

May 22 is Bike to Work Day



On Tuesday, May 22, communities around the region are inviting residents to bicycle to work or school. Most people have a commute that is nine miles or less. That is a distance that most children and adults can enjoy, even if they don't ride often. If you plan to have a group bike to work, call TMACOG to register. We'll send you some tips and fliers, and ask you to tell us how many people are in your group. TMACOG can also help you plan a route. Call 419.241.9155 ext. 125.

"If people try riding a bike to work just one day, they will realize how easy and fun it is, and maybe do it more often," says Ed O'Reilly, chair of TMACOG's Pedestrian and Bikeways Committee. "Riding even occasionally is great for your health and makes a difference to the environment."

A four-mile round trip on a bicycle rather than a car keeps about 15 pounds of pollutants out of the air we breathe. And as gas prices rise, a



More than 40 City of Oregon employees participated in Bike to Work Day 2006, including Mayor Marge Brown (at left in group photo).

bike rider could save plenty by riding even occasionally. If your commute is just too long to bicycle, ride your bike to a bus. All TARTA buses have bike racks and cyclists ride for only 25 cents during Bike Week, May 21 – 25.

During Bike Week, TMACOG is encouraging people to use the bicycle facilities that are there for you. Explore the many bike paths and signed bike routes in the region. As bicyclists explore, it's important to know how to stay safe. Always wear a helmet. Wear bright or reflective clothing. Because you feel air-cooled on a bike, you may not realize how much you are perspiring so drink plenty of fluids. Other safety equipment could include a rear-view mirror, extra reflectors, and a front light for evening or early morning rides.

Remember that a bicycle is considered a vehicle on Ohio and Michigan roads. A cyclist has the same rights and duties as a motor vehicle driver. Cyclists are required to follow all the rules of the road with respect to traffic lights, signals, and signs. See bike maps, Ohio's revised bicycle laws, and more on www.tmacog.org.



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Focal Points ...

COMMUTER SERVICES

Northwest Ohio CommuterLINK Update

As of April 1, 2007

Riders Approved	3,862
Daily Adult Riders	22
Children Transported Daily	18
Number of Daycares Used	10
Employers	16
Employer Locations	16
TARTA routes affected	4

NOTE: CommuterLINK serves people who cannot use public transportation due to their work schedule, child care location(s), or need to access areas outside the public transit area.

Northwest Ohio CommuterLINK

----- Connecting people to jobs -----

A PROGRAM OF TMACOG

Care for Your Air

We all can take steps to protect our air quality. This spring and summer, TMACOG encourages area people to keep cars in good repair, take extra steps on Ozone Action Days, and consider less polluting fuel when you do have to drive.



Gas Cap Testing and Replacement Program

For the last several years, TMACOG's Commuter Services Department has operated a gas cap testing program. This spring and summer, staff and interns will again be heading out to public events and area gas stations to look for leaky gas caps and hand out air quality information. A leaking gas cap is not only expensive – a car can lose two tanks of gas a year – but also contributes to ground level ozone. While older cars are more likely to have leaky caps, problems have been found in cars of all model years.



Ozone Action Days

The Environmental Protection Agency is currently looking at air quality measurements in our region to see if our designation can be improved to a "maintenance level." We can all help by reacting to ozone warnings. An Ozone Action Day will be announced by 2 p.m. when the next day's weather is expected to be hot and sunny with little wind, leading to hazardous conditions. Take action. Reduce your car use by walking or riding a bike. Take a bus to school or work; TARTA is free on Ozone Action Days. Avoid operating small engines like lawn mowers and blowers. Don't gas up your car or fire up a grill until the sun goes down. Together, we can make a difference to our air quality and the quality of life in our region.



Alternative Fuel More Available in Region

Several gas stations in Toledo, Perrysburg, and Sylvania now sell E-85 fuel. E-85 is an alternative fuel for some cars that is made from 85% ethanol and 15% gasoline. In the U.S., ethanol is made from corn, although fast-moving research is developing formulations from other biomass materials. E-85 is less expensive than gasoline, and burns cleaner. To see if your car is E-85 compatible, and to find stations near you, see www.E85fuel.com.

NW Ohio CommuterLINK Car Buy Update

Car Buy Program As of April 1, 2007

Cars Delivered	437
Cars Paid Off	324

Fiscal Year (7/1/06 - 4/1/07)

Cars Delivered	34
Cars Paid Off	39

Fiscal Year 2007 goal:
four cars delivered each month



Haskins is Model for Water Infrastructure

The Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), advisory group of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), has produced an informative documentary about the challenges cities and towns face in building and maintaining water infrastructure.

Haskins Mayor Kenneth Fallows, appointed member of the LGAC, represents one of five communities in the video. The Village of Haskins is used as an example of how and why a jurisdiction should plan ahead to make the expensive investments in water treatment facilities.

The film is directed toward elected officials, explaining why investing in water facilities is important and presenting strategies for persuading voters to support plans. As the film's narration notes, "The capability and condition of the water assets is a key prospective indicator of a community's wealth and environmental well-being. And the management of this infrastructure cannot be hit or miss."



Stephen Johnson, U.S. EPA administrator, greets Kenneth Fallows, mayor of Haskins and chair of TMACOG's Environmental Council.

Haskins had wastewater challenges common to many cities and towns. The wastewater treatment infrastructure was older, the town is growing, and new regulations meant that the old system was inadequate. It took eight years, but a new wastewater treatment plant that doubles the village's capacity has begun operation in Haskins. "Maintaining water, roads, and other infrastructure is the first duty of an elected official," says Mayor Fallows. "Good management is taking care of these things as planned initiatives, not as crisis management." Mayor Fallows will be showing the

documentary at several local meetings of elected officials, sharing strategies for improving water infrastructure.

Kenneth Fallows is a former chair of TMACOG and current chair of TMACOG's Environmental Council. He was the 2006 recipient of the Tom Bradley Award from the National Association of Regional Councils, in part for his leadership on environmental issues.

To see the video, find the link to water infrastructure at http://www.epa.gov/waterinfrastructure/lgac_video/index.html

Ottawa River – Report to the Community

At a meeting May 22, the public is invited to hear reports about the status of the Ottawa River and efforts to improve the quality of its waters, sediment, and habitat. The Report to the Community is the work of a team of stakeholders in the region, managed by TMACOG.

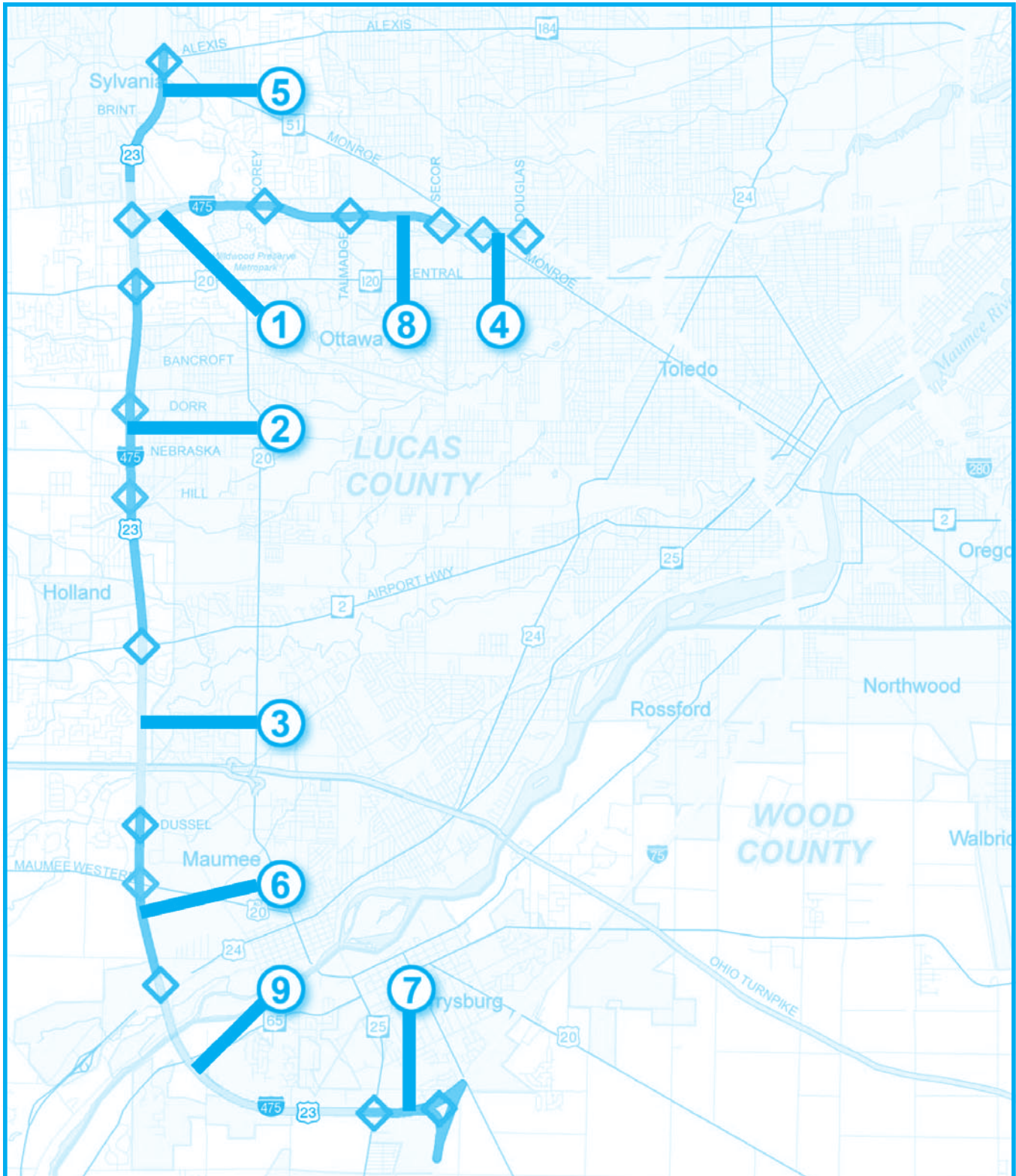
Representatives from U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. EPA, the University of Toledo, and local engineering firms will speak. The U.S. EPA will report on 2006 soil and sediment testing between Stickney and Lagrange streets, and Limno-Tech and Hull & Associates will describe more recent findings in an area below Stickney. Other speakers will assess the state of the riparian habitat, and funding options to remediate contaminated sediment.

A recent grant is funding a project to inventory habitat along the Ottawa River, looking for areas that can be restored and linked together to improve habitat for birds and other wildlife. A presentation will provide information on this new project and solicit property owners to recommend areas suitable for restoration.

The meeting is Tuesday, May 22, 7 p.m. at the Friendship Park Senior Center in Point Place. For more information call Kurt Erichsen, 419.241.9155 ext. 126.

Focal Points continued...

TRANSPORTATION



Map courtesy of ODOT

Beltway Upgrades Recommended from Sylvania to Perrysburg



The section of I-475 and US 23 that makes up the western side of the expressway loop in northwest Ohio is due for major improvements according to an ODOT study, and the area is also a priority in TMACOG's long range plan.

"On the Move: 2007-2035 Transportation Plan" is TMACOG's nearly complete plan for the region. The entire I-475/US 23 section is a priority but because of the cost and the disruption of construction, the improvements would have to be implemented in phases over 20 years or more. The map on the facing page outlines ODOT's recommended priority order as presented in February after two years of public consultation. The overall plan calls for widening I-475 to four or six lanes, from Perrysburg north to the Michigan state line. The extra lanes would be built in what is now the median.

The area cited as top priorities (see 1 and 2 on the map facing and on the list below) is the interchange where US 23 from the north joins I-475 just a very short distance from a right exit for Central Avenue. Westbound drivers on I-475 merge with southbound US 23 drivers, and to exit must merge quickly across three lanes of traffic to a curved exit ramp. The recommended alternative would increase the number of lanes on I-475 and improve the exit. Plans also recommend construction of a new interchange between Central Ave. and Airport Hwy., possibly at Dorr Street.

Recommended Priority Order

Rank	Location	Description
1	I-475/US 23 interchange	Interchange and widen I-475 to 3 lanes from US 20 to US 23, and US 23 to Corey exit
2	I-475, SR 2 (Airport Hwy.) to US 20 (Central)	Widen to 4 lanes from SR 2 to US 20 (Central Ave.) Interchange at US 20. New interchange at Hill or Dorr. *
3	I-475, Salisbury to SR 2	Widen to 4 lanes from Salisbury/Dussel to SR 2
4	I-475, Secor to Douglas	Widen to 3 lanes from Secor to Douglas, interchanges at Secor, Monroe, and Douglas
5	US 23, I-475 to Alexis	US 23, widen to 3 lanes from I-475 to Alexis, interchange on US 23 at Alexis
6	I-475, US 24 (Anthony Wayne Trail) to Salisbury/Dussel	New interchange at US 20A, widen to 4 lanes from US 24 to Salisbury/Dussel
7	I-475, I-75 to SR 25 (N. Dixie Hwy.)	Interchange at I-75, widen I-475 to 3 lanes from I-75 to SR 25, upgrade SR 25 interchange
8	I-475, Corey to Secor	Widen to 3 lanes from Corey to Talmadge, and from Talmadge to Secor; interchanges at Corey and Talmadge
9	I-475, SR 25 to US 24	Widen to 3 lanes from SR 25 to US 24, interchange at US 24, and widen bridge over Maumee River

* Future studies will determine if a new interchange can be developed separately subsequent to mainline widening

City of Monroe, Michigan

The City of Monroe is one of 10 Michigan members of TMACOG. The other members are Monroe County, the City of Luna Pier, Village of Dundee, townships of Erie, Riga and Whiteford; and non-governmental members Beckett & Raeder, Monroe County Community College, and Monroe Bank & Trust.

The area that is now Monroe played an important role in the war of 1812, the scene of battles between the British and the U.S. forces. The U.S. forces

were based at Fort Meigs near present-day Perrysburg. The City of Monroe was officially established after the war in 1817 and named after President James Monroe.

With a population of about 24,500 in about 10 square miles, Monroe has important infrastructure and industry. The Port of Monroe is the only Lake Erie port in the state of Michigan. The city's transportation infrastructure also includes Custer airport, established in 1929. Local industries include Tenneco, which manufactures Monroe Shock Absorbers, and La-Z-Boy which maintains its corporate headquarters and sales center in Monroe.

Monroe has been a member of TMACOG since 2003 and takes advantage of TMACOG services. Lt. Charles Abel of the Monroe Police Department attended TMACOG's recent seminar on emergency preparedness at Professional Development Day. Lt. Abel said, "Very helpful. I will be incorporating some of the information presented into the City of Monroe's pandemic flu plan. It's good to get another perspective of other community's action plans."



News Files...

2007 Ohio Conference on Freight

September 17-18, Toledo OH

TMACOG's Transportation Department and transportation professionals in our region have identified freight and logistics as an industry with potential to transform our regional economy. In September, TMACOG will host a state-wide conference addressing the future of freight and transportation logistics in Ohio and the region.

The day-and-a-half conference will begin with a dinner and keynote address on Monday, September 17,

and continue the next day with a full session of speakers and seminars. On Monday evening, events will include a tour by water of the Veterans' Glass City Skyway. Elected officials, economic development professionals, and transportation interests from around the state and from the region are invited to attend. Watch for updates on www.tmacog.org as details are confirmed.

Maumee Cleanup May 12

The big walleye run on the Maumee brings lots of fishermen out to enjoy the river. Unfortunately, some fishermen leave behind tangles of fishing line and piles of sinkers and lures. On May 12, the Maumee RAP and volunteers will target streambeds and shoreline along the Maumee River to get the lead out.

Volunteers are asked to gather at the Rotary Pavilion at Side Cut Metropark at 8:30 a.m. on May 12. Volunteers are provided with buckets, garbage bags,

and gloves and should expect to get wet and dirty. Cleanup concludes at noon. In case of bad weather or high water, June 2 is the backup date. Check for timely information at www.maumeerap.org. For more information or to register, call Matt Horvat at 419.241.9155 ext. 123.



Traffic Counting Season Begins

As soon as the snow melts, TMACOG staff begins annual counts of cars and trucks on roads in Lucas and Wood counties. The process involves creating a list of 300 to 400 areas where transportation data is needed or where counts have been requested. Then staff attaches a measuring box to some fixed object and stretches air hoses across the road to count vehicles.

After 48 hours, the boxes are collected and the information downloaded onto computers at TMACOG. This information provides valuable information for people planning where to put a new gas station, where to put a billboard, or deciding how to adjust traffic signals. Link to the traffic count database through the Traffic Counts page at www.tmacog.org.

Portage River Student Congress May 9

Students from junior high and high schools in the Portage River Basin will gather May 9 for a student congress. At this annual meeting, held at Bowling Green State University, classrooms present their findings from water quality testing. Students involved in the program do field work to collect water samples, perform measurements and testing, chart results, and present their findings with a graphic display. The congress is supported by the Ottawa County and Wood County commissioners, the Ottawa and Wood Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and other partners of TMACOG's Portage River Basin Council.



The Portage River Student Congress is supported by elected officials from throughout the region. Wood County Commissioners Alvin Perkins, James Carter, and Tim Brown (back row: first, third, and fifth from right) congratulate winning students at the 2006 Student Congress.

Mark Your Calendar

Ottawa County Member Reception

TMACOG members from Ottawa County are invited to learn more about wind power from Kevin Maynard, utilities director from the City of Bowling Green.

Thursday, May 31, 5-7 p.m.
at Schedel Arboretum & Gardens in Elmore.

Wood County Member Reception

Thursday, June 28, 5 - 7 p.m.
at Bowling Green State University

TMACOG Summer General Assembly

Thursday, July 26, at Put-in-Bay



Anthony L. Reams

To describe the range of work we do here at TMACOG, we often use the words "quality of life." But what does that mean? I think quality of life can be defined many ways but can be summed up as a healthy life. I look at the work of TMACOG staff and members and I recognize that we are engaged in work that safeguards health in our region.

We expect to hear by June about a redesignation of the air quality in Lucas and Wood counties. Three years of testing results have shown that we are keeping our air within safe levels for ozone and particulates, and our recent long range transportation plan, the On the Move plan, includes projections that show we should stay well within the limits. This is good news, not just for business in the region, but for the health of the people who live, work, and play here.

Ongoing programs throughout northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan are also looking out for our water quality. In this issue of the *Big Picture* you'll read about how communities are building better water treatment plants and figuring out how to clean up contaminated waterways.

Our staff and members also go the extra mile. It's gratifying to see our people volunteering to clean fishing line and sinkers out of the Maumee River. And many more are planning to ride their bikes to work on May 22, traveling from homes in Oregon, west Toledo, and south Toledo.

It's certainly true that spring weather improves our quality of life by letting us get outside and get active. But in every season, TMACOG staff and members will continue to do the important behind the scenes work of planning for safe roads, cleaner air, and fishable and swimmable streams in our region.

To respond to this letter, email perspectives@tmacog.org



Our Vision...

TMACOG will be the governmental partner of choice to coordinate regional assets, opportunities, and challenges.

The Big Picture is published by TMACOG

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