

Regional Transportation & Development Plan

2020-2045

Executive Summary

Mapping a Route Forward to a Strong & Resilient Region



Funding Provided by:

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Regional Partners:





LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear OMEGA Members and Colleagues:

I am excited about the integration of our Long-Range Transportation Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This comprehensive planning document will provide a road map to developing a stronger and more resilient region by focusing on the infrastructure, initiatives and policies that will be needed to reach this goal. Our team has documented the existing socio-economic conditions of the entire OMEGA region as well as the state of the transportation systems in the eight counties included in the OMEGA Regional Transportation Planning Organization.

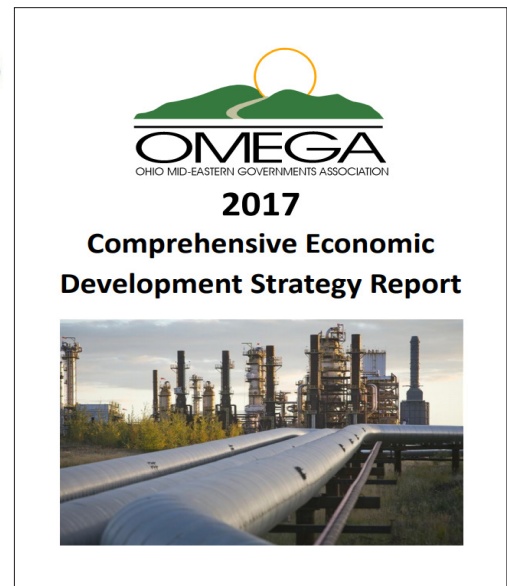
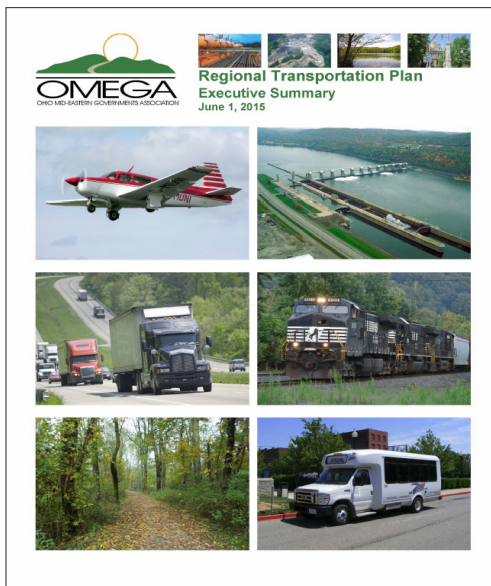
We have established goals and strategies and performance measures to assess the impact of our planning activities on the region's economy and quality of life. Ultimately, we want to work with our members, partners, and colleagues on providing the framework that will promote economic diversification, resiliency, accessibility, employment opportunities, higher incomes, and lower poverty rates for our region. This Executive Summary provides a great overview of our region, identifies key regional projects such as completion of both the US 30 and Columbus to Pittsburgh Corridors, as well as other initiatives and projects currently being planned throughout the region. Excluding the two corridor projects, our region has identified almost \$304 million in projects and needs that will meet the goals of our Regional Transportation & Development Plan.

I encourage you to visit our website, omegadistrict.org/programs/transportation/plan2020/ to view the complete plan and the interactive story map for more information.

I am extremely grateful to our federal and state partners who funded this document and to our members and colleagues who participated in the planning process and to our staff at OMEGA who prepared this plan that clearly **"Maps a Route Forward to a Strong & Resilient Region"**.

Sincerely,

Jeannette M. Wierzbicki



The Regional Transportation & Development Plan is the first comprehensive planning document in OMEGA's history. Merging the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy into one document results in the organization being able to minimize the amount of duplicative work and reallocate the time and cost savings into projects that directly benefit our members.

The merged documents also formally align all organizational goals to ensure that the region is best prepared to move forward, utilizing knowledge and resources from a variety of programs, professions, and funding sources. This alignment will guide regional development that will allow the OMEGA region to maximize available resources.

Preserve Regional Assets to Support Local Economies

Goal: Preservation



Objectives

- ✓ Reduce the number of bridges on the local system with a General Appraisal Rating of 4 or less.
- ✓ Increase the number of miles in "Acceptable" pavement conditions on Federal Aid system.

Increase the Safety of Regional Infrastructure

Goal: Safety



Objectives

- ✓ Reduce the number and rate of fatal and serious injury crashes
- ✓ Reduce the number of fatal and serious injury non-motorized crashes (includes bicycle, pedestrian, buggy)
- ✓ Reduce at-grade railroad crashes (motorized, Pedestrian, etc.)

Develop & Maintain Regional Resiliency

Goal: Resiliency



Objectives

- ✓ Consider Complete Streets Implementation
- ✓ Decrease the number of locations of major roadways at risk of flooding/slipping
- ✓ Increase business diversification

Facilitate Economic & Community Development

Goal: Economic and Community Development

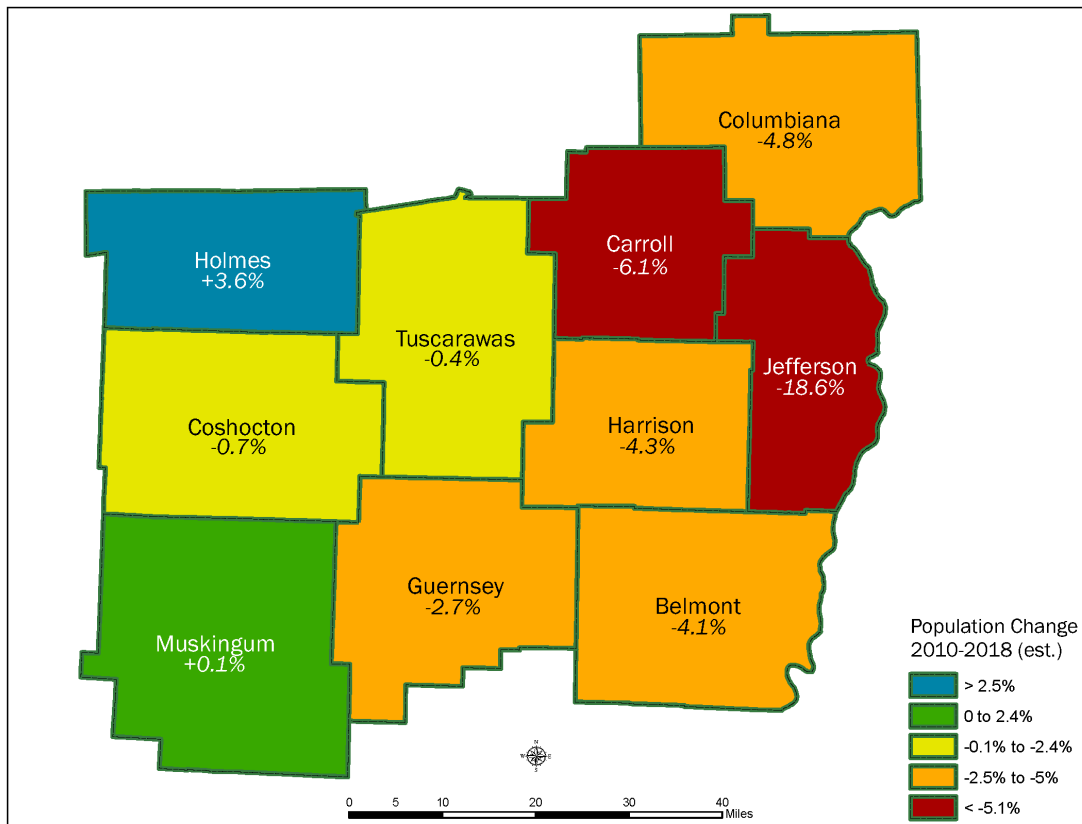


Objectives

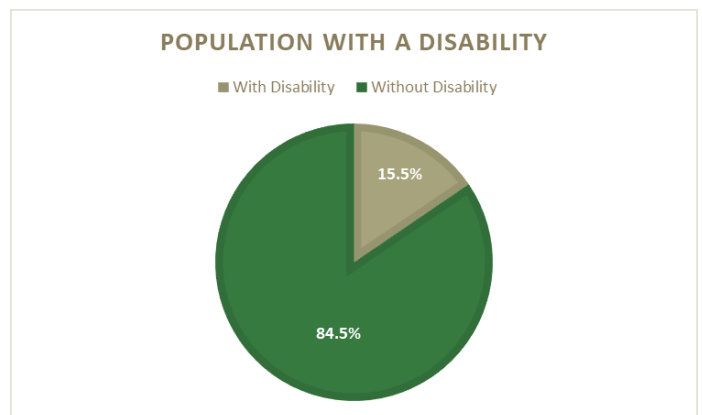
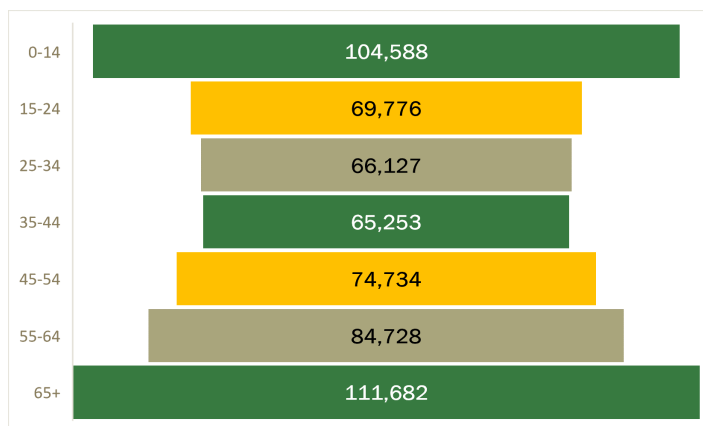
- ✓ Increase the number of commuters walking, biking, or riding transit
- ✓ Increase the average number of jobs accessible within 30 minutes by driving
- ✓ Increase the number of miles of trails or designated bike facilities
- ✓ Number of households improved – **Access to Safe Drinking Water**
- ✓ Number of households improved – **Access to Public Wastewater System**
- ✓ Track the MHI for the region vs. statewide
- ✓ Track the poverty level for the region vs. statewide
- ✓ Track the education attainment level for region vs. statewide
- ✓ Increase the number of Census tracts served by broadband (25:3 or as defined by FCC)
- ✓ Track the transfer payments for the region vs. statewide
- ✓ Track the number of manufacturing employees
- ✓ Number of businesses improved - **Infrastructure**
- ✓ Number of businesses improved - **Financed**
- ✓ Number of students/workers improved – **Workforce**
- ✓ Transit – Reduce Denials
- ✓ Transit – Reduce Cancellations/No Shows*
- ✓ Transit – Increase ridership
- ✓ Transit – Track Call Volume*

*No data currently available to set benchmarks. New benchmarks will be established in CY 2020 and tracked in CY 2021 and beyond.

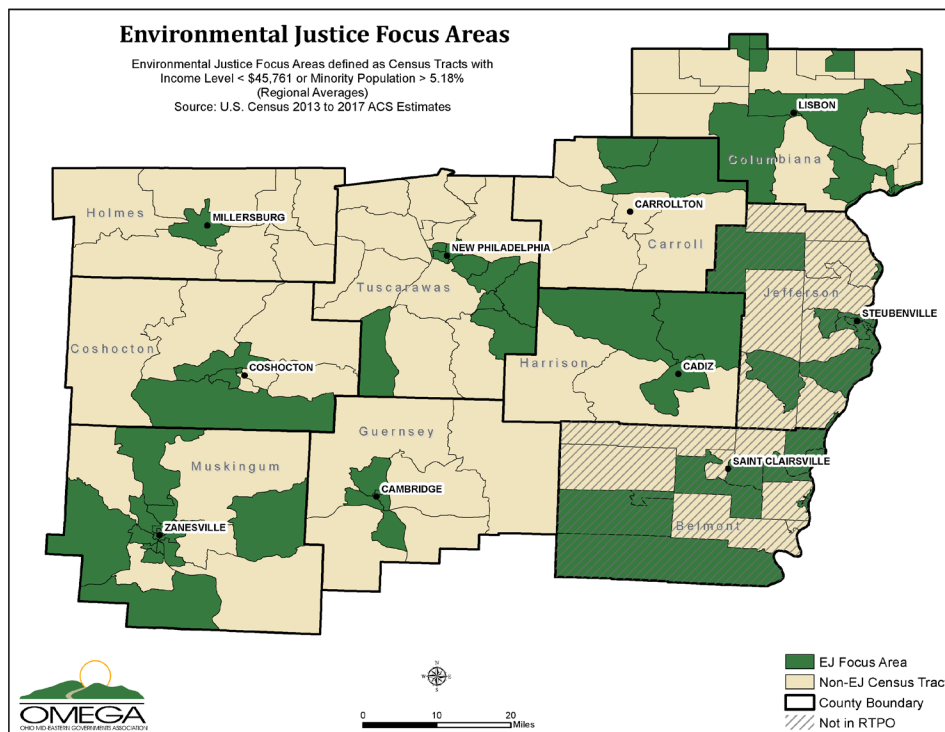
Existing Conditions



Over the preceding decade, the OMEGA region has experienced limited growth in the west, with larger population declines in the central and eastern two-thirds of the region. Growth has been concentrated primarily in Holmes County which features a robust and diverse manufacturing & tourist-driven economy and Muskingum County with a flourishing logistics industry and proximity to the rapidly expanding Columbus metropolitan region.

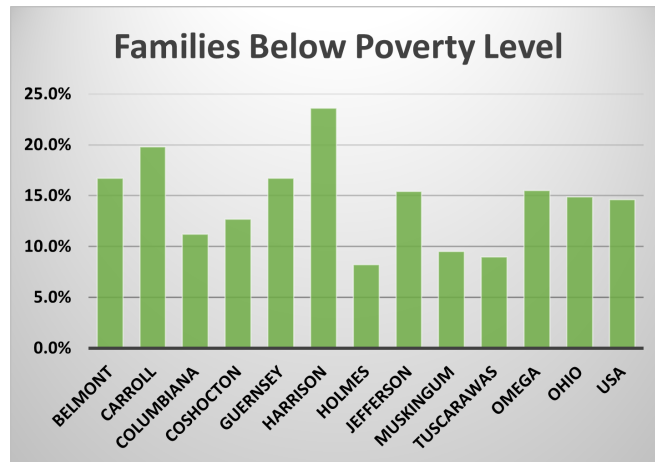
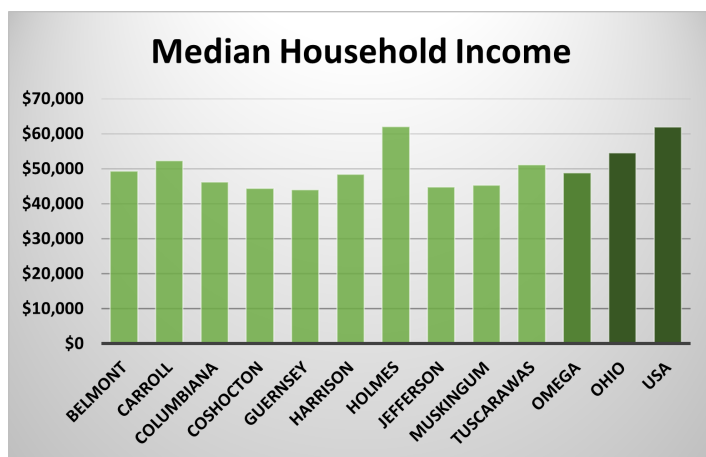


A deeper analysis of the population shows a trend of working-age adults leaving the region and only returning when reaching retirement age. Meanwhile, one-sixth of the population has a disability. To combat the challenges, innovative educational opportunities are being developed to ensure a ready workforce will find employment within the region.

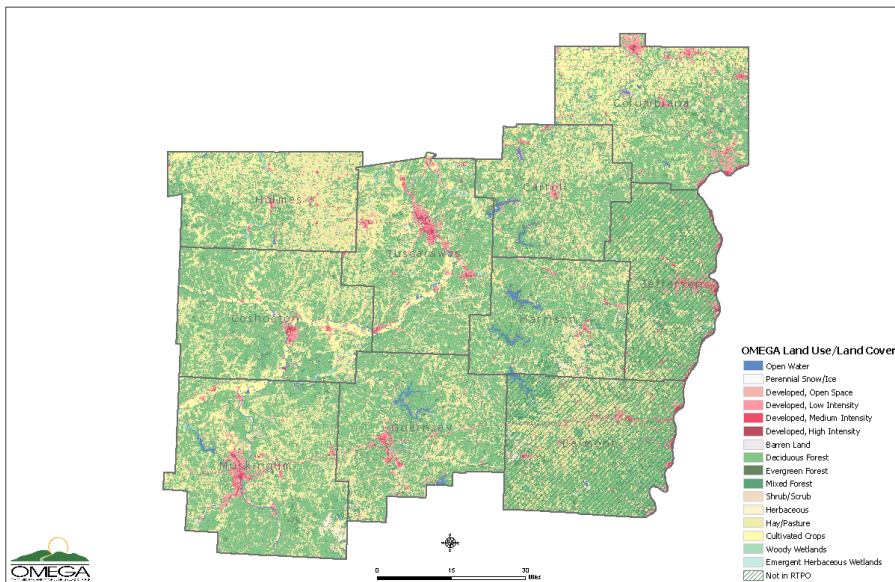


The OMEGA region is within Ohio's Appalachian region. Households throughout this region generally face overall lower median household incomes and higher poverty levels than the state or nation.

OMEGA helps facilitate outreach opportunities for minority and low-income communities to influence the planning and decision making processes of community, economic, and transportation projects.



When compared to the state and national household income levels, most OMEGA counties fall below the average. Many of the counties also have higher poverty rates than the state and nation.

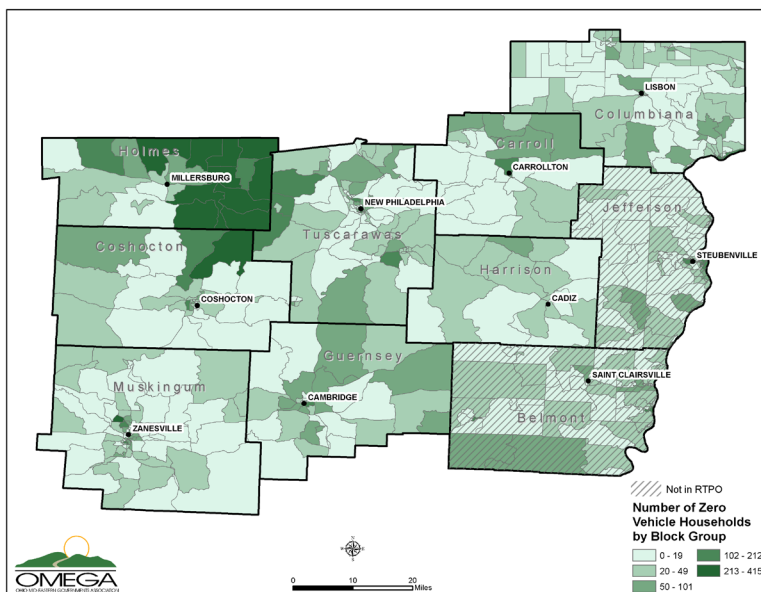
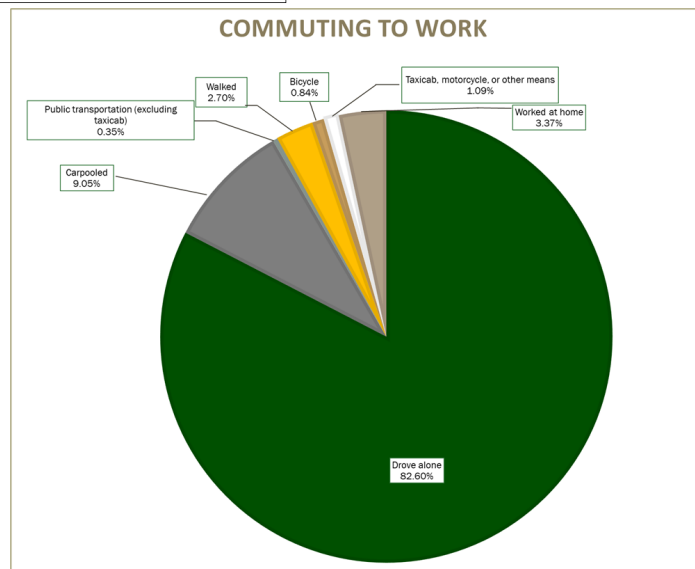


The OMEGA region is primarily rural in nature, with only **8%** of land currently developed.

Due to topography, brownfield redevelopment and infill may help municipalities grow without incurring high costs for infrastructure.

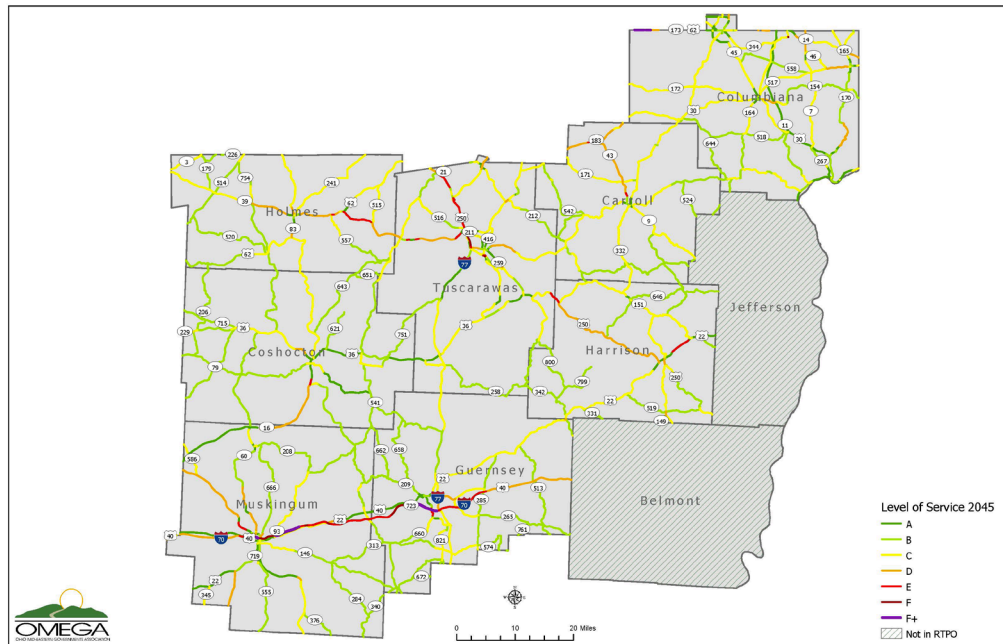
An overwhelming majority of commuters choose to drive alone to reach their destination. Combined with commuters that carpooled, private vehicles constitute **over 91%** of all trips.

Only **3.5%** of all trips utilize Active Transportation, which is common in rural areas.



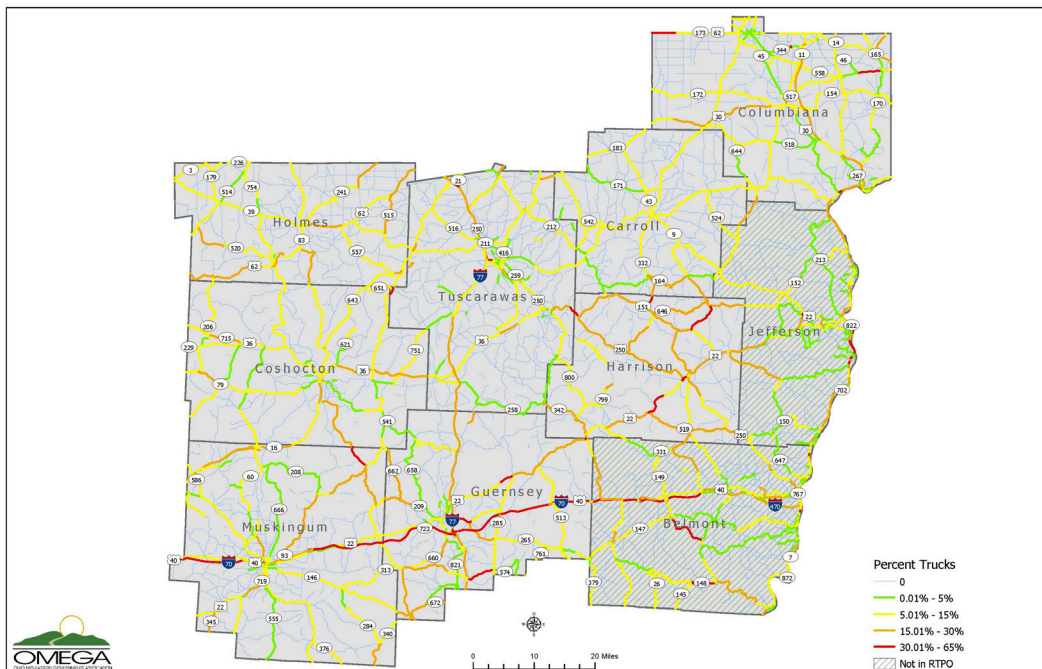
Zero-vehicle households face additional challenges to access services, education, and employment.

Outside of urbanized areas, large areas in Holmes and Coshocton Counties are affected, primarily due to higher Amish populations.



Level of Service (LOS) is a qualitative measure of the operation of traffic flow. Speed, travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, drive inconvenience, safety, and delay are all factors considered in the LOS.

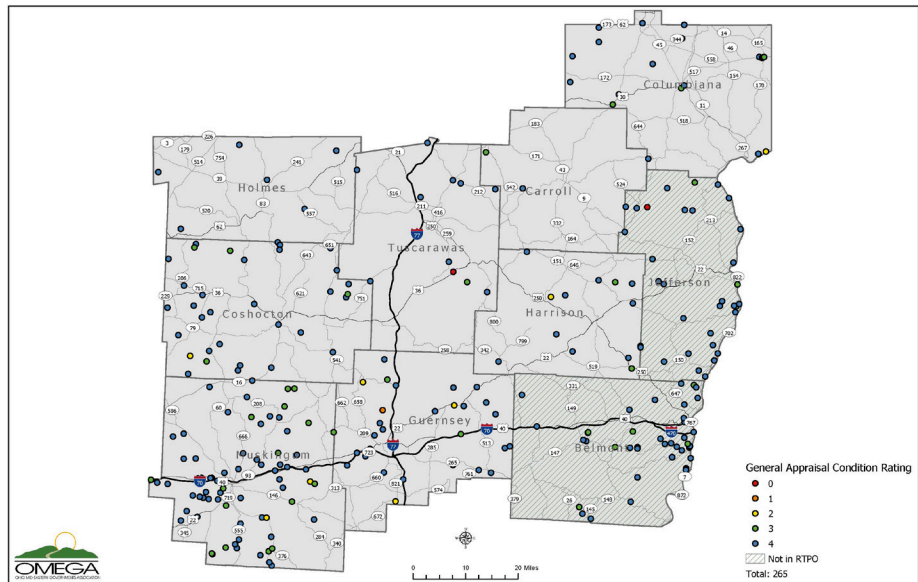
In 2045, it is anticipated that congestion issues may occur on I-70 & I-77, as well as other major regional roads, such as SR 39 west of I-77.



With the growth of online shopping with direct-to-door shipping and just-in-time logistics common in many industries, the amount of truck traffic on regional highways is projected be a greater percentage of overall traffic. Off the Interstate system, routes such as **US 36**, **US 250**, **US 22**, **SR 83**, and **SR 93** will likely see an increasing number of trucks.

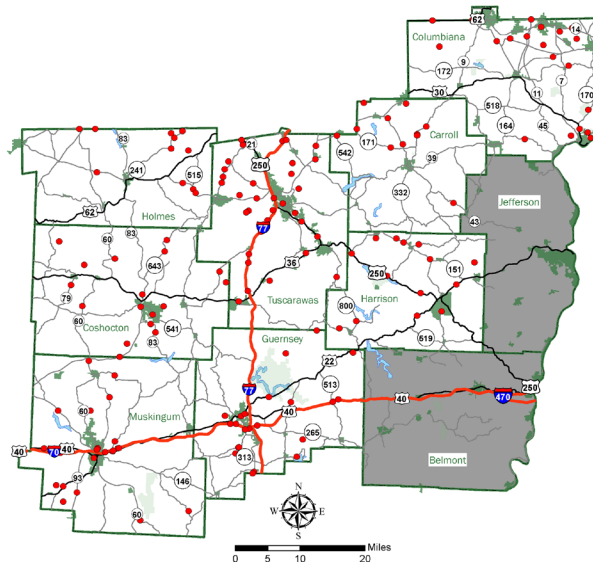
The existing condition of bridges must be monitored to ensure a safe, reliable transportation system is in place for the region. Bridges with a General Appraisal Rating of 4 or less are considered to be in Poor condition and may have weight restrictions or be closed to the public.

In 2020, there were **265** bridges with a rating of 4 or lower on the state and local systems.



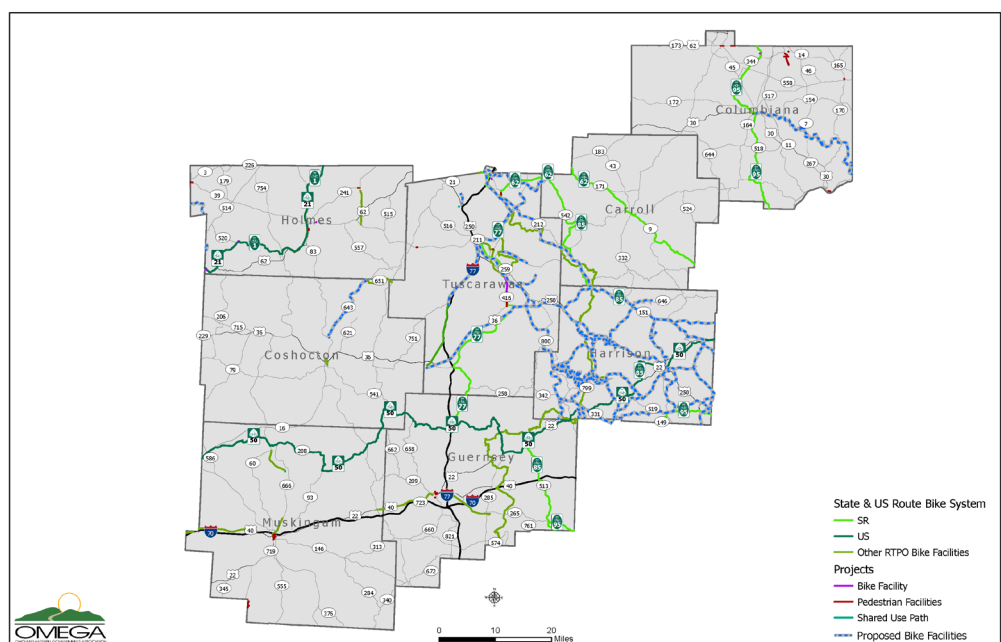
Roadway safety is a high priority for the region. Between 2016 and 2018, there were 29,991 crashes on OMEGA RTPO roadways. Crashes are categorized by severity from Property Damage Only to Fatal.

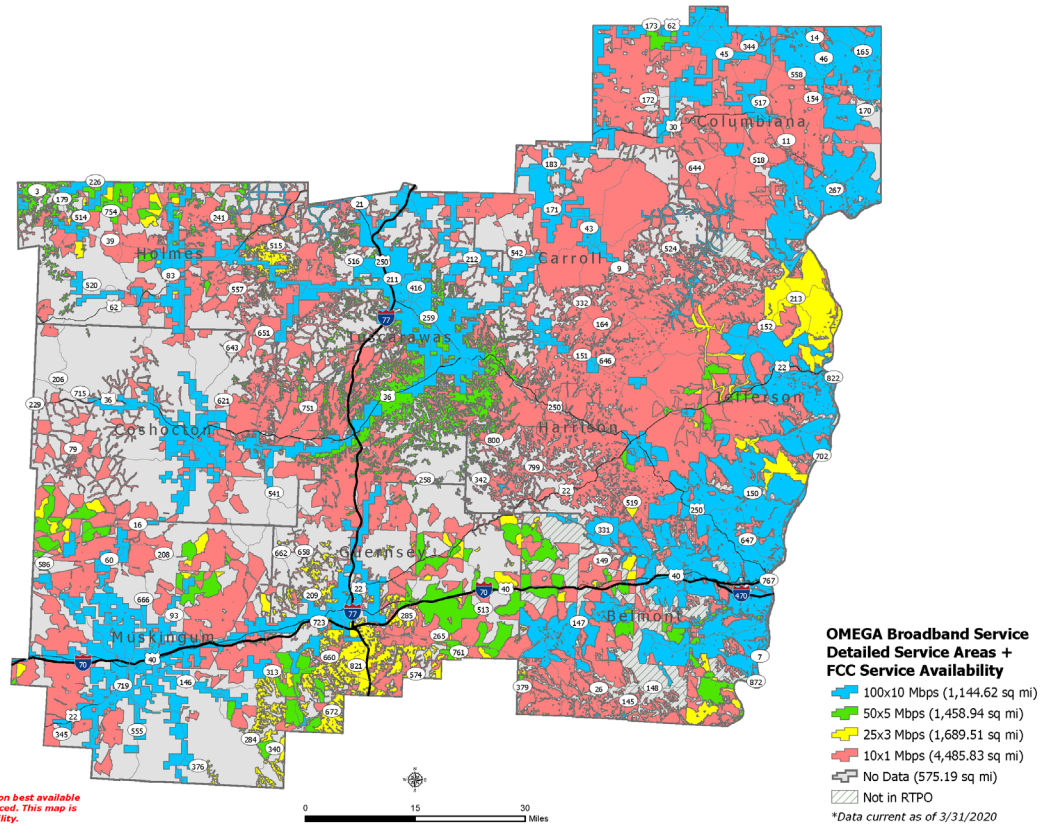
This map (*right*) shows the location of the 170 fatal crashes from 2016-2018.



Active Transportation is a growing part of the region's multimodal transportation network.

US and State Bike Routes are being planned and designated, with the effort spearheaded by ODOT. Other regional and local links are being proposed & built by local governments, or non-profit organizations.



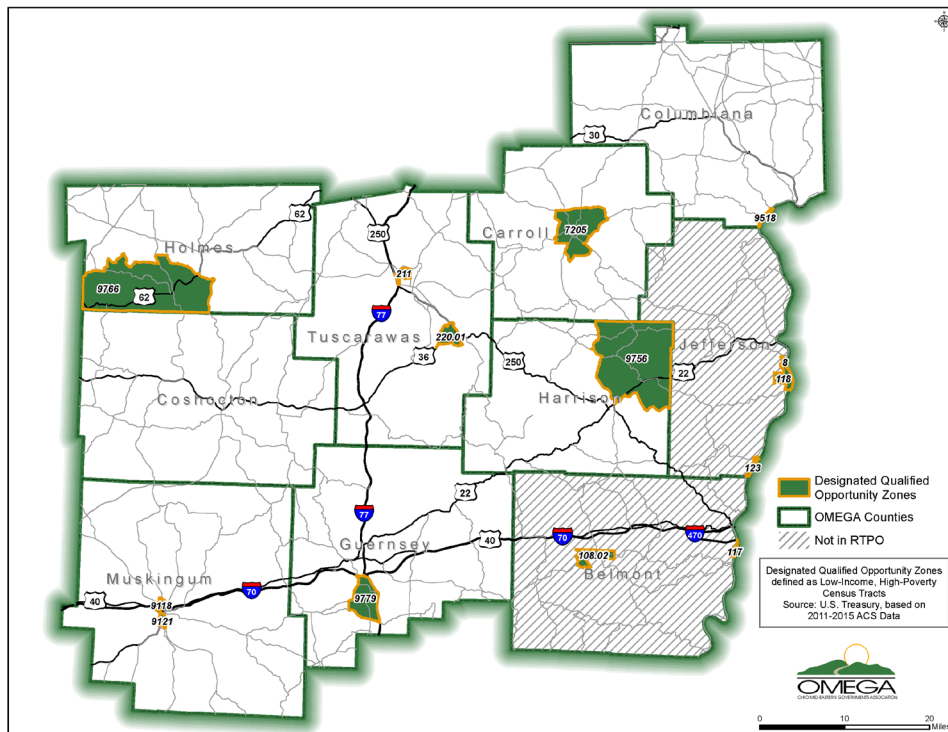


Outdated, insufficient, and/or total lack of infrastructure has consistently been the largest challenge facing economic development in the OMEGA region. OMEGA works with multiple federal and state agencies focusing on the region's infrastructure needs and many grant and loan programs are often leveraged to allow large infrastructure projects to proceed. With the rolling hills and abundance of isolated, rural households, providing the entire region with affordable and quality internet access is not a simple task.

OMEGA is extremely supportive of the expansion of broadband services in the region as high-speed connectivity is a significant element in site selection. OMEGA has adopted a broadband policy to demonstrate commitment to infrastructure expansion in support of economic and community development, education, and quality of life in the region.

The goals include:

- Improve the accuracy and veracity of broadband mapping by drilling down to the actual service locations.
- Advance the region's economic development through Internet-enabled education, healthcare, transportation, and workforce development.
- Leave no one behind by extending broadband to all households and businesses, delivering robust communication services.
- Use fiber to connect local government facilities in Appalachia in order to increase efficiency of management and delivery of municipal services.

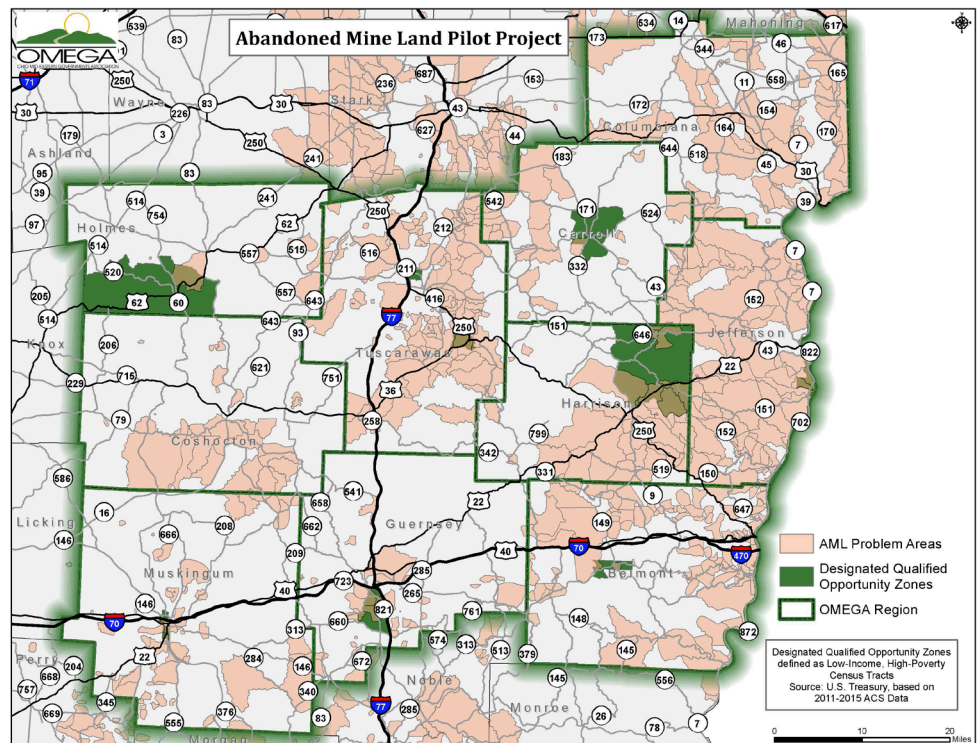


Qualified Opportunity Zones were created by the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. An Opportunity Zone is an economically distressed community where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. Localities qualify as Opportunity Zones if they have been nominated for that designation by the state and that nomination has been certified by the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury via their delegation of authority to the Internal Revenue Service.

The map above shows the location of the **14 Opportunity Zones** within the OMEGA region.

Abandoned mine land also proves to be a significant challenge when developing land. OMEGA partnered with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to identify sites mined prior to 1977 where reclamation is likely to improve the land for economic or community development reuse under the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Pilot Program.

AML locations are shown in the map to the right.



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Despite the economic ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are a few major development projects currently under construction in the region. One example is the Guernsey Power Station, pictured to the right. The 1,650 megawatt (MW) plant is south of the Village of Byesville in Valley Township, Guernsey County, and is on track to be completed in about two years. It is projected to have a transformative effect on the area's economy, with at least half of the anticipated annual plant maintenance budget of \$20 million to be spent locally. During the construction period, the projected economic impact includes over 3,000 annual jobs, \$33.8 million in state and local tax revenue, \$450 million in associated labor income, \$952.8 million in output, and \$586.2 million in gross state product.



Guernsey Power Station

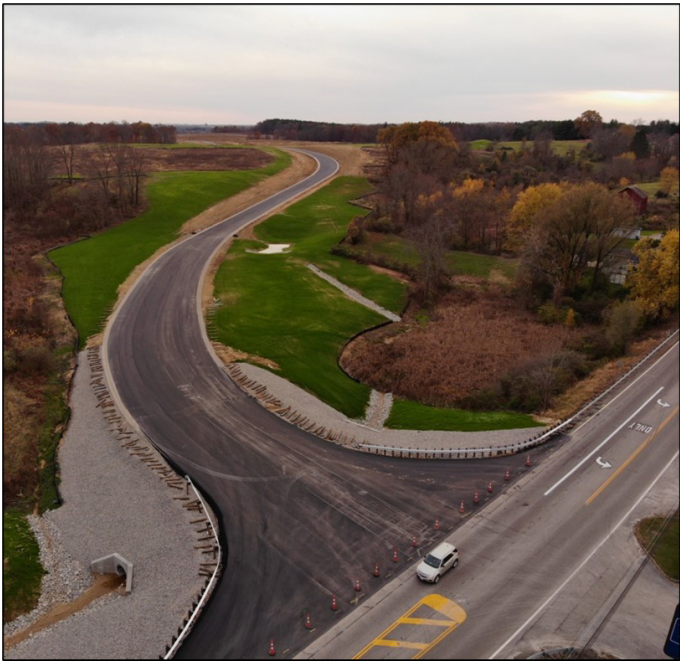
The construction of the 1,100 MW South Field Energy power plant in Columbiana County that started in May of 2019 is anticipated to have an economic impact of \$922.5 million in project expenditure during construction based on the Economic Assessment performed by Economic Development Research Group out of Boston, Massachusetts. An annual average of 1,352 jobs over the 30-month construction period are expected as well as \$380.2 million in gross state product.

The US Department of Energy released a report in June 2020, titled *The Appalachian Energy and Petrochemical Renaissance* which examined newfound economic opportunities throughout the region. This report specifically mentioned corridors within our region that will contribute to future development. The ongoing construction of the Shell Ethane Cracker Plant in Monaca, Pennsylvania (near East Liverpool) and the potential PTT Global Ethane Cracker Plant planned for Dilles Bottom in Belmont County would be monumental for the region and are expected to ignite a chain reaction for the petrochemical industry.



South Field Energy Plant

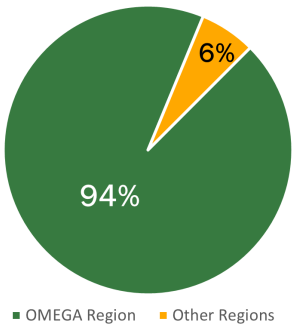
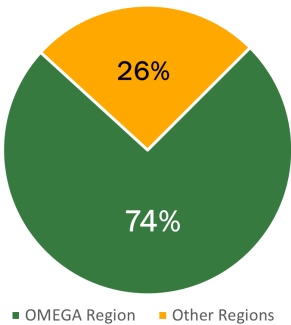
The National Road Business Park, owned by the Muskingum- Zanesville Port Authority, is currently under development in Muskingum County. The picture to the left showcases the access road under construction. The Port Authority owns three other business parks in the county that employ over 4,000 people in total. The conservatively estimated 1,500 jobs and the induced economic impact of approximately \$41 million that will result from these improvements will be a substantial aid in Muskingum County and the surrounding region’s recovery from the economic impact of the coronavirus.



National Road Business Park Access Road

Oil and Gas Production

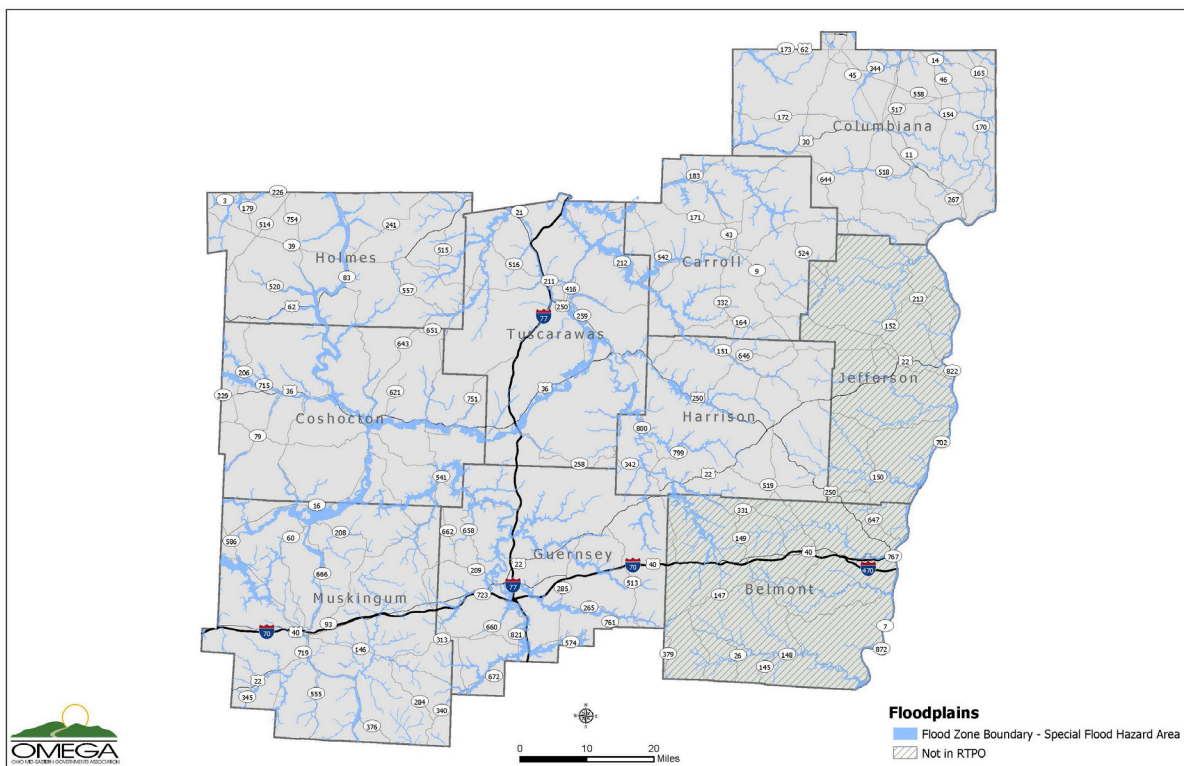
Despite the effect on the economy that the pandemic has had, the oil and gas industry in the region has remained practically on par with last year’s oil production as shown in the tables below.



Resiliency

Resiliency planning is fundamental to ensuring the region is prepared for extreme events, whether natural or man-made. Adapting current economic, community, and transportation planning methods to incorporate resiliency is a priority goal of OMEGA. We will work with members and partner agencies to ensure development and completion of projects that are resilient and/or sustainable.

Changes in climate and extreme weather events strain the region's infrastructure. With challenging topography throughout much of the region, extreme weather events affect this area differently than many other parts of the state. Landslides, flash flooding, and road washouts are hazards to transportation infrastructure, as well as to the business community and residents.



Regional Policy Recommendations

With multiple planning tools at its disposal, OMEGA is distinctively positioned to provide a pathway to enhance community and economic growth in the region. Two of the largest planning efforts undertaken by OMEGA are the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the Long-Range Transportation Plan. By combining these two documents into a Regional Development Plan, OMEGA seeks to reduce the number of hours spent planning and increase the efficiencies by aligning goals across all program areas within the organization. The policy recommendations outlined below will guide OMEGA's planning activities into the future:

→ **Broadband Policy Priorities**

1. Improve the accuracy and veracity of broadband mapping by drilling down to the actual service locations.
2. Advance the region's economic development through Internet-enabled education, healthcare, transportation, and workforce development.
3. Leave no one behind by extending broadband to all households and businesses, delivering robust communication services.
4. Use fiber to connect local government facilities in Appalachia in order to increase efficiency of management and delivery of municipal services.

→ **RTPO Capital Funding**

OMEGA recommends a sustainable funding resource for Ohio's RTPOs, that will allow RTPOs to assist communities in utilizing existing funding mechanisms by providing all or part of the local match requirement.

→ **Multimodal Inclusivity**

OMEGA recommends transportation projects consider all users during design, construction, or rehabilitation. Adoption of policies or guidelines, such as Complete Streets or Safe Routes to School, will enable communities to provide robust, sustainable transportation networks that work efficiently for all users.

→ **Environmental Risk Mitigation**

OMEGA recommends assessing alternative drainage improvements to mitigate damage by excessive rainfall.

→ **Designation of Maritime Statistical Port**

OMEGA recommends the designation of the Mid-Ohio River Valley Statistical Port between the Ports of Huntington and Pittsburgh which includes the public intermodal port at Wellsville (*right*).



→ **Business Diversification**

OMEGA supports efforts undertaken by local and regional economic development professionals to create a diverse collection of industries ranging from petrochemicals to manufacturing, and from agriculture to retail in order to cultivate a stable, growing, and resilient economy.

Regional Corridors



RTIP

OMEGA recommends the completion of the US 30 four-lane highway from East Canton to central Columbiana County. The completion of this corridor will mark the completion of the four-lane highway across the entire state of Ohio and links this corridor to existing four lane highway segments in West Virginia and Indiana. This corridor will enable

efficient travel, reducing the burden on Interstates 70 and 76/80/90 (Ohio Turnpike), while connecting mid-size populations centers that are often bypassed or hard to reach using current routes. This route will also connect the ethane cracker plant currently being constructed in Monaca, Pennsylvania to plastics manufacturers in Ohio for final product development, thereby allowing the value addition to remain in the state. This corridor will also establish a more direct link with the public intermodal port in Wellsville, allowing shippers and receivers to take full advantage of the maritime access afforded by the Ohio River.

The proposed improvements would also improve a spur connecting to Carrollton in Carroll County. This may be along SR 43, or another alignment, but would offer the county its first four-lane highway access. As a focal point in the shale oil and gas extraction industry, Carroll County can capitalize on improved connections to more urbanized areas for delivery of their resources and services for their residents. In 2019, the US 30 RTIP project was awarded **\$2 million** in Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) funding for preliminary engineering and detailed design to extend the current four lane highway from Trump Avenue in East Canton to SR 44 southeast of East Canton.



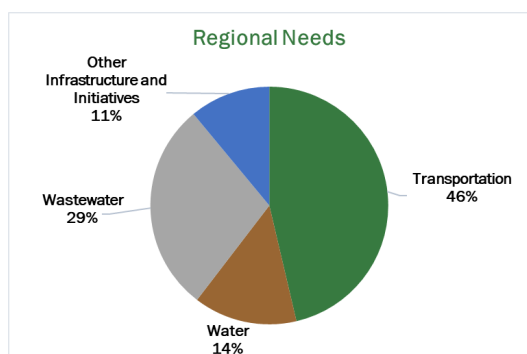
OMEGA recommends the completion of a contiguous four-lane corridor through the middle of the RTPO, named the “Columbus to Pittsburgh Corridor”. This corridor consists of several US and state routes, though potential future alignments for sections of the corridor may be considered as needed to complete the corridor.

This corridor would link two large population centers of over 2 million people each with an efficient corridor for freight and people. It would also serve as a relief valve for the I-70 corridor, which is constrained in areas near Zanesville, Cambridge, and the Wheeling, West Virginia, and southwestern Pennsylvania areas from expanding further to accommodate more traffic. The Columbus to Pittsburgh corridor would also connect the center of the Marcellus and Utica shale formations to potential end users of the extracted resources.

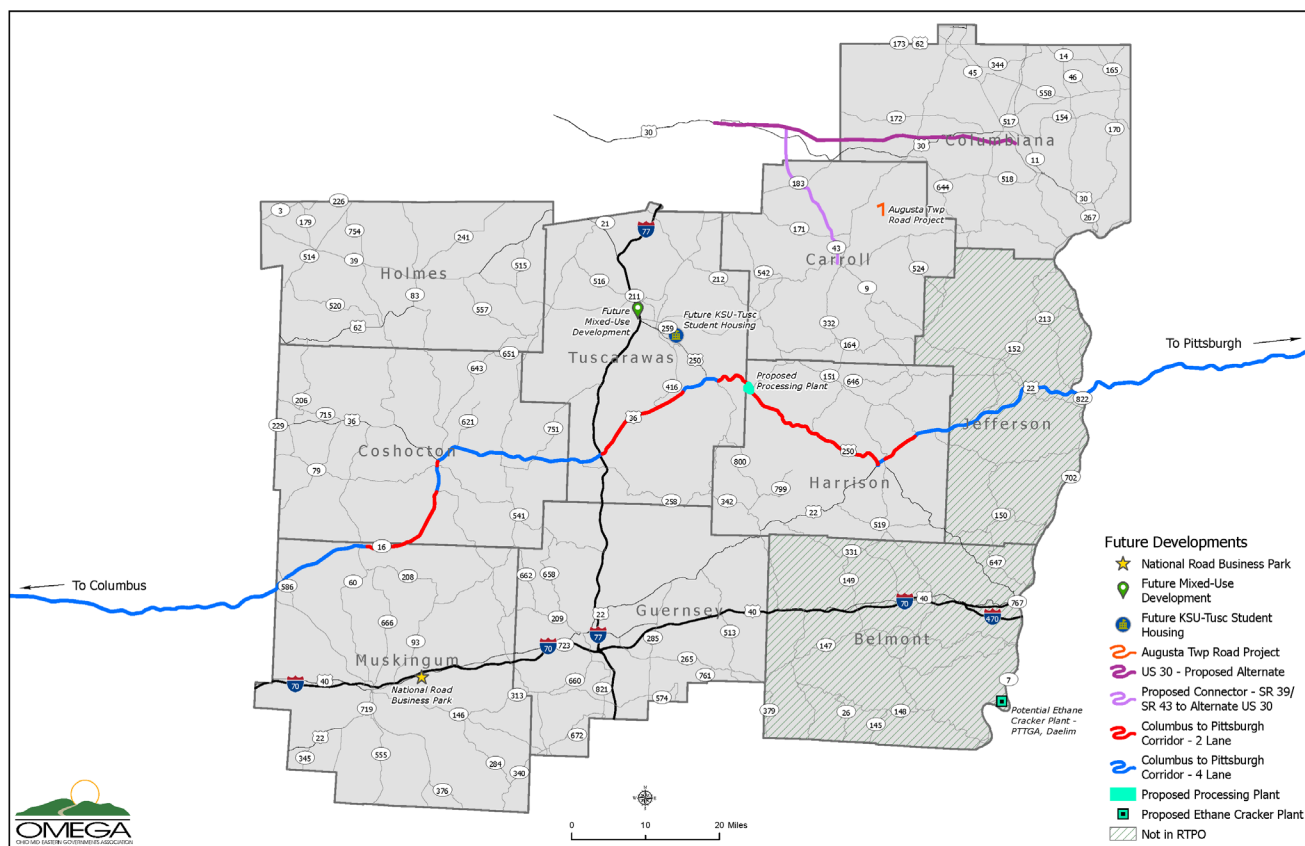
The corridor starts in the west at I-270 in northeastern Columbus. It is currently a four-lane highway through New Albany & Newark (SR 161/SR 16), transitioning to a two-lane highway near Dresden in Muskingum County. It continues as a two-lane highway until the City of Coshocton. SR 16 ends and US 36 joins the route. The route is four lanes through eastern Coshocton County and southwestern Tuscarawas County, transitioning back to a two-lane highway again east of Interstate 77. Passing through the villages of Port Washington and Gnadenhutten, this corridor returns to a four-lane configuration west of Uhrichsville and turns into US 250 here. North of Dennison, US 250 turns into a two-lane highway until intersecting with US 22 in Cadiz. Following US 22, it is four-lane to Pittsburgh, except for a three-mile two-lane portion near Hopedale, east of Cadiz.

Completion of both corridors opens new opportunities for additional economic development.

Regional Projects & Needs



Project Category	Total Cost
Transportation	\$ 140,675,122
Water	\$ 42,725,867
Wastewater	\$ 86,798,338
Other Infrastructure & Initiatives	\$ 33,425,463
Total	\$ 303,624,790



Disclaimer: Please note that any of the alignment decisions ODOT made as a part of the environmental process are no longer valid because of the time since the decisions were made (over 15 years). If a project were to move forward, highway design criteria, environmental regulations, and the entire NEPA process would have to be reviewed and updated. All technical information and documents would have to be updated. beginning with the purpose and need statement and logical termini decisions. Any depiction of the route is for representative purposes only and shows the potential connections that may be made on a regional level.



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