

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA) is organized as an agency of local 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 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 serves ten counties in Ohio: Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum, & Tuscarawas.



On July 1, 2013, the Ohio Department of Transportation authorized OMEGA to participate in a two-year pilot program to develop a Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) to serve the eight counties in OMEGA's district which are not members of a Metropolitan Planning Organization. These eight counties include: Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas.

A regional voice and planning organization is needed to address the major transportation needs that will facilitate economic and community development, address safety and congestion issues, and improve the quality of life for our residents.

Our Regional Transportation Planning Organization will focus on the following planning efforts:

1. Development of a **Five Year** Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) by June 30, 2015.
2. Facilitation of a consultation process which will allow for OMEGA's members to discuss regional transportation issues with ODOT, and where ODOT will provide updates regarding current plans, programs and projects occurring within OMEGA's region.
3. Facilitation of public outreach efforts.
4. Development of transportation expertise amongst OMEGA staff.

The development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a coordinated effort involving and engaging decision makers and stakeholders to include local elected officials, development agencies, private industry, ODOT, and the general public. The RTP will be financially responsible; promote the retention, expansion and redevelopment of regional industrial centers to include the shale industry; develop a public transit and human services transportation system to improve access and mobility; and develop a pedestrian and trail network to improve the quality of life for our residents.

Consistent with the eight planning factors that need to be considered under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), OMEGA in conjunction with the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and Executive Board have adopted the following the goals for the development of a Regional Transportation Plan:

- **Goal 1:** Preserve, Maintain and Improve Existing Transportation Systems
- **Goal 2:** Address Safety and Congestion Issues
- **Goal 3:** Facilitate Economic and Community Development
- **Goal 4:** Improve Quality of Life
- **Goal 5:** Develop a Financially Responsible Regional Transportation Plan

This Regional Transportation Plan includes the follow specific elements:

- Goals and Objectives
- Existing Conditions
- Future Conditions
- Needs Analysis
- Recommendations
- Fiscal Analysis
- Public Involvement

Specific objectives to meet the five goals were developed and provided in Section 2.0 of the RTP.

Documentation of existing conditions provided the framework for plan development and will provide the baseline for quantitatively measuring the success of the plan implementation. A detailed analysis of the existing conditions of the transportation systems in the RTPO region is provided in Section 3.0 of the RTP. Specific baseline data in the Existing Conditions Section includes: demographics, roads, bridges, transit, ports and rivers, aviation, rail, safety, economy, bicycle routes, and environmental concerns.

After establishing the baseline conditions of the transportation systems in the RTPO region, OMEGA projected the future conditions of the region and the impact those conditions will have on the transportation systems. Analysis of the future conditions (see Section 4.0) of the region focused on the impact of demographics, traffic, and shale development on the transportation systems in the region including roads, bridges, rivers, aviation, and transit. OMEGA relied on modeling conducted by the ODOT Office of Statewide Planning and Research and by the Ohio Development Services Agency to predict future demographic and traffic conditions of the region.

Assessment of the existing and future conditions along with input from OMEGA's Executive Board, Transportation Advisory Committee, Citizen's Advisory Board, other stakeholders, and the general public formed the basis for identifying the needs of the region, development of a preliminary projects list, and recommendations. The results of this analysis and recommendations are documented in Sections 5.0 and 6.0 of the plan.

Relying on historical data provided by ODOT, OMEGA also estimated the annual level of funding that may be available for locally initiated projects. OMEGA assumed that federal and state funding levels would be equivalent to the ten-year historical average and would remain flat over the planning period. Results of this fiscal analysis are provided in Section 7.0 of the plan.

Finally, documentation on public involvement activities aside from the regularly scheduled Executive Board, Transportation Advisory Committee, and Citizens Advisory Board Meetings is provided in Section 8.0 of the plan.