



2021 ODOT REGIONAL SPECIAL FUNDING PROJECTS: MEDIA OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

*Project Funded by Ohio Department of
Transportation*



SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA) is organized as a Council of Governments pursuant to Section 167 of the Ohio Revised Code and is designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission as a Local Development District and by the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, as an Economic Development District. OMEGA's region includes ten counties in eastern Appalachian Ohio: Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas. OMEGA is a collaborative body of member governments that serves as a facilitator between state and federal government agencies and local entities to provide opportunities in economic and community development through networking, education, planning, research, and allocation of resources. OMEGA's mission is to provide a pathway to enhance community and economic growth in the region.

On January 27, 2016, Former Governor of Ohio John Kasich, pursuant to United States Code, Title 23, Section 135 (m), officially designated OMEGA as an Ohio Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO). The OMEGA RTPO includes all counties previously listed with the exception of Belmont and Jefferson Counties which are served by the Belomar and Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson metropolitan planning organizations, respectively. In January 2018, the Ohio Department of Transportation selected OMEGA to participate in a Regional Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Pilot Program. The purpose of this pilot program is to promote effective and comprehensive coordination of transportation services throughout the region and to increase mobility, equity, and ridership especially for seniors and disabled persons. In 2019, Columbiana County made the decision to opt out of the pilot program as their transportation patterns better aligned with another region. The OMEGA Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan includes the counties of Belmont, Carroll, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas.



In 2020, The Ohio Department of Transportation, ODOT, awarded the OMEGA Region (ODOT Region 9) Coordinated Transportation Pilot Program \$100,000 in special funding in order to promote regional initiatives that advance the coordination, equity, and accessibility of transportation options within the region.

Steering Committee members, which equally represent each of the counties in Region 9, were asked to develop and present for consideration potential project proposals for best utilizing the special funds. At the November 4, 2020, Steering Committee meeting, four special projects were proposed for consideration. Project summaries including proposed budgets and project lead contact information were sent to all members for review, consideration, and comment. After an adequate review period, a vote was taken at the Steering Committee meeting held on November 17, 2020, to accept and fully fund the four special regional projects. Each project was considered and voted on separately. The vote was to accept the project and award full project-specific funding. Each project was adopted by unanimous affirmative vote. The projects and their budgets included:

1. An Employment Transportation Feasibility Study centered in Coshocton County.
Project Budget: \$25,000.00
2. Development of a Region 9 Resource Guide: an interactive, online, coordinated resource guide. Project Budget: \$2,000.00
3. A One Call/One Click Regional Call Center Strategic Planning Study.
Project Budget: \$35,000.00
4. A Media Outreach Campaign Project with both regional and local components.
Project Budget: \$38,000.00

OMEGA was responsible for administering the special funds from ODOT. All funds were required to be expended in CY 2021.

SECTION 2: PROJECT DETAILS AND RESULTS

One challenge being faced by rural public transit organizations across the state is that of marketing and public awareness. The OMEGA Media Outreach Campaign (MOC) was formulated to best utilize the project budget of \$38,000; to be split between budgets for individual counties and a total regional budget.

Under the OMEGA MOC, each participating county was allotted \$3,812.50 to spend on marketing efforts as each county advisory panel approved. County Mobility Managers met individually with OMEGA representatives and determined how funds could be utilized most effectively within their specific county. Counties chose to utilize funds to advertise services on a variety of media platforms including print, radio, social media, and billboards.

The regional MOC budget of \$7,500 was put towards the creation and advertisement of two Public Service Announcement (PSA) videos designed to showcase each Public Transit Agency

across the region. A local marketing company was selected to film and complete the two videos: one 60 second version and one 30 second version. Following completion of these PSA videos, OMEGA worked with local television stations in order to purchase advertisement time slots.

SECTION 3: COUNTY LEVEL MOC



BELMONT COUNTY

After meeting with OMEGA representatives and discussing the demographics of Belmont County, the county's advisory panel and mobility manager chose to expend its individual MOC funding on newspaper advertisements. Advertisements ran in the *Times Leader* Newspaper, alternating featuring local transportation providers. The circulation for the *Times Leader* is 6,825 every Sunday. The ads were also placed on their website, which gets about 114,00 visitors per month. The ads ran online for 30 days.



OVRTA/EORTA serves portions of Ohio and Marshall Counties in West Virginia and portions of Belmont and Jefferson Counties in Ohio.

- ✓ There are 11 fixed routes
- ✓ Service is provided Monday through Saturday from 6:00 a.m. until 6:30 p.m.
- ✓ There is no service on Sundays
- ✓ Complementary paratransit service called AdvANTage is provided during the same hours as the fixed-route service




If you are a resident of Belmont County and are currently 60 years of age or older, Senior Services of Belmont County may be able to help you with your transportation needs.

There are no income requirements, no costs to you (donations only) and no one will ever be refused services because of an inability to pay. We have Senior Centers throughout Belmont County that provide transportation for hair appointments, banking and many other non-medical needs. These locations also provide regularly scheduled nutritional shopping opportunities as well as daily transportation to and from the senior centers. You can inquire about times and availability by contacting your local senior center or calling 740-695-4142 for more information. Senior Service operates a fleet of modern, safe, reliable vehicles to provide transportation for medical care including physician appointments, dental appointments, cancer treatments, dialysis, physical therapy and much more. We have wheelchair accessible vehicles available as well as KWD SUVs and Sedans. You should schedule your medical transports at least 3 business days in advance by calling 740-695-4142.

Call 740-695-4142 for more information




CARROLL COUNTY

Carroll County's Advisory Board elected to purchase a billboard on State Hwy 183 beginning 4/22/2021. This billboard was placed to generate more public knowledge of Carroll County Transit in the Malvern area. Since the billboard has been up there has been an increase in call volume from that area.



COSHOCTON COUNTY

Coshocton County was able to utilize the OMEGA Media Outreach Campaign funds to advertise CCCTA on billboards throughout the county. They advertised for eight months in a row in a different location each month. In total, according to the advertising company, the CCCTA billboards reached on average a total of 109,000 people per week!

During the eight months the billboards ran CCCTA completed 10,212 trips. In the eight months prior to advertising on the billboards the agency completed only 8,392 trips. They report having numerous positive comments from clients as well as community members about the billboards as well as how our advertising efforts have really increased. The County Mobility Manager typically registers at least two new clients per day to utilize CCCTA.



GUERNSEY AND MUSKINGUM COUNTIES

As Guernsey and Muskingum Counties share a Mobility Manager, the counties shared an advisory board and spend funds in a similar fashion. The counties partnered with Muskingum Valley Health Centers Marketing experts for photos of a daily passenger and driver. Using these images, the Mobility Manager had a billboard created for both counties. The billboards ran for 6 months in each county. Muskingum County's billboard began on August 1, 2021 and ran until January 31, 2022. The billboard was moved to a new location each month. Guernsey County's billboard began on September 1, 2021 and will run until February 2022, also moving to a new location each month. This allowed for 12 different locations in both Counties for more traffic and visibility. A small portion of the Muskingum County budget was allocated to the Region 9 Resource Guide Project.



HARRISON COUNTY

Harrison County decided to utilize their funds for a billboard that was placed on US-250 East bound heading into Cadiz during October 2021. When the billboard was first erected it generated a lot of buzz within the community. Harrison County Transit and Harrison Hills Local School share a similar logo. Harrison County Transit even received a call from the Harrison Hill School Superintendent with her support. She herself was unaware of the services the rural public transit offered in her community. The billboard will remain up for 1 year. Since the advertisement has been visible Harrison County Rural Public Transit has received an increase in calls inquiring of their services.



JEFFERSON COUNTY

With social media use on the rise across nearly all demographic groups, Jefferson County's advisory board opted to utilize their individual funds to purchase 33 Facebook advertisements (see data excerpt below). As a result of these advertisements, a total of 49,317 people were reached with 351,052 impressions. The advertisements were viewed on average 7.12 times per person reached.



TUSCARAWAS COUNTY

Tuscarawas County utilized a combination of print advertisements and grocery inserts to reach its population and target demographics. They were able to reach nearly 29,000 Tuscarawas County residents with inserts in The Bargain Hunter. Additionally, there were 7,200 inserts in The Times Reporter in September and December and 5,000 grocery inserts at Mako's Market and Pharmacy. An additional 2,000 grocery inserts were placed at Giant Eagle-Dover. Inserts were also placed at the service centers at Buehler's New Philadelphia and Dover locations. Ads were also purchased for the WJER Radiogram in both the November and December issues. An advertisement was placed in The Outreacher paper in December.



SECTION 4: REGIONAL MOC

The second portion of the OMEGA Media Outreach Campaign (MOC) had a regional focus, as two video public service announcements promoting public transportation options across the area were produced and placed on local television and streaming platforms. The OMEGA team worked with a local marketing company videographer to create both a 30 second and a 60 second version of the PSA. Each county mentioned in Section 3 of this report was responsible for sourcing real public transportation users and drivers to be featured in the videos. The premise of the video PSAs was to destigmatize public transit and reinforce the reality that it is a service available for use to everyone. Participants ranged in age, gender, race, and ability level. Participants signed a waiver giving OMEGA full permission to utilize their likeness in the videos with the understanding that they would be aired on local television and streaming platforms.

Following the completion of the video PSAs, advertisement slots were purchased with WHIZ-TV, WTOV-TV, and Spectrum. WHIZ-TV provided 65 ad slots, while WTOV-TV provided 47 ad slots. Spectrum Streaming provided 52,972 total impressions. In total, the Regional MOC project cost \$7,500. The video PSAs will be utilized for promotional purposes and at transit/transportation events.

30 Second Video (double click to view):



60 Second Video (double click to view):



SECTION 5: CONCLUSION

The OMEGA Media Outreach Campaign (MOC) can be considered a success for several reasons. Each county was given the unique power to choose which form of media would be most effective at reaching their target demographics. Following the advisory board selection process, county mobility managers worked closely with the OMEGA team in order to carry out successful county level marketing campaigns. Results from each county have been reviewed and additional information and insight have been gained in each county that will aid in future marketing efforts.

From a regional standpoint, additional awareness was raised for transit/transportation options in each county through the PSA videos. Not only were the video PSAs seen numerous times across the region on local television and streaming platforms, but Region 9 will be able to utilize the videos for an extended period of time in promotional events and materials.