



Holmes Co/ Millersburg  
Economic Development  
9/22/21

Arnie Oliver opened meeting with introductions. Poggemeyer Design Group reviewed a power point on the Comprehensive Plan and specifically the transportation planning element. Existing conditions in the county and visioning themes related to transportation from the visioning session were reviewed. Existing conditions included: topography, historic downtowns, two-lane roads, tourism traffic, buggy/bike/e-bike traffic, and truck traffic. Opportunities and challenges to transportation were also reviewed. A map to determine where existing traffic conflicts and potential future transportation improvements could be located was completed. Participants filled out visioning cards if they hadn't already.

Typical modes of transportation in a transportation network are motor vehicle, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian. Need to add E-Bikes and vehicles for hire in Holmes County. Vehicles for hire are typically difficult to find, usually by word of mouth or relational in nature with cash only, sometimes credit cards taken. Typically, those driving are retired people and working part-time.

### **Visioning Themes from Visioning Session** (outlined in power point were reviewed)

Additional conversation on the following issues below:

*Private Drives:* Had clarification that limiting private drives meant those serving a single residence. Common access drives to parcels are better for moving traffic along and taking up less land. One attendee mentioned that right now there are a lot of private drives which are shared drives. ODOT has mentioned to Millersburg that access management is improved with less curb cuts.

*Public Transportation:* There is documented survey information from OMEGA that there is a need, but the hurdle is a sustainable funding source. MRDD has vehicles and they sit from 9:30-2 every day, same with local school districts. Is there a way to do a public/private partnership to utilize these vehicles and drivers? The County did not have a good experience with public transportation years ago. Also, there was a tourist route 5-6 years ago from Sugar Creek to Walnut Creek to Millersburg for just one season. One attendee noted that there was not any advertising done for this tourist route. One attendee noted that she likes the idea of public transportation because there is no way to get from some of the lower income housing facilities to the doctors, stores, etc. Anything done with public transportation has to be ADA accessible.

*Electric Charging Stations:* There are 3-4 in the County with 1 at the Inn at Honey Run (central part of county) and 3 in Mt Hope (NE part of county).

*Introduction of 4 Lane Roads:* Group was not sure this was the answer to traffic issues. They thought it would negatively impact the rural character and charm of the community.

*Traffic Noise:* One attendee noted that is it really loud coming through Millersburg, a resident or tourist can't have a conversation outside or sometimes inside.

*Bypass:* Comp Plan of the 1970s discussed a bypass. Group questioned if this is really even feasible and will it serve the purpose to get less truck traffic, less noise? Will trucks actually follow it? Need a lot of space to do bypass, it is a huge undertaking. Group agreed not sure appetite in the County for a full-blown bypass. With the terrain around potential bypass options (PDG engineers did a few options), County Engineer thought it would be 10's of millions of dollars to spend and maybe not worth it. Would rather see money spent for active transportation. For example, did improvements to CR77 (widening) and now 3500 vehicles go through with little problems. Vehicles are getting smarter, so that will help, trucks are getting quieter. An attendee commented that Courthouse improvements have helped the turning radii for truck traffic.

*Road Widening, Buggy Lane Addition:* Seemed to be the most supported option for improving roadways, like what did on CR 77.

*Traffic Conflicts:* Semi's can't get through certain areas. County Engineer said they have shortened guardrails and tried to make improvements to assist, but sometimes buildings are built too close on narrow roads. There is signage in many places saying no truck traffic, but truck drivers still seem to utilize the narrow roads. A lot of bridges are hit on certain roads and the County has worked to re-align bridges and recently re-did one off of 577. The County has tried to work with trucking companies. New vehicle drivers have had difficulties turning onto 83 north.

*Google/Apple Directions/Mapping:* One attendee mentioned that the difficulty with cell phone reception and directions may have to do with being a Verizon service area. Visitors complain that an address they are going to may have a postal address of Millersburg, but actually located in DT Berlin. This can be very confusing. Google and Apple directions sometimes route trucks through neighborhoods. An attendee mentioned that you can contact Google to correct the algorithm, but Apples does

not respond. County GIS does work with google, but other areas do continue to pop up. The County tries to get trucks off the routes with weight restricted roads.

### **Economic Development and Transportation Planning**

Manufacturing has been built out of farms/residences. Can lead to some transportation issues that do not have fixes. An attendee asked about who is clearing trees and are they taking public input into account when doing this? ODOT local reps have been good. Power companies are the ones typically clearing trees, brush, but the County will address if trees are a risk of falling on cars/people. Dead Ash trees have been removed. A participant wanted to make sure any economic development transportation improvements keep character/appeal of County. The Bunker Hill project looks like any other intersection in the state, not unique to Holmes County. Some smaller manufacturing facilities have transportation for employees.

### **Land Use and Transportation Planning**

Hawk's Landing was mentioned as a great example of utilizing land for residential development. Good design and planning used. Water and sewer already there and storm water considered with development. Limited acres to work with but used 42 acres for development of 180 lots with 12 lots left. Could do this with some farmland, if can do it properly. Water and sewer easements and price of land cut into profitability. Amish typically want multiple driveways into one property, splitting property up by family. County Planning Director was not sure that updating subdivision regulations will help with the issue of multiple driveways. An attendee said that subdivision regs do have some loopholes that could be corrected. Could tweak road standards. Have been asked to decrease standards because it is typically less expensive for developers to create private roads. Not likely can make improvements with zoning. An attendee said that traffic in the east is problematic with noise, speed, trucks, but because not incorporated, so can't control for these things. County does have access management regulations, but they are pretty old. They were adopted in 2002 to make them more local instead of adopting ODOT's standards. An attendee asked if there are a number of variances, should the subdivision regs should be updated? The County Planning Director said typically see variances related to length of cul-de-sac and type of road surface. There has been more flexibility with cul-de-sac length, but not with road surface. Updating regs is not an easy process, difficult to come to agreement. Attendee mentioned developers need to know where they stand before they come to planning commission.

### **Tourism and Transportation Planning**

Attendees agreed that tourists are not frustrated by the traffic in Holmes Co, they are used to it based on where they are coming from, it still only takes 10 minutes to get through the traffic. Residents are the ones who are frustrated. Tourists are afraid to pass E-Bike and Bicycle traffic and then locals want to pass but are stuck behind tourists. An attendee commented that E-Bikes are intimidating as they go 35-40 mph. Locals also drive fast because they know the roads. This may be more of an education project. Berlin is a safety issue, no one pays attention when crossing the street or driving. The Amish think the perfect buggy route is CR 77 to Mount Hope. Amish love the newer roads they have taken notice of them and support the sales tax for road improvements. Improvements have allowed more cars and trucks to move better on road. An attendee commented on the #s vs names of roads and that it is confusing. This was done in the 1990s, old roads were changed to numbers. County Engineer commented that in process of replacing all road # signs, making them bigger and easier to read. They need concept for design, asking Chamber for assistance. The goal would be to brand the signs, but not as intricate as Walnut Creek. Wayfinding for tourism is important, but not want to disrupt scenery with signs. Cell service and no cell service is frustrating. Traffic noise is an issue in Millersburg for tourists (noise pollution). Additional discussion about addresses and when businesses are addressed for Millersburg but in different smaller towns.

### **Transportation Challenges**

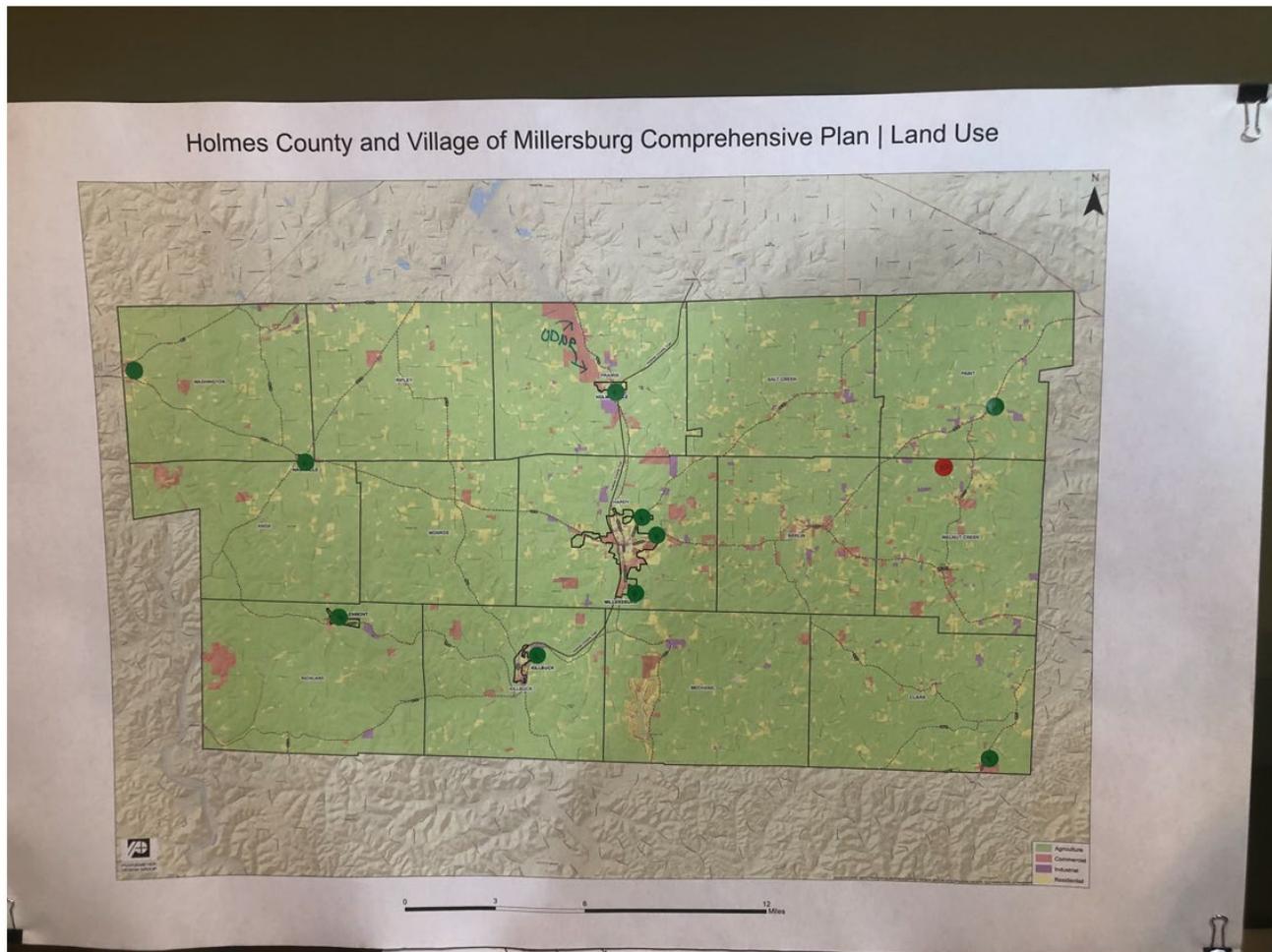
From power point included: Topography, Traffic Congestion, Traffic Noise, Road Sharing, Lack of Divided Highways/Interstate Access, Curb Cuts. Attendees added: Seasonal Agricultural Traffic, Different Unique Modes of Traffic, Lack of Driver Education, Lack of Consistent/Adequate Signage, Side Road Ditches, Tour Bus Traffic (turning, parking), Animals on the Road, Horse Poop, and Grass Clippings. Motorcyclist traffic has grown, and they have concerns about grass clippings in road. Police Chief commented that can't control county-wide but could control in town if dumping large amounts of grass clippings. It is the driver's responsibility to avoid grass clippings, gravel. Hard to enforce. Participants agreed that it is unique to not have four lane highways. Berlin did add a center turn lane and that seems to work. Not sure need to add 4-lane highways. Could look at some intersections to add turning lane, maybe where Millersburg splits at Post Office could add a left turn lane. Getting buggy, bike, E-bike traffic off the roads and on to a widened path will help traffic issues and help tourists so they don't have to pass buggies or E-bikes. Attendees identified bad intersections as 557/120, not sure where to stop here and it is difficult to see. Highest concentrated intersection that may need a center lane would be taking left off of 557/39/62 CR 201. Per the County Engineer, ODOT is studying it in the short term for a small improvement and in the long term for a roundabout. Attendee noted that any roundabouts should be attractive. Education is important for those who get

their license at 18 and have no formal training or have not even ridden in a car before. Attendees commented that there are a lot of accidents with younger Amish on E-Bikes. An attendee asked if there could be better coordination when closing multiple roads at the same time during construction season. Another attendee asked about closing roads for festivals.

### Transportation Opportunities

From Power Point included: Road Sales Tax, ODOT Safety Funds, Educational Safety Program, Marketing of Easy Inflow Commute. Sales tax was discussed for roads, up for renewal, ¼% sales tax for a road repavement on a 10-year plan. County completed 125 miles in first five years. Township gets 10%, about \$50k each. 80% of sales tax is paid by tourists. The Chamber commented that the population of Holmes Co increases by 500% during the height of tourist season. Attendees added following opportunities: Regional Transportation Plan has capital money, Amish Donation (Amish also contribute to roads through a voluntary donation of \$75 per buggy and distribute through churches to political subdivisions The County received \$378k last year), State Infrastructure Bill has a lot of money for Active Transportation in it for state and locals, County works with safety committee to identify hotspots to target widening efforts to improve safety, Water Trails (canoe livery on Mohican and landing on Killbuck Creek), and Boardwalk through wetlands. An attendee commented that the Village and County have money to do improvements, but most townships do not have the money. OMEGA confirmed they are helping the townships and that more than half of them do not have any money for transportation improvements.

**Mapping Exercise** Attendees were asked to map (with red dots) where traffic conflicts are currently located:



### Big Ideas

- Bypass around Millersburg- Attendees determined this would be too expensive and too difficult to implement, money is better spent doing other active transportation projects
- Widening and creation of shared use path instead of center lane
- Employee ride sharing, need communication here
- Tourist shuttle done right with trolley or bus getting tourists to and from parking and experiences
- Non-motorized and motorized driver education for Amish and English
- Support system that allows people to live and work in the county
- Examine additional strategies to alleviate congestion
- Bike trails to capitalize on existing system and encourage bicycle tourism
- Work on how traffic patterns/volume and large trucks can pass through historic downtown with old buildings in Millersburg
- More education on rules of the road, vehicles can pass in certain circumstances
  - Dangerous when people are stopping to turn left, and drivers pass going fast on the berm
  - Second or third cars cannot pass if first car does not pass
- Desire to access new transportation technology such as smart car technology, smart traffic lights, traffic circles, 5G communication, smart signage, and wayfinding

### **Next Steps**

- Get transportation plans on comp plan website tab (Arnie)
- Identify exact road locations for consultant on above map for traffic conflicts (Chris)