



# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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# Letter from Director Wierzbicki

Dear OMEGA Members and Partners,

As I contemplate the events and projects of the past year, I feel a sense of excitement and hope for the future. The year 2022 was one of progress and opportunity for the OMEGA region, with several new programs taking shape and unfolding. Perhaps the most significant of these programs was the Appalachian Community Grant (ACG) program, which was announced by Governor Mike DeWine in June. When complete, the ACG program will transform Appalachian Ohio as \$500 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding will be put towards transformational projects in rural communities across the 32-county region. This program is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I could not be prouder of the tireless efforts put forth by our communities and staff as they worked to meet the fast-approaching deadline for technical assistance applications in December. The OMEGA staff and I look forward to assisting our members and communities with ACG community development applications, which will be due later in 2023.

While new programs were unveiled, another successful and exciting project came to a close in 2022 as the OMEGA Broadband Feasibility Study was completed with the Reid Consulting Group. The study began in 2021 and provides more accurate and specific data as to which areas in the OMEGA region lack reliable broadband access. The data gathered has been and will continue to be a key asset in advocacy for rural broadband access on both a state and federal level. In an everchanging technology centric world, access to reliable broadband and competitive speeds is vital to the future and success of the Appalachian region.

In 2022, OMEGA obtained \$12.75 million in funding for the region from sources other than the ARC/GOA Area Development Program. Most notable include a \$1,999,000 ARC POWER Grant to extend broadband in Carroll County, a \$5,000,000 grant from the EDA for the Construction Trades Building at Belmont College, and a \$2,155,616 grant from EDA for The Wilds for a new RV campground. The broadband project in Carroll County will provide service to 384 households and 53 businesses. Located on 10,000 acres of reclaimed coal mine lands, the Wilds is a nonprofit safari park and conservation center which is a cornerstone of the ecotourism industry in the region with a total projected annual economic impact of almost \$18 million. The Construction Trades Building will provide career building skills for in-demand jobs in the region. These projects will improve 53 businesses, create 275 new jobs and retain 138 jobs.

OMEGA also successfully implemented our Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) Capital Allocation Pilot Program. Using funds from this program, we were able to provide funding assistance to six active transportation projects and one bridge project in four counties. Over \$1.14 Million was provided for engineering, design, and construction of these projects.

I am extremely proud of the accomplishments of our staff and the investments that have been made in the region as a direct result of their hard work.

While 2022 was a year of progress and unimaginable opportunity for the OMEGA region, the coming year will be one of transition as I plan to retire in October 2023 and Assistant Executive Director/Finance Director Cindi Metz will retire in August 2023. I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to work alongside Cindi, our outstanding staff, and great communities. The OMEGA region and organization will always hold a special place in my heart and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to work alongside you to make our region a great place to live and work.

Sincerely,

*Jeannette M. Wierzbicki*

Jeannette M. Wierzbicki, P.E.  
Executive Director

# OMEGA Member Governments



The member governments of OMEGA include 10 county governments — Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Muskingum and Tuscarawas — as well as 12 city governments — Cambridge, Coshocton, Dover, East Liverpool, Martins Ferry, New Philadelphia, St. Clairsville, Salem, Steubenville, Toronto, Uhrichsville and Zanesville

OMEGA is a collaborative body of member governments that serves as a facilitator between federal and state government agencies and local entities to provide opportunities in economic and community development through networking, education, planning research and allocation of resources. OMEGA's main objective is to foster a cooperative effort in planning, development and implementation of local and regional plans, programs and projects which will increase the economic activity in the area and improve the quality of life for its citizens. OMEGA is also the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Muskingum and Tuscarawas counties.

**OMEGA MISSION STATEMENT:** *Provide a pathway to enhance community and economic growth in our region.*



Department of  
Development



U.S. Department of  
Transportation  
Federal Highway  
Administration

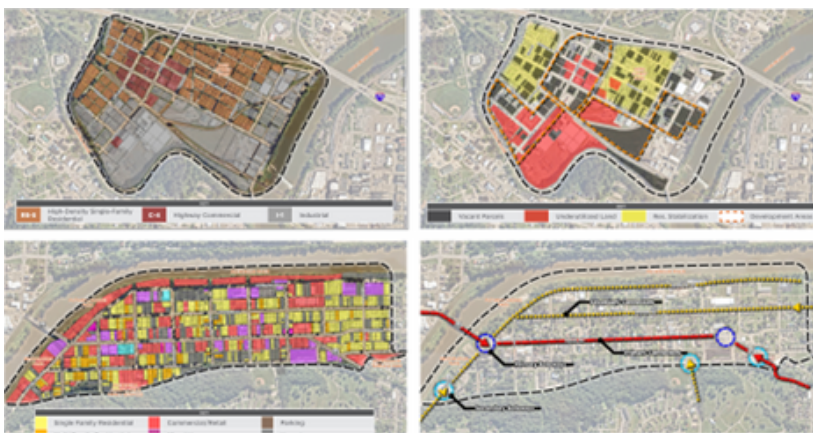




# The Resilience Initiative for Southeastern and Eastern Ohio (RISE Ohio)

Spearheaded by a \$2.2 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) in January 2021, RISE Ohio is a bold initiative and unique partnership among OMEGA, Buckeye Hills Regional Council, and Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service. The program is designed to yield quality job creation and economic diversification within an 18-county area (OMEGA and Buckeye Hills' regions) that is striving to move beyond an over-reliance on coal-related industries. EDA's investment was matched with \$250,000 from JobsOhio and \$300,000 from the Voinovich School's Appalachian New Economy Partnership (ANEP) State appropriation to create a \$2.75 million program that will offer a variety of services through the Local Development Districts and the Voinovich School.

RISE Ohio partners are tasked with engaging in several key strategies, including an analysis of the coal supply chain's ability to diversify into new markets; optimizing development within the 26 Opportunity Zones throughout the 18 counties; and a focused effort on economic recovery in Coshocton County in the wake of the 2019 closure of the Conesville power plant. OMEGA advanced these efforts in 2022 through its contract with The Hamman Consulting Group, Inc. (serving as the Coshocton County Recovery Coordinator through June 2023), while also engaging other consulting groups for targeted Opportunity Zone technical assistance in the 14 Opportunity Zones within the OMEGA region.



**Existing Conditions Analysis**

*(LEFT): Zanesville's Historic Putnam and Old 8th Ward Neighborhoods*



# The Resilience Initiative for Southeastern and Eastern Ohio (RISE Ohio)

To support development in the region's Opportunity Zones, OMEGA focused on technical assistance projects throughout 2022. RISE Ohio has enabled the following exciting projects in every corner of the region:



## Wellsville Columbiana County

Through a contract with MS Consultants, Inc. ([www.msconsultants.com](http://www.msconsultants.com)), OMEGA will provide greater visibility of development opportunities throughout the downtown core, as it sits in a strategic location along the State Route 7 corridor between Youngstown and Steubenville. The project will also present village leaders with an actionable Main Street streetscape vision.



## Steubenville Jefferson County

Envision Group LLC ([www.envisiongroupllc.com](http://www.envisiongroupllc.com)) will provide a targeted analysis of a 5-acre area within the Opportunity Zone in the south end of Downtown Steubenville. The area contains redevelopment sites with immediate access to State Route 7, adjacent to the former 120-acre steel mill complex that is now a transloading terminal that employs 100 full-time workers.



## Zanesville Muskingum County

OHM Advisors is preparing streetscape, zoning, and development strategy recommendations for two of the city's historic urban core neighborhoods - the Putnam Avenue Historic District and the Old 8th Ward. The project will complement the city's downtown redevelopment plans to include tourism, dining, and business incubation plans.



## Byesville Guernsey County

Axcel Innovation, LLC is a national leader in business incubator and development finance analyses. Axcel will provide a detailed study of the former Byesville Elementary school building, as village leaders contemplate its conversion into an incubator / marketplace to serve as a gateway into a downtown that has become a success story of entrepreneurship.



## 6 County OZ Analysis

The Envision Group LLC, will provide the remaining Opportunity Zones with detailed analysis and marketing prospectus services through October 2023. The zones offer a variety of downtown and industrial redevelopment opportunities. The OMEGA region is now presented with a unique development proposition with major corporate investments.



## Coshocton Recovery Coordinator

Major Work Activities in 2022:  
-prepared two OhioSE site readiness grants that secured \$13,490 toward the Port Authority's industrial site development efforts  
-2023 Ohio Rural Industrial Park loan application and introduced the Port Authority to private sector development partners  
-presented annexation and parcel assembly strategies as part of the comprehensive economic development plan

# OMEGA Executive Board

Member	Representative	Title	Appointed By
Belmont County	J.P. Dutton	Commissioner	Belmont County
Carroll County	Chris Modranski	Commissioner	Carroll County
Columbiana County	Roy Paparodis	Commissioner	Columbiana County
Coshocton County	Tiffany Swigert	Port Authority Director	Coshocton County
Guernsey County	Jack Marlin	Commissioner	Guernsey County
Harrison County	Paul Coffland	Commissioner	Harrison County
Holmes County	Ray Eyer	Commissioner	Holmes County
Jefferson County	Tony Morelli	Commissioner	Jefferson County
Muskingum County	Mollie Crooks	Commissioner	Muskingum County
Tuscarawas County	Kerry Metzger	Commissioner	Tuscarawas County
City of Cambridge	Thomas Orr	Mayor	City of Cambridge
City of Coshocton	Mark Mills	Mayor	City of Coshocton
City of Dover	Shane Gunnoe	Interim Mayor	City of Dover
City of East Liverpool	Gregory Bricker	Mayor	City of East Liverpool
City of Martins Ferry	John Davies	Mayor	City of Martins Ferry
City of New Philadelphia	Joel B. Day	Mayor	City of New Philadelphia
City of St. Clairsville	Kathryn Thalman	Mayor	City of St. Clairsville
City of Salem	Cyndi Dickey	Mayor	City of Salem
City of Steubenville	Domenick Mucci	Mayoral Appointment	City of Steubenville
City of Toronto	John Parker	Mayor	City of Toronto
City of Uhrichsville	Mark Haney	Mayor	City of Uhrichsville
City of Zanesville	Donald Mason	Mayor	City of Zanesville

# 2022 Financial Report

Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association  
Guernsey County, Ohio  
*Balance Sheet*  
*Governmental Funds*  
*June 30, 2022*

	General	Revolving Loan	Appalachian Regional Commission	State Appalachian Development Program	Economic Development Administration	Rural Transportation	Rural Transit Pilot Program	Other Governmental Funds	Total Governmental Funds
<b>Assets</b>									
Equity in Pooled Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 175,107	\$ -	\$ 75,085	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6	\$ 250,198
Cash and Cash Equivalents in Segregated Accounts	100	590,173	-	-	-	-	-	-	590,273
Cash and Cash Equivalents with Fiscal Agent	2,656	9,039	77,183	65,602	105,903	79,313	45,177	6,967	391,840
Receivables:									
Intergovernmental	1,971	13,156	-	136,703	105,241	61,508	30,880	14,390	363,849
Loans	-	2,021,752	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,021,752
Prepaid Items	22	73	625	531	857	642	366	56	3,172
Interfund Receivable	327,348	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	327,348
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 507,204</b>	<b>\$ 2,634,193</b>	<b>\$ 152,893</b>	<b>\$ 202,836</b>	<b>\$ 212,001</b>	<b>\$ 141,463</b>	<b>\$ 76,423</b>	<b>\$ 21,419</b>	<b>\$ 3,948,432</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>									
Accrued Expenses	\$ 224	\$ 763	\$ 6,520	\$ 5,541	\$ 8,945	\$ 6,698	\$ 3,815	\$ 589	\$ 33,095
Interfund Payable	-	14,298	-	130,894	92,562	50,915	24,838	13,841	327,348
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>15,061</b>	<b>6,520</b>	<b>136,435</b>	<b>101,507</b>	<b>57,613</b>	<b>28,653</b>	<b>14,430</b>	<b>360,443</b>
<b>Deferred Inflows of Resources</b>									
Unavailable Revenue	-	13,156	-	-	18,526	12,202	21,647	14,390	79,921
<b>Fund Balances</b>									
Nonspendable	22	73	625	531	857	642	366	56	3,172
Restricted	2,656	2,605,903	145,748	65,870	91,111	71,006	25,757	6	3,008,057
Unassigned	504,302	-	-	-	-	-	-	(7,463)	496,839
<b>Total Fund Balances</b>	<b>506,980</b>	<b>2,605,976</b>	<b>146,373</b>	<b>66,401</b>	<b>91,968</b>	<b>71,648</b>	<b>26,123</b>	<b>(7,401)</b>	<b>3,508,068</b>
<b>Total Liabilities, Deferred Inflows of Resources and Fund Balances</b>	<b>\$ 507,204</b>	<b>\$ 2,634,193</b>	<b>\$ 152,893</b>	<b>\$ 202,836</b>	<b>\$ 212,001</b>	<b>\$ 141,463</b>	<b>\$ 76,423</b>	<b>\$ 21,419</b>	<b>\$ 3,948,432</b>



# Grant Assistance

OMEGA's Community Development Specialists and other staff provide assistance to local governments and non-profit organizations to identify potential funding sources and financial strategies. They also facilitate meetings with funding agencies and other interested parties. OMEGA's specialists help prepare funding applications, conduct environmental reviews and provide funding administration services. The provision of these services increases the capacity of communities in Appalachian Ohio, enabling them to be more competitive with the urban areas of the state.



## CONSTRUCTION TRADES BUILDING

- *Belmont College*
- EDA ARPA Economic Adjustment Assistance
- \$5,000,000 grant
- \$8,145,355 total



## ARPA HIRING AND PAYROLL

- *Bethesda Fire Department*
- EMS
- \$209,000 grant
- \$209,000 total



## BODY WORN CAMERAS - ROUND 1 AND ROUND 2

- *Byesville Police Department*
- Office of Criminal Justice
- \$12,424 grant
- \$12,424 total



## ARPA HIRING AND PAYROLL

- *Cadiz Police Department*
- Office of Criminal Justice
- \$59,592 grant
- \$59,592 total



## CLAIRMONT AVENUE SIDEWALKS

- *City of Cambridge*
- ODOT Safe Routes to School
- \$399,043 grant
- \$399,043 total



## CONNECTING UNDERSERVED CARROLL COUNTY, OHIO

- *Carroll County*
- ARC POWER
- \$1,999,000 grant
- \$3,999,005 total



## 3RD STREET STORM SEWER REPLACEMENT

- *Village of Carrollton*
- OPWC
- \$179,750 grant
- \$359,500 total



## HALL PARK UPGRADES

- *City of Coshocton*
- ODNR
- \$25,028 grant
- \$33,370 total



## BICYCLE SAFETY TRAIN THE TRAINER

- *Coshocton County*
- ODOT Safe Routes to School
- \$5,500 grant
- \$5,500 total



## COSHOCOTON CONNECTOR: CR 621 MULTI-USE PATH

- *Coshocton County*
- ODOT Transportation Alternatives
- \$817,861 grant
- \$948,406 total



## ARPA HIRING AND PAYROLL

- *Village of Dillonvale*
- Office of Criminal Justice
- \$28,600 grant
- \$28,600 total



## RECOVERY TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- *Guernsey County CDC*
- ARC INSPIRE
- \$325,645 grant
- \$483,725 total

# Grant Assistance



## LUCASBURG ROAD ASPHALT OVERLAY

- *Jackson Township - Guernsey County*
- ODOT Township Stimulus
- \$132,441 grant
- \$132,441 total



## TR 92 CHIP/SEAL

- *Killbuck Township - Holmes County*
- ODOT Township Stimulus
- \$30,946 grant
- \$30,946 total



## KENT STATE CONNECTOR TRAIL

- *City of New Philadelphia*
- ODNR
- \$500,000 grant
- \$969,400 total



## NEW PHILADELPHIA SKATE PARK

- *City of New Philadelphia*
- ODNR
- \$16,194 grant
- \$35,800 total



## ADENA DRIVE SANITARY SEWER IMPROVEMENTS

- *Village of Newcomerstown*
- OPWC
- \$189,181 grant
- \$378,363 total



## N. COLLEGE STREET SANITARY SEWER EXTENSION

- *Village of Newcomerstown*
- OPWC
- \$309,580 grant
- \$619,160 total



## VILLAGE PARK IMPROVEMENTS

- *Old Washington*
- ODNR
- \$3,489 grant
- \$4,652 total



## MCCULLOCH PARK RENOVATION

- *City of Salem*
- T-Mobile Hometown Grant
- \$25,000 grant
- \$103,657 total



## ARPA HIRING AND PAYROLL

- *Salem Police Department*
- Office of Criminal Justice
- \$159,704 grant
- \$159,704 total



## SAFETY SIGN UPGRADE

- *Ripley Township - Holmes County*
- ODOT Township Sign
- \$28,793 grant
- \$28,793 total



## SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS

- *Village of Tuscarawas*
- ODOT Safe Routes to School
- \$90,012 grant
- \$406,032 total



## RV CAMPGROUND

- *The Wilds*
- EDA ARPA Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation
- \$2,155,616 grant
- \$2,855,616 total



## SAFETY SIGN UPGRADE

- *West Township - Columbiana County*
- ODOT Township Sign
- \$48,490 grant
- \$48,490 total



**\$12.75 M Total**

2022

# ***Grant Assistance/ GOA & ARC Outcomes***

30	Applications Submitted
26	Applications Approved
630	Jobs Created/Retained
1,277	Existing Businesses Improved
71,829	Households Improved
13.1	Miles of Waterline Constructed
3.5	Miles of Sanitary Sewer Improved/Constructed
0.6	MGD Wastewater Treatment Plant
1	Water Reservoir Improved
3.4	Miles of Recreational Trails
0.95	Miles of Sidewalks
33,400	Square Feet of Buildings Improved
9	Safety Projects for Police/Fire Departments
4	Park Improvements
567	Road Safety Signs




# RTPO Allocation Program


In 2021, House Bill 74 of the 134th Ohio General Assembly allocated \$5.2 million in funding over the state’s biennium for the creation of a Regional Transportation Planning Grant Program. Since being officially designated as a Regional Transportation Planning Organization in 2016, this is the first time that the OMEGA RTPO region received an allocation from the federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program. Each Ohio RTPO was allocated funding dependent on a base allocation of \$100,000 and a formula-based calculation based on land area and population. Based on these calculations, OMEGA was allocated \$572,321 annually in state fiscal year (SFY) 2022 and SFY 2023. Realizing the importance of these funds to the region, OMEGA's Transportation Team in conjunction with the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) quickly developed the policies, procedures, and application process for these funds. OMEGA’s Executive Board adopted the OMEGA RTPO Allocation Policy in December 2021 and OMEGA accepted applications to this new program in 2022. The purpose of this grant is to allow RTPOs the opportunity to award funds to projects that may otherwise be overlooked by traditional State and Federal grant programs. OMEGA received 12 applications requesting \$1,850,427. OMEGA evaluated each application and provided a recommendation to the TAC and Executive Board for approval. Of the applications submitted, OMEGA was able fund 7 projects in 4 counties for a total of \$1,144,642 split between SFY 2023 and 2024. Program funds were used for the design or construction phase. For several projects, the applicant received funding for the construction phase, but struggled with being able to finance engineering and other costs. The RTPO Capital Allocation Program bridged this financial gap.


## Safety Snapshot


	Totals	% Change vs. 2019-2021
Crashes	27,839	+0.65%
Fatal Crashes	203	+12.8%
Injury Crashes	6,268	-2.62%
Leading Crash Type	FIXED OBJECT	26.4%


# RTPO Capital Allocation Program


- 


**Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity, Phase 1**  
(SR 259/SR 39)  
City of New Philadelphia  
Shared use path that will connect KSU and Downtown New Philadelphia, 2.5 miles long  
\$250,000 grant; \$3,048,306 total cost
- 

**Mohican Valley Trail, Phase 1**  
Holmes County  
Phase 1 of all-purpose trail that will extend 0.7 miles from northern county border to new bridge, parallel to Wally Road.  
\$250,000 grant; \$1,429,322 total cost
- 

**CR 12 New Bedford Buggy Lane**  
Coshocton County  
Buggy lane on east side of CR 12 outside New Bedford  
\$30,000 grant; \$155,000 total cost
- 

**Miskimen Drive Sidewalk**  
Village of Newcomerstown  
Sidewalk along Miskimen Drive and Goodrich Street  
\$42,721 grant; \$154,721 total cost
- 

**Towpath Trail Ext. 1**  
Tuscarawas County  
Extension of the Towpath Trail from Zoarville to the Dover Dam  
\$100,000 grant; \$666,925 total cost
- 

**CR 62 Bridge Replacement**  
Tuscarawas County  
Bridge replacement (TUS CR 62-00.70)  
\$250,000 grant; \$6,915,790 total cost
- 

**East Liverpool Riverfront Trail Phase 1.1**  
City of East Liverpool  
Multi-use path connecting Downtown East Liverpool to riverfront  
\$221,921 grant; \$1,214,994 total cost

# Regional Coordinated Transportation Pilot Program

OMEGA's Regional Coordinated Transportation Pilot Program is guided by the Steering Committee, Regional Coordinated Council (RCC), and ODOT. The pilot program includes all OMEGA counties except for Columbiana County and is designated Region 9 by ODOT. The current Regional Coordinated Transportation Plan has been extended by ODOT to guide the region through June 30, 2024. The next iteration of the Coordinated Transportation Plan will be developed in 2023/2024 and is due for submission to ODOT by June 30, 2024. The new plan will cover a four-year period from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2028.

In 2022, four counties in the OMEGA region were chosen to participate in a new ODOT initiative called Mobility Ohio. The four counties involved in this pilot include Coshocton, Tuscarawas, Guernsey, and Muskingum. The objective of the Mobility Ohio pilot project is to determine if efficiencies in coordinated Health and Human Service (HHS) transportation can be created by the development of a centralized scheduling center and to determine fully allocated costs for HHS transportation services. The Mobility Ohio pilot is slated to begin operations in January of 2024.


## Accomplishments

 Review and update of Regional SWOT Analysis

 Review and update of Regional Unmet Needs

 Addition of Action Items to updated Regional Goals/Strategies


 Received over 2,058 responses to the Regional Survey of Unmet Needs


 Coordination with ODOT for review of all 5310 and Mobility Management Applications

 Completed 2022 yearly update to the Regional Coordinated Transportation Plan

 Updated Region 9 Resource Guide

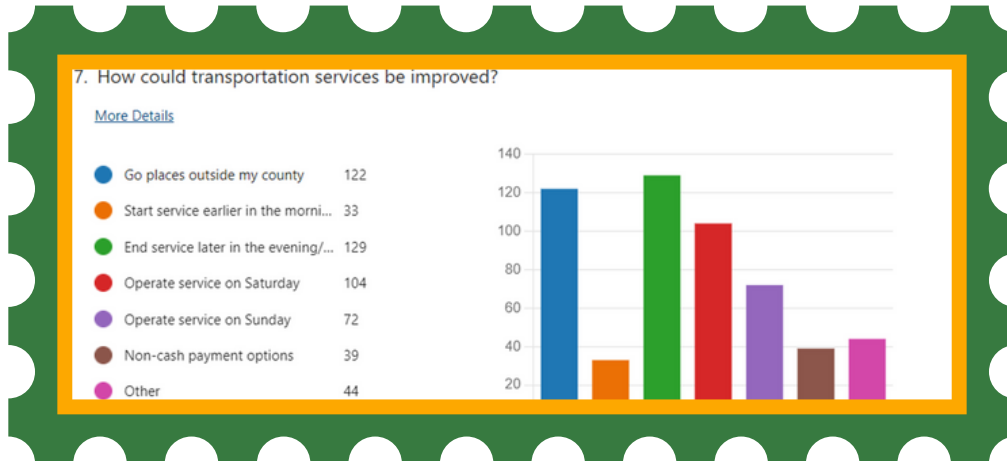
 Began formalization of Regional Coordinated Council

 Coordination with ODOT on Mobility Ohio Pilot Project

 [www.region9resourceguide.com](http://www.region9resourceguide.com)  
[www.omegadistrict.org/programs/transit/regional/](http://www.omegadistrict.org/programs/transit/regional/)



# Regional Coordinated Transportation Pilot Program



The Steering Committee has become an integral and effective platform to advance the directives of the Regional Coordinated Transportation Plan. The Steering Committee has been able to create regional initiatives with broad based support and become a vital platform to best meet the many and varied transportation needs of all persons in the region. In 2022 there were six meetings of the Steering Committee and four meetings of the Regional Coordinated Council which covered topics including: AAA9 and Developmentally Disabled transportation programs and challenges, Everything EV, barriers before the bus doors open and after the bus doors close, a personal experience, and the United Way and Veteran's Service's transportation programs and challenges.

## Steering Committee Report

**Regional Goals, Strategies and Action Steps - completed**

- REGIONAL GOALS (3)** ✓
- REGIONAL STRATEGIES (19)** ✓
- REGIONAL ACTION STEPS (64)** ✓

Next tasks: Regional SWOT Analysis, Origin-Destination mapping, Regional Survey of Unmet Needs data analysis.

# OMEGA Staff



**Jeannette M. Wierzbicki, P.E., Executive Director** reports directly to the President of OMEGA and the Executive Board. She oversees all programmatic areas, staffing, budgets, and other duties as may be assigned by the Executive Board. Ms. Wierzbicki is also responsible for assuring compliance with all rules, regulations, and requirements pertaining to the function and administration of the agency. Jeannette is President of the Ohio Association of Regional Council (OARC) and serves as OMEGA's representative on the Small Community Environmental Infrastructure Group.

**Email: [jeannettew@omegadistrict.org](mailto:jeannettew@omegadistrict.org)**

## **Cindi Metz, Assistant Executive Director/Finance**

**Director** works in conjunction with the Executive Director to further the mission of OMEGA and assumes the responsibilities of the Executive Director in her absence. As Finance Director, she administers the organization's long-term and short-term budgets and prepares all financial reports for the board of directors and members. She works directly with the auditors to ensure compliance with all federal and state requirements. Cindi also manages the daily operation of the office, including human resources, payroll, deposits, payments and account reconciliation. She is cross-trained to assist the Revolving Loan Fund Administrator in a back-up capacity.

**Email: [cindim@omegadistrict.org](mailto:cindim@omegadistrict.org)**



## **George Dolney, RLF Administrator/ Regional 166 Program Administrator**

is responsible for all activities required to administer the RLF and Regional 166 Programs including coordination of business loan packages, analysis of loan requests, facilitation of loan closings, compliance with state and federal regulations, monitoring repayments and performing all accounting processes related to the loan programs. He also performs on-site monitoring visits and conducts file audits on a regular basis. George is cross-trained to assist the Finance Director in a back-up capacity.

**Email: [gdolney@omegadistrict.org](mailto:gdolney@omegadistrict.org)**



# OMEGA Staff



**Alan Knapp, ARC Program Manager / Community Development Specialist** is the program manager for the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and Governor's Office of Appalachia (GOA) programs and develops the OMEGA ARC/GOA Project Package on an annual basis. He provides technical assistance to applicants requesting ARC/GOA funding to include assistance with direct applications to ARC for POWER and INSPIRE. Alan also managed the Regional Job Training Program and is leading OMEGA's Recovery to Work Program. He provides assistance to local governments and non-profit organizations on the identification of potential funding sources and facilitates meetings with local officials, community leaders and funding agencies. Additionally, Alan prepares applications for CDBG funding and assists communities with the administration of CDBG grants, including environmental reviews, status reports, drawdowns and amendments.

**Email: [alank@omegadistrict.org](mailto:alank@omegadistrict.org)**

**Hannah Stillions, EDA Program Manager/Development Specialist** is the program manager for the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Partnership Planning Grant and develops the OMEGA Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Report and annual updates to the CEDS. Hannah also assists communities with Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant programs, including communication of program intent, eligibility criteria, funding availability, and leveraging requirements in addition to application preparation and funding administration. Hannah also assists local governments and nonprofit organizations with funding applications.

**Email: [hstillions@omegadistrict.org](mailto:hstillions@omegadistrict.org)**



**Trina Woodland, Community Development Specialist** assists local governments and non-profit organizations with the identification of viable financing strategies for needed improvements. She also facilitates meetings with local officials, community leaders and funding agencies. She prepares funding applications, conducts environmental reviews, and provides funding administration services. Trina is also responsible for conducting the local review for the Intergovernmental Review (IGR) process for project applications submitted to federal and state agencies. She also serves as the liaison for the Ohio Public Works Commission Natural Resource Assistance Council for District 14. Trina prepares applications for CDBG funding and assists communities with the administration of CDBG grants, including environmental reviews, status reports, drawdowns and amendments.

**Email: [trinaw@omegadistrict.org](mailto:trinaw@omegadistrict.org)**





# OMEGA Staff



**Kennedy Blakley, Communications Manager** is responsible for all areas of public relations and communication, including membership, media and the general public. She oversees the production and release of annual reports, newsletters, press notices, social media content, and OMEGA website content. Kennedy also organizes and assists with preparations for OMEGA Executive Board Meetings, Legislative Mixers, Annual/ Semi-Annual Meetings, and various events across all departments.

**Email:** [kblakley@omegadistrict.org](mailto:kblakley@omegadistrict.org)

**Deb Hill, Transit Planner** is responsible for implementation of the coordinated plan and required updates. She also manages OMEGA's Regional Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Pilot Program. As part of the planning process, she leads public workshops; distributes surveys; facilitates meetings with stakeholders including senior citizens, people with disabilities, mobility managers, transportation service providers, human service agencies and other interested parties; analyzes data; and conducts origin and destination studies. Deb also coordinates with the Ohio Department of Transportation on mobility initiatives and grant programs.

**Email:** [dhill@omegadistrict.org](mailto:dhill@omegadistrict.org)



**Evan Scurti, Senior Development Specialist** is responsible for the management of OMEGA's Resilience Initiative for Southeastern and Eastern (RISE) Ohio Initiative, a U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Assistance to Coal Communities program initiative led by Ohio University's Voinovich School, Buckeye Hills Regional Council, and OMEGA, focused on economic diversification; Opportunity Zone planning, development, and investment; and assistance to communities impacted by coal fired power plant closures. He is also responsible for the overall supervision of other EDA programmatic activities and coordination of other economic development initiatives for the region.

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# OMEGA Staff



**Kevin Buettner, Transportation Director** manages OMEGA's Transportation and Transit programs. Responsibilities under the Transportation Program include: development of a four-year Regional Transportation Improvement Plan; participation in statewide transportation planning activities; providing technical assistance (e.g. school travel plans, traffic counts, crash analysis, road safety audits, training); maintenance of transportation databases; conducting transportation related surveys; development of performance measures and targets, and revisions to the Regional Transportation Plan. Kevin also facilitates the public involvement component of the Transportation Program and prepares funding applications for transportation and non-transportation projects.

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**Josh Sliker, Transportation Planner** works with the Transportation Director and other transportation planning staff on the Transportation Program. Josh responsible for short range transportation planning activities (Active Transportation Plans, Safe Routes to School Travel Plans, etc.); development of the 4-year Transportation Improvement Plan; administering the RTPO Capital Allocation Program; participation in statewide transportation planning activities; providing technical assistance (e.g., traffic counts, crash analysis, road safety audits, transportation grant writing, training); conducting transportation related surveys; development of performance measures and targets, and revisions/updates to the Regional Transportation Plan. Mr. Sliker assists the Transportation Director with the public involvement component of the Transportation Program. Mr. Sliker also prepares funding applications for transportation projects, and assists communities with transportation planning activities.



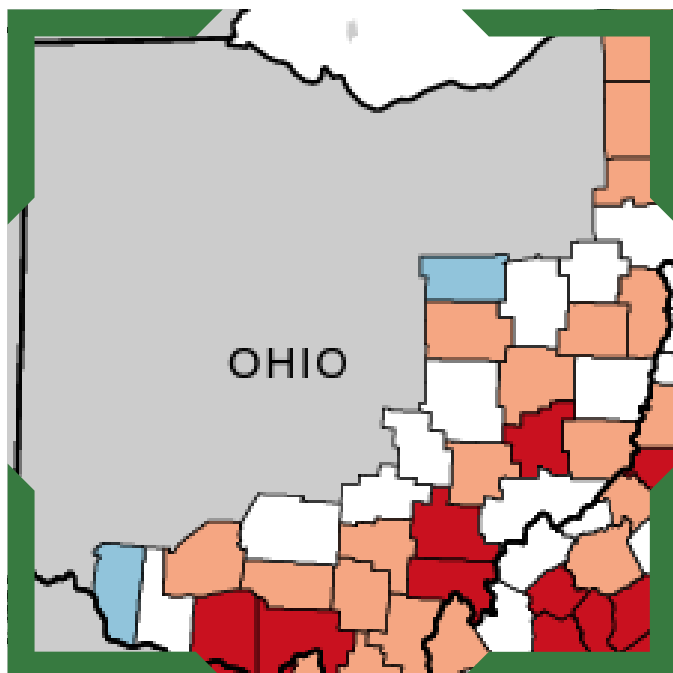
**Email: [jsliker@omegadistrict.org](mailto:jsliker@omegadistrict.org)**



# Appalachian Community Grant (ACG) Program

In June 2022, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine announced the Appalachian Community Grant (ACG) Program. The ACG Program will distribute \$500 million of funding amongst the 32 Appalachian Counties to plan and complete transformational projects across rural Ohio. In response to this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, OMEGA hosted a regional meeting in conjunction with the Governor's Office of Appalachia (GOA) at Kent State University Tuscarawas. Following the regional meeting, OMEGA hosted individual meetings in each of its 10 counties in order to discuss potential projects in depth with local leaders and community members. Technical Assistance and first round Development applications were due in December 2022 and funding will be awarded in Spring 2023. Planning will continue and the next round of applications will be due Fall 2023.

(RIGHT): GOA Director John Carey explains funding priorities to attendees at the Regional ACG Workshop



(LEFT): Distressed and At Risk Counties, as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)

# ARC Projects for Program Year 2022f

Applicant/Project	County	ARC Request	Other \$	Total Cost
City of St. Clairsville Water Distribution System Improvements	Belmont	\$250,000	\$2,874,950	\$3,124,950
City of East Liverpool Thompson Ave Water Tank Transmission Line Replacement	Columbiana	\$250,000	\$1,844,400	\$2,094,400
Holmes County Berlin Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion	Holmes	\$250,000	\$3,476,575	\$3,726,575
Village of East Palestine Water Line and Lead Service Replacement	Columbiana	\$250,000	\$5,971,317	\$6,221,317
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>\$14,167,242</b>	<b>\$15,167,242</b>

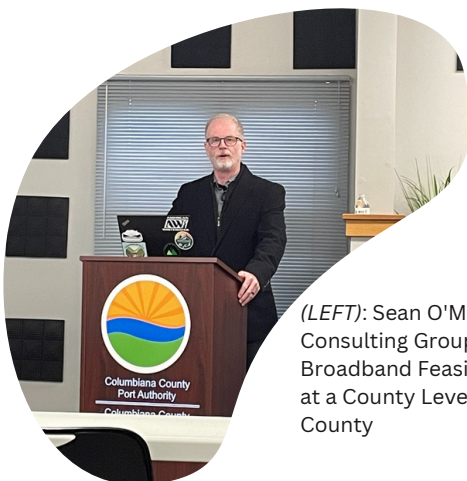
# GOA Projects for Program Year 2022

Applicant/Project	County	GOA Request	Other \$	Total Cost
City of Salem Salem Reservoir Dam Improvements	Columbiana	\$235,000	\$236,000	\$471,000
Coshocton County Port Authority Access Road for Genesis Campus	Coshocton	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$500,000
Tuscarawas County TID I-77/US 250 Interchange Study	Tuscarawas	\$60,000	\$63,900	\$123,900
KSU Tuscarawas Campus Multi-County Advanced Manufacturing Corridor	All OMEGA Counties, excluding Muskingum	\$91,000	\$91,000	\$182,000
Muskingum University Regional Health and Well-Being Workforce for the Future	All OMEGA Counties	\$250,000	\$253,151	\$503,151
Columbiana County Port Authority Global Investments Hub	Columbiana	\$250,000	\$444,800	\$694,800
Village of Scio Grandview, Maple, Brown Water Line and Lead Service Line Replacement	Harrison	\$124,000	\$993,823	\$1,117,823
<b>Total for GOA</b>		<b>\$1,260,000</b>	<b>\$2,332,674</b>	<b>\$3,592,674</b>

# Broadband Feasibility Study

Reliable access to broadband has long been a challenge across the Appalachian Region. This inequity was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lasting changes that were brought about as a result. As remote work, telehealth, virtual education, and video conferencing became the norm the digital divide became more apparent. Using funding from the EDA CARES Act Planning Grant, OMEGA retained the Reid Consulting Group to develop a Regional Broadband Feasibility Study. The Broadband Feasibility Study was designed to paint an accurate, unbiased picture of the state of broadband in the OMEGA region and to develop a strategy to expand access to reliable high-speed broadband. By knowing the existing landscape, area specific action plans were prepared that will eventually have tangible results in the region. By using the most up to date and highest regarded data available, including Duns and Bradstreet business data that OMEGA obtained as a part of this grant to create the business overlay maps, the Reid Consulting Group conducted the study. This study identified that 38% of the households in the OMEGA region do not have access to the minimum speeds of 25 Mbps downloaded and 3 Mbps upload and that the estimated cost to extend fiber to all households and businesses in the region is approximately \$743 million. A subsidy of \$558 million may needed to make broadband services affordable for the businesses and residents and to provide incentives for the internet service providers to extend service in low-density rural areas. Broadband profiles and action plans for each county were developed and a robust stakeholder engagement process was used throughout the study. While fiber to the home is the long term goal, the study also acknowledged the need for multiple technologies such as fixed wireless and low earth satellites are needed to meet current needs as well as the needs of the most rural areas of the region. With the completion of this study, counties in the OMEGA region have a logical process for expansion of broadband to unserved and underserved areas that will allow communities to take advantage of local, state, and federal resources to meet the broadband means of the region. The study identified the use of ARPA funding, Rural Digital Opportunities Fund, upcoming NTIA programs, and referenced the investments from the Ohio Residential Broadband program. Results are available at <https://omegadistrict.org/regionalbroadband/>.

(RIGHT): OMEGA Executive Director speaks to WTOV media personnel at the Jefferson County Meeting, as Sean O'Malley looks on

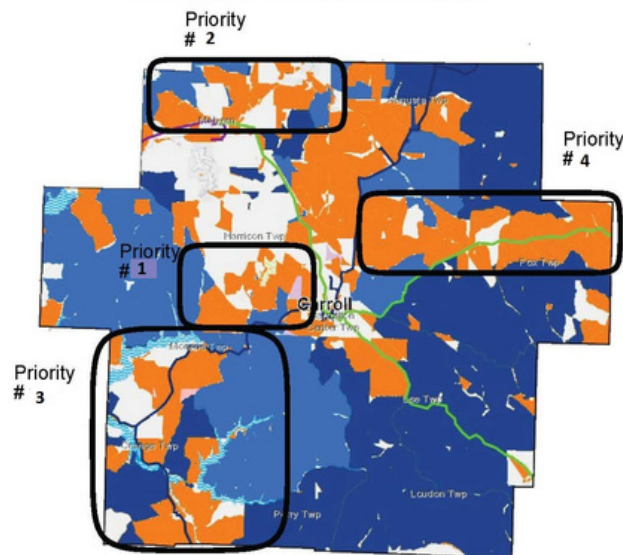


(LEFT): Sean O'Malley, with The Reid Consulting Group, explains details of the Broadband Feasibility Study at a County Level Meeting in Columbiana County

# Carroll County Broadband POWER Project

Carroll County has struggled with connectivity for several years. The county is rural in nature, with less than one percent of its 395 square miles classified as urban. As a result, the majority of residents make their home in the rural landscape of Carroll County and there are only 73 people per square mile. Carroll County has an abundance of recreational opportunities with three large lakes to welcome thousands of tourists each year. While the tourism industry is a tremendous asset to the community, there is only one healthcare provider available in the county which is not open past 5 PM. This oftentimes causes residents and visitors to drive 45 minutes to reach the nearest hospital. Yet another challenge being faced by the community is the delivery of public services and job creation. Keeping these issues in mind, the county made the decision ask OMEGA for assistance in applying for a \$1,999,000 ARC POWER grant to expand broadband services. Recognizing the importance of broadband, the Carroll County Commissioners contributed \$1,126,005 of ARPA funding to the project and will receive an \$874,000 commitment from an internet services provider through an RFP for a total of \$3,999,005. When this project is completed, 384 households and 53 businesses will have access to reliable high-speed broadband.

CARROLL COUNTY 2022 ARC POWER APPLICATION  
BROADBAND PRIORITY AREAS



Providers that have received Federal RDOF subsidy to improve internet access are illustrated by color

- Charter Communications
- Mercury Wireless
- Connect Everyone
- Rural Electric Cooperative Consortium
- Areas of greatest need that are likely to remain below 25/3 Mbps without new government investment



# Revolving Loan Fund

In 2022, the OMEGA Revolving Loan Fund Program successfully disbursed the remaining amount of the EDA CARES Act funds while still within the Disbursement Phase of the Grant Award, as required by the EDA. These final CARES Act funds were disbursed to ESM Enterprise LLC, a company owned and operated by a very successful contractor located in East Liverpool, Ohio, who recently acquired Wise Buys Carpet store with the intention of expanding into the much needed markets of bath, shower, tile, and cabinetry fixtures to better assist the local customers and contractors in and around Columbiana County.

OMEGA also successfully closed on the previously reported pending loan to Master Manifest Properties LLC for the purchase of Creative Learning Childcare Inc., a very successful Preschool and Daycare facility located in St. Clairsville, Ohio. Since the closing of this loan, Creative Learning Childcare Inc. has experienced so much growth that there is already talk of expanding and opening up a secondary location to better address the childcare needs of Belmont County.

## OMEGA Loans Approved/Closed in 2022

Borrower	Loan Amount	Date Approved	Closing Date	Funding Source	FTE Jobs
Master Manifest Properties LLC	\$100,000.00	11/15/21	1/14/22	ARC	2 created 13 retained
ESM Enterprises LLC	\$30,000.00	4/28/22	6/22/22	EDA CARES Act	6 created 3 retained

## 2022 RLF Statistics

RLF Statistics as of 12/31/20	All Loans	ARC Only
Total Loans	101	49
Total Loan Amount	\$7,901,428	\$3,798,066
Jobs Created	1,207	521
Jobs Retained	522	257
Total Jobs Created/Retained	1,729	778

# EDA Partnership Planning

During 2022, OMEGA assisted with the preparation of two major grant applications to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) ARPA Programs.

OMEGA assisted **Belmont College** with the successful submittal of a \$5M request for a **Construction Trades Building** from the ARPA Economic Adjustment Assistance program. Belmont College applied for support for their Construction Trades Building project to build a new building to house their Welding, HVAC, and Building Preservation and Restoration programs. These programs are currently housed in an outdated building (owned by Ohio University) that is unable to meet the needs for developing a 21st century workforce. In order to provide their students with the most up-to-date education, a new building owned by Belmont College is needed to ensure longevity and sustainability. This project is critically needed to provide a skilled workforce for these in-demand professions. Funding from EDA will ensure that we have a highly skilled workforce to meet the needs of businesses in our coal impacted region. The development of this highly skilled workforce will lead to the creation of 250 new jobs, the retention of 107 jobs, \$750,000 in private investment and improving 9 businesses.

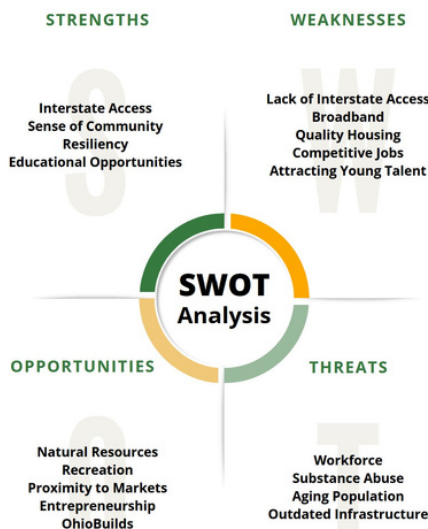


## **The Wilds Travel, Tourism, Outdoor Recreation Grant under ARPA**

OMEGA assisted The Wilds in applying for a \$2.15M grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) ARPA Tourism Grant Program in 2021. In 2022, the funding was awarded. Funds will be utilized for an RV Campground at the park. The Wilds is a non-profit safari and conservation center located on almost 10,000 acres of reclaimed mine lands. The Wilds is the key economic driver for tourism in the OMEGA region and generates \$15 million annually to the local economy. With the development of this project, an additional \$1.7 million in revenues is projected to be generated annually and spur additional private investment and business expansion in tourism industry, one of the top business sectors in the OMEGA region. This investment is expected to result in the direct creation of 7 new jobs, the retention of 18 jobs, and the generation of \$231,000 in private investment.

# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

A key component of OMEGA’s Partnership Planning Grant with EDA is the development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). EDA defines the CEDS as, “the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region.” Through the OMEGA region’s planning process, six goals were developed by the steering committee to provide a unified structure for local development professionals to use and support their projects while keeping the goals of the region in mind. The goals and strategies of the OMEGA region focus on building a robust workforce, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation, building a strong infrastructure, improving quality of life, business, retention, and attraction, and capitalizing on industry strengths. The CEDS will provide a framework for state and federal investments for economic and community growth. The details of all goals, strategies, and action steps taken to achieve them can be found on the OMEGA website.



(ABOVE): CEDS Committee Members meet in February 2021



<https://omegadistrict.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022-CEDS.pdf>

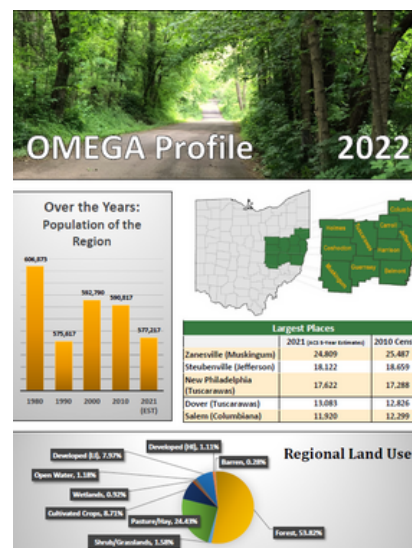
# EDA CARES Act Planning Grant

The EDA CARES Act Planning grant was completed in July 2022 and included two major projects.

**The Economic Recovery Coordinator**, The Montrose Group conducted industrial site identification and development in Holmes County which resulted in \$11.6M in expansions of two existing local businesses and the creation of 25 new jobs. In partnership with the Zanesville – Muskingum County Port Authority (ZMCPA) and OMEGA, the Economic Recovery Coordinator supported a second submission to the U.S. Economic Development Administration Economic Adjustment Assistance program, requesting funding to assist with the extension of public infrastructure into the County’s National Road Business Park to support direct foreign investment of \$280,000,000 for an international snack food manufacturer and the creation of 320 jobs. Unfortunately, the application was not approved.

Montrose also assisted the Columbiana County Port Authority with an Ohio Rural Industrial Park Loan (RIPL) Program application for a 60,000 square foot spec building for the CCCPA World Trade Park. Under the CARES grant period, Montrose completed the project narrative, economic and workforce analysis, industrial building inventory comparison, and highest and best use analysis required for the application. Montrose has and will continue to engage with ODOD’s RIPL Program Manager on project progress, application assistance, and program funding updates.

**The OMEGA Broadband Feasibility Study** was completed in June 2022. Several stakeholder meetings were held in each of the 10 counties in the OMEGA region. Final mapping efforts were then completed and a final report was made to include an action plan. The Broadband Feasibility Study is available at <https://omegadistrict.org/regionalbroadband/>. (See page 21 for more information).



<https://omegadistrict.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-OMEGA-Profile.pdf>



# 2022 OMEGA Meetings



**February Executive Board Meeting -**  
MWCD Director Craig Butler serves as Guest Speaker at the Dennison Depot



**March Annual Membership Meeting-**  
GOA Director John Carey and Tom Reid (Reid Consulting Group)



**May Executive Board Meeting-**  
Dr. Glenda Bumgarner, President and CEO of Appalachian Partnership, Inc.



**June Executive Board Meeting-**  
Jonathan McCracken, State Director of USDA Rural Development



# 2022 OMEGA Meetings



**August Legislative Mixer -**  
Rep. Don Jones (95th District)  
addresses crowd at Tappan Lake



**September Semi-Annual Membership Meeting -**  
Michael Bowden, ODNR



**December Executive Board Meeting -**  
Diane Lautenschleger, Mindy Brems, and  
Jackee Pugh served as guest speakers from

# DDAA Conference Awards

In March 2022, members of the OMEGA staff attended the DDAA/NADO Conference in Washington, D.C. with OMEGA President Tiffany Swigert, Treasurer Domenick Mucci, and Secretary Joel B. Day. The region was well-represented by three award winners, as detailed below:

**GOA Director John Carey received the John Whisman "Vision" award**, which is presented to an individual who has contributed to making the region a better place and to promoting federal, state, and local partnerships to further the mission of the Appalachian Regional Commission. Director Carey has worked tirelessly in his position to provide Ohio's Appalachian communities with the resources that they need to succeed.

**Reverend Ashley Steele, with Urban Mission, received the Don Myers Humanitarian Award.** The award is intended to recognize an individual who has shown leadership and provided community service that has enriched Appalachia. Rev. Steele founded Urban Mission with the mission of helping the homeless population in Jefferson County through employment opportunities and additional resources.

**Senator Rob Portman was presented with the DDAA Congressional Award**, which honors members of the United States Congress who throughout their leadership and support recognize the valuable work of the Appalachian Regional Commission and its intergovernmental partnership in helping to improve the quality of life in the 13 state region. Senator Portman retired after 12 years of service to the State of Ohio and the Appalachian Region.



(ABOVE): OMEGA Executive Director Wierzbicki and ARC Program Manager Alan Knapp pose with GOA Director John Carey and Rev. Ashley Steele following the presentation of awards at the DDAA/NADO Conference.

(BELOW): OMEGA staff members and officers join representatives from Buckeye Hills Regional Council and Ohio Valley Regional Development Council in presenting Senator Rob Portman with the DDAA Congressional Award



# 2022 Impact Statement

## Appalachian Regional Commission and Governor's Office of Appalachia

OMEGA secured **\$2.26 million** in federal and state ARC and GOA funding for communities in the region. For every **\$1** invested by ARC and GOA, our region leveraged **\$7.30** in additional investments for a total investment of **\$18.76 million** and the creation/retention of **231 jobs**.

## Other Federal and State Funding Sources

With **26** approved applications, OMEGA helped secure **\$12.75 million** in grants and low-interest loans from other funding sources for our region leading to the creation/retention of **399 jobs**.



(LEFT): OMEGA Executive Director Jeannette Wierzbicki poses with DDAA members at the August DDAA Meeting held at Salt Fork Lodge.

(RIGHT): OMEGA Executive Director Jeannette Wierzbicki informs legislative representatives about the Columbus to Pittsburgh Corridor at the Legislative Luncheon hosted by the Ohio LDDs in Washington, D.C.





*Connecting Communities to Resources*

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*A special thank you to Jackee Pugh and  
Visit Belmont County for our beautiful cover photo!*