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OMEGA reaching out for travel input through online survey

BY DAVE MAST OCTOBER 5, 2020 50



Dave Mast

Area roads are littered with walkers, bikers, buggies and tractors that share the road with vehicles. OMEGA is seeking the public's input on roadways in Tuscarawas, Coshocton and Holmes counties.

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Traveling the byways of Ohio is tough enough when dealing with everyday vehicle traffic, but in the tri-county area of Tuscarawas, Holmes and Coshocton counties, where pedestrian, buggy and bicycle travel is so common, it can become especially challenging and dangerous.

Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association is currently taking on a major commitment in creating safer roadways for all modes of transportation through the Tri-County Transportation Plan Re-launch for Coshocton, Holmes and Tuscarawas Counties.

As part of that effort, OMEGA is currently reaching out to the public to hear what the needs and desires are of people who travel the roads each day.

The Tri-County Active Transportation Survey will give a voice to anyone who wishes to share their thoughts and opinions on how the OMEGA can create a strategic plan to improve the tri-county byways and make them safer for walkers, bikers and buggies who share the roads with vehicle traffic.

"In Holmes, Tuscarawas and Coshocton counties, we have a lot of people walking and traveling by bikes and buggies along our roadways," said Megan Carmel, transportation planner/GIS coordinator for OMEGA. "Every year we see a large number of crashes involving these modes of transportation, and most of them end in serious injury or even fatalities, and one fatality a year is too many. We want

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are on how we can put together a plan to do that." **BULLETIN BOARD (/BULLETIN-BOARD) FIND A BUSINESS (/BUSINESSES)**

The goal is to create a safe, connected multi-modal system for people of all ages and abilities that will improve safety through infrastructure and educational resources; construct accessible sidewalks, bicycle lanes, buggy lanes and trails; encourage healthy alternatives to driving; and boost community and economic development.

The kick-off to developing the tri-county plan began this past August when the vision and goals of the plan were designed. Since then the committee has worked on sharing and explaining data and talking about the needs that must be met in order to reach their goals.

Carmel said with the public expected to share their vision, the final plan will hopefully be unveiled in spring 2021.

A final plan would need approval from Ohio Department of Transportation, but with all parties working toward creating safer travel, Carmel doesn't see that being an issue. She said once the draft is in place, they will meet with county and township officials and Amish community leaders to get their insight.

According to Carmel, the relaunch committee is currently seeking to identify the best plan of action and then dedicate itself to find funding that will bring the plan to fruition.

"It's important for us to gain as much insight and better understand the needs and challenges of bikers, walkers and buggies in the area," Carmel said. "No one knows the roads and what is needed better than the community itself, people who use these roads daily. Therefore, their input is critical to us to put together the most comprehensive and well-rounded, useful transportation plan for our region. We can come up with as many ideas as we want, but in the end it is really the public's plan, so we want that to be reflected in what we develop."

The survey itself is fairly simple and straightforward and takes less than five minutes to complete. In doing so, the public can have a voice in the direction OMEGA takes in how it will approach creating a strategic plan.

In addition to the online survey, paper copies are available through OMEGA.

Carmel said once the committee gets an initial draft put together, the hope is that they will create even more opportunity to hear from the public through a series of public meetings, but that is several months down the road.

The actual funding process for the changes that will eventually be put in place will be an ongoing effort, according to Carmel. She said some of that fundraising will begin this year, even without the plan fully in place.

One such format is the Transportation Alternatives letters of interest through ODOT, which villages and communities can send in to ODOT through Oct. 31. TAP funding for projects is defined as transportation alternatives including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving nondriver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community-improvement activities, environmental mitigation, recreational trail program projects, and safe routes to school projects.

In 2019 area communities receiving TAP funding included Mt. Hope, which built sidewalks; the Tuscarawas County commissioners, who constructed a limestone surface for 4 miles of trail along the Tuscarawas River; and Millersburg, which completed a sidewalk project including adding American Disabilities Act ramps.

"There are tons of funding sources out there," Carmel said. "This plan will really give us a step up in acquiring those funds. When you show these organizations that you have a game plan in place, it really enhances the chances of receiving funding."

With the hope of finding dollars to commit to the project along with the willingness to reach out to the public, OMEGA is going to great lengths to assure a quality transportation plan can be designed, developed and put to good use.

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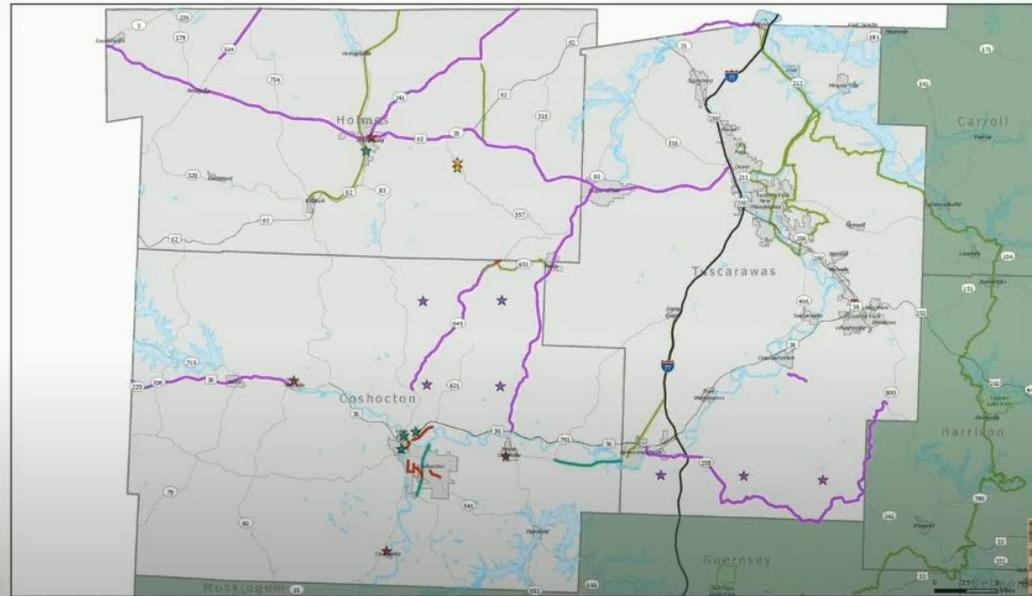
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Recommendations



Recommended Facilities
★ Bicycle/Buggy Lane
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★ Other - Safety

Existing
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Tri-County
Active Transportation Recommendations

16:50 / 38:10

OMEGA

The video player interface includes a progress bar at 16:50 / 38:10, a play button, and a volume icon. On the right, there are icons for closed captions (CC), settings, and a full-screen button. A small inset window shows a woman in a virtual meeting room with a brick wall background.

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Meeting 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQXFE7-Uvg4>

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