help improve food access and transportation for residents in Monroe and Noble counties. Through partnerships with the Noble County Health Department and the Monroe County Community Foundation, eligible transit riders can receive collapsible grocery carts at no cost to help them carry groceries safely and more easily while using public transportation.

The program was created in response to a common challenge faced by older adults and individuals with disabilities who rely on transit services. For many riders, carrying multiple grocery bags can make shopping trips difficult and can create safety concerns when boarding, riding, and returning home. By providing foldable carts, the program offers a simple solution that supports independence and helps remove barriers to accessing healthy food and essential items.

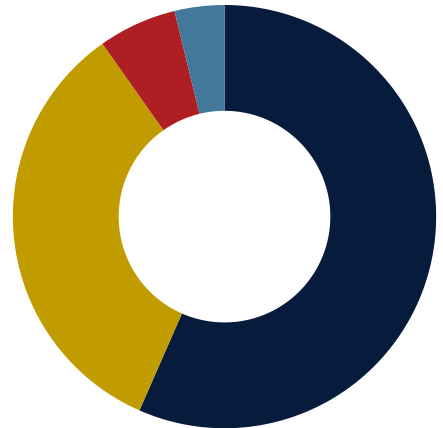
The initiative also supports goals identified in Monroe and Noble counties' 2025–2029 Coordinated Transportation Plan, including reducing transportation barriers and improving access for residents. Through strong local partnerships and practical community-based solutions, the program helps strengthen mobility and quality of life across the region.

2025 Operations

REVENUE

● Federal Grants and Awards:	\$4,861,517
● State Grants and Awards:	\$2,889,475
● Local Funds:	\$514,152
● Contract Income:	\$326,628

TOTAL: \$8,591,772



EXPENDITURES

● Personnel:	\$3,831,575
● Fringe Benefits	\$1,887,080
● Operations:	\$2,398,877

TOTAL: \$8,117,532

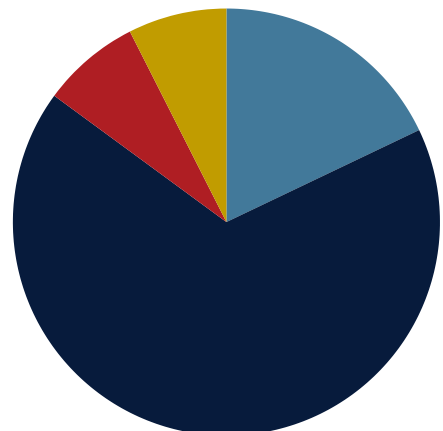
BALANCE: \$474,240



EMPLOYEES

● Aging & Home Care:	45
● Administration	12
● Community Development:	5
● Planning:	5

TOTAL: 67



Leadership Team

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ABOUT BUCKEYE HILLS

Buckeye Hills Regional Council serves as a forum through which local communities work cooperatively to improve our region. Founded in 1968, we work closely with government leaders, state and federal partners, and community partners to serve Ohio's Appalachian region.

Our organization is a designated Area Agency on Aging, District Liaison for the Ohio Public Works Commission, Economic Development District, Local Development District, Regional Transportation Planning Organization, and Aging & Disability Resource Center.

Since our inception, Buckeye Hills has brought more than \$1.7 billion in programs and services to Southeast Ohio communities.



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BUCKEYEHILLS.ORG



Improving the quality of life in Southeast Ohio

BUCKEYE HILLS
**regional
council**

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