March 27, 2023

CCAO Board of Directors members, along with CCAO Executive Director Cheryl Subler, pose with the America 250 emblem. The emblem will travel across the state over the next three years to help celebrate the semiquincentennial anniversary of the founding of the United States.

If you are having issues viewing Counties Current in your email, click [View this email in your browser] at the top of the email.

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ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER NEWS

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Let CCAO help you celebrate National County Government Month!

As you may be aware, April is National County Government Month. CCAO wants to help counties across Ohio celebrate!

We will be mailing each county two window slicks to display in your county buildings along with a sample resolution for your county to adopt recognizing National County Government Month.

CCAO also has two yard signs for you to display. These are available at our office in Columbus. They will be distributed to you when someone from your county comes into our office or as our CCAO, CORSA and CEBCO staff visit your counties.

During the four weeks of April, CCAO will be running a social media campaign focusing on 4 Pillars of County Government:

- Week One: Justice/Public Safety
- Week Two: Roads/Transportation
- Week Three: Economy & Employment
- Week Four: Services for children, families, seniors and veterans

The purpose of the campaign is to educate the residents of your counties about the multifaceted and vital work that gets done at the county level. If you choose to opt-in to the campaign, CCAO will provide you with a customized graphic (with your county name and flag) each week of April to use on your social media platforms, websites, email messaging, etc.

NATIONAL
COUNTY
GOVERNMENT
MONTH
APRIL
CCAO
Justice & Public Safety
Counties operate 91% of all local jails and invest over $107B in justice and public safety annually, including 911 centers.

The image to the left (click to view the full copy) is a sample of what you will receive for week 1 of April. In place of the CCAO logo would be your respective county's flag. You can opt-in to this campaign here.

After you submit the form, you can upload an image file of your county's seal or logo. If no image is uploaded, your county flag image will be used in the graphics.

We hope you join us in recognizing the greatness of Ohio counties! Please reach out to CCAO Service Corporation Manager Steve Caraway at (614) 220-7998 or scaraway@ccao.org with any questions.

First round of Appalachian Community Grants awarded

Last week, the DeWine-Husted Administration announced the first round of Appalachian Community Grant Program awards, totaling $50 million of the $500 million program.

The $50 million will go to four projects:

- **The Utica Shale Academy of Ohio** will receive $2.35 million to create the Connecting Communities Through Workforce Training project, providing residents of Columbiana, Carroll, Jefferson, and Mahoning counties with career pathways.
- **The city of Athens** will receive $17.7 million to revitalize more than 80,000 square feet of downtown space in the city and in Coshocton, Logan, and Somerset. Additionally, the funding will provide collaborative regional programing for the expansion of mental health services in Athens, Coshocton, Hocking, and Perry counties.
- **The Survivor Advocacy Outreach Program** will receive $25.8 million to address social determinants of health in Athens, Glouster, Nelsonville, Gallipolis, and Middleport. This includes mental health drop-in centers, the production of affordable housing, renovation of downtown buildings, and more. It will benefit Athens, Gallia, and Meigs counties.
- **The Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia** will receive $4.18 million for tourism efforts related to nature, heritage, and art. These efforts will include connectivity to workforce development and expanded health care access. The project will benefit Athens, Meigs, and Jackson counties.

In addition to the four projects listed above, $7.66 million of technical assistance grants will be provided to 21 organizations.

You can read more about the first round of awards under the Appalachian Community Grant Program here. The application window for the second round is expected to open in November.

Ohio Council of County Officials Legislative Reception now open for registration

Registration for the 2023 Ohio Council of County Officials (OCCO) Legislative Reception is now open! The event will be held at the Statehouse Atrium from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on April 19. The event is free to attend and is a great opportunity to get to know your legislators and statewide office holders.

Registration can be completed at CCAO's website. If you have any questions about the event, please contact Robin Garrett, CCAO Boards' Liaison and Events manager at rgarrett@ccao.org.

Former Putnam County Commissioner Richard Ricker passes away

Richard "Dick" Ricker, a long-time public servant in Putnam County, recently passed away at the age of 96. He is survived by his wife, eight children, 25 grandchildren, 58 great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren.

Ricker was a lifelong farmer and was recognized by numerous organizations for his work as a farmer, including induction into the Ohio State Fair Hall of Fame, the Ohio Ag Council Hall of Fame, and the Putnam County Agriculture Hall of Fame.

He served as Putnam County Commissioner for 12 years, as a member of the Fort Jennings Local School Board for 18 years, and help positions on other local boards and councils such as the Putnam County Council on Aging and the Ohio Expo Commission.

Happy birthday Vinton County!

Last Thursday, Vinton County celebrated its 173rd birthday. It was created out of portions of Athens, Gallia, Hocking, Jackson, and Ross counties. The county is named after Samuel Finley Vinton, a prominent Ohioan who served portions of the area of modern-day Vinton County in the US House of Representatives for 22 years between 1823 and 1851. Among Vinton's achievements during his congressional career was helping to establish the Department of the Interior.

Vinton County is home to the ghost town Moonville, supposedly one of the most haunted locations in the state. An abandoned train tunnel, called the Moonville Tunnel, is allegedly haunted by four different ghosts:

- **The Engineer** - A ghostly figure walking along the tracks while lantern, supposedly the ghost of Theodore Lawhead.
- **The Brakeman** - A ghostly young man walking drunkenly along the tracks.
- **The Lavender Lady** - A thin, elderly woman walking along the trail who leaves behind a scent of lavender.
- **The Bully** - The ghost of Baldie Keeton, a belligerent drunk. He allegedly stands above the tunnel and throws pebbles at visitors.

Next week's Counties Current covers April 1, the birthday of 19 counties (second only to March 1's 24 birthdays). The save space for other articles in Counties Current, those counties will be covered in a post on CCAO's website and will be linked to in next week's issue.

STATE AND FEDERAL NEWS

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Office of Criminal Justice Services launches strategic planning survey

The Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS), in conjunction with the Kent State University Survey Research Laboratory, is conducting a survey to obtain input about Ohio's criminal justice needs. The results of this survey will be used by OCJS as it develops a five-year strategic plan to determine Ohio's criminal justice funding priorities, particularly with regards to Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program.

You can access the survey link here.

PLEASE NOTE: If you receive a survey invite directly from the OCJS, please use that link and not the one shared above.

Opioid settlement dollars from Mallinckrodt to be distributed beginning next week

On Friday, CCAO was informed by the Ohio Attorney General that the National Opioid Abatement Trust II will be releasing settlement funds obtained through the Mallinckrodt bankruptcy to participating subdivisions beginning on March 28. The total amount distributed to Ohio is estimated to be about $6,665,759. Of that, just under $2 million will flow directly to local governments.

You can view the complete payment spreadsheet here.

If you have questions regarding these payments, please contact Rachel Massoud Reedy at rreedy@ccao.org.

NACo releases overview of county priorities in President Biden's budget request

Last week, NACo released an analysis of President Biden's FY 2024 budget request as it pertains to county government. You can access the detailed analysis here.

NACo highlights eight items in the budget request of particular interest to counties:

- Continued funding for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law programs, such as $60.1 billion for highways and $14 billion for transit authorities.
- Increased funding for mental health services, such as funding for the 9-8-8 crisis line, $1.3 billion for substance abuse prevention and treatment, and $387 million for behavioral health workforce development.
- Dedicated support for the country's veterans and military families.
- Direct investment in local law enforcement through $4.9 billion in discretionary grant funding.
- Reinstatement of the Child Tax Credit, which helped reduce child poverty rates by 50% in 2021.
- Direct investments in clean energy and water utility infrastructure, such as $4 billion for upgrading drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Increased investments in local election systems, such as $5 billion in election assistance grants.
- Expanded support for rural broadband deployment funding, largely through a $400 million investment in the US Department of Agriculture's ReConnect Program, which funds broadband infrastructure in rural service areas.

Supreme Court of Ohio offers conflict resolution services for public officials

Government Conflict Resolution Services (GCRS) is a program offered by the Supreme Court of Ohio to provide flexible and practical assistance in resolving and preventing conflict among public officials on various matters including, but not limited to, budget issues, public records requests and other organizational issues, without court involvement.

GCRS is provided at no cost to public officials and will take place at a location agreed upon by the parties.

There are three services offered through GCRS:

Neutral Evaluation: The parties to a dispute present their claims and/or defenses and describe their evidence to a neutral third party. The third party then shares their impressions about the strengths and weaknesses of each side.

Mediation: A neutral third party called a mediator helps the parties communicate and negotiate with each other to help them reach a voluntary agreement regarding the dispute.

Facilitation: A process that focuses on the tasks needed to run a productive and impartial meeting. A neutral third-party moderates discussion and is primarily aimed at assisting individuals refine communication and organizational skills so they can work more efficiently with each other in a group setting.

You can acquire more information, as well as forms to request services, on the Supreme Court of Ohio's website.

Auditor of State issues advisory to state and local governments on phishing scams

Auditor of State Keith Faber recently issued an advisory to state and local government employees regarding an increase in cyberscams targeting public offices.

These scams are referred to as "re-direct schemes," wherein emails impersonating government vendors or other government employees request to have payments sent to a different bank account which the scammer controls.

CCAO encourages counties review the advisory, as well as other cybersecurity information the Auditor of State provides, to ensure that you do not fall victim to a scam and lose taxpayer funds. More information regarding cybersecurity best practices can be also be learned from CORSA.

EDUCATION AND GRANTS

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Visit the Grants and Funding Opportunities page on the CCAO website for a detailed listing of open grant programs.

Grant opportunity round up

CCAO has posted several new grant opportunities on our Grants and Funding Opportunities page that counties may choose to pursue. Below is a brief description of some.

- Residential Substance Use Disorder Treatment Grant
    - To assist local governments with developing implementing correctional facility-based substance abuse treatment programs.
    - Deadline: April 3
- RecoveryOhio Law Enforcement Fund
    - To providing funding to help defray costs of drug task forces.
    - Deadline: April 17
- Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program
    - To increase awareness of and increase availability of services to pregnant women and parents, as well as other relatives caring for children less than 12 months old.
    - Deadline: May 1
- Family-Based Alternative Justice Program
    - To build capacity for diversion and alternate justice programs for parents in order to mitigate the harmful effects that the incarceration of a parent has on children.
    - Deadline: May 1
- Community Oriented Policing Services Hiring Program
    - To provide funding directly to law enforcement agencies to hire additional career law enforcement officers.
    - Deadline: May 11

Lake Erie Commission to host event on the Ohio Domestic Action Plan in April

On April 20, the Ohio Lake Erie Commission will be hosting a virtual event to review progress made on the Ohio Domestic Action Plan and kick off updates that will occur on the plan during 2023.

Among action items currently included in the Domestic Action Plan are H2Ohio support for home sewage treatment system remediation, establishing science-based agricultural best management practices and supporting farmers to implement them, and integrating the role of watershed planning at the local level to help better reduce nutrients efficiently.

You can find more information about the Lake Erie Commission and Ohio's Domestic Action Plan here.

Glenn College of Public Affairs MAPS recommendations for local government leaders

The John Glenn College of Public Affairs at the Ohio State University hosts a number of Management Advance for the Public Service (MAPS) professional development courses annually. The Glenn College has released a list of eight upcoming courses that it believes will be of particular value for local government leaders.

The first four local government MAPS courses are listed below. You can find the rest of the local government leaders MAPS courses here and a complete listing of courses here.

Strategic Inclusive Leadership

- Participants will explore the moral and business cases for DE&I work and how diversity leads to more inclusive workplaces, stronger performing teams and a competitive advantage.
- April 4, Virtual (Zoom)

Foundations of Community Engagement

- As a community leader, it is important for you to have a good understanding of the purpose, approaches and tools for engaging your community, and working effectively with your leadership team to promote community engagement. During this session, participants will learn best practices for community engagement.
- April 11, Virtual (Zoom)

Building a Succession Pipeline

- This course approaches succession planning as an organizational responsibility, where everyone can and is expected to play a role in successful succession practices. Participants explore the importance of succession management and how everyone in the organization is already contributing to how it is done today.
- April 18, OSU Columbus Campus

SAM.gov, federal grant portal, walkthrough available; grant writing resources available

Last month, the US General Services Administration hosted an online forum to help walk state and local officials through how to use SAM.gov. The website is the primary portal for intergovernmental assistance from the federal government to state and local governments.

The Administration has made the presentation slide deck and the recording of the session available for download, as well as a one-page guide.

Grants are a valuable resource for counties to utilize, but knowing how best to develop competitive applications can be difficult and the learning curve cause counties to lose out on grants. Luckily, federal agencies and nonprofits offer resources to assist in developing competitive applications. Federal agency websites point to internal and external sources and many conduct free training and targeted one on one or small group technical assistance. Here are some current resources to explore:

- Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse
- Great Lakes Community Action Partnership
- Local Infrastructure Hub
- National Wildlife Federation
- Rural Community Assistance Partnership
- State and Community Energy Programs-Tools and Resources
- US Department of Transportation
- USDA Rural Development
- 10,000 Communities Initiative

ARPA and BIL RESOURCES

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This section of Counties Current will be a permanent fixture for the foreseeable future to help counties with the ins and outs of the American Rescue Plan Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. These two laws provide a once-in-a-generation investment.

Federal legislation increases ARPA flexibility for infrastructure, disaster response, and CDBG projects

The federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 was signed into law on December 29, 2022. The legislation contains important updates to how counties and other local governments may use their ARPA funds. First, the Act codifies the standard allowance included in the US Department of the Treasury's Final Rule that permits counties to use up to $10 million for the provision of government services under the "revenue loss" eligibility category without having to demonstrate losses through a complicated formula. This codification means that the Treasury Department cannot alter the standard allowance in any subsequent rulemaking.

The Act also permits counties to use the greater of $10 million or 30 percent of their total ARPA allocation for federal infrastructure projects, responding to natural disasters, or Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects. Counties must expend these funds no later than September 30, 2026, rather than the standard date of December 31, 2026. Eligible natural disaster responses include emergency relief and the negative economic impacts of natural disasters, including temporary emergency housing, food assistance, financial assistance for lost wages, or other immediate needs. CDBG projects must meet the requirements of Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

Some of the federal infrastructure programs eligible for ARPA match include the National Highway Performance Program; Bridge Investment Program; Surface Transportation Block Grant Program; and, the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program. More information, and a complete list of eligible transportation programs, is available from NACo at this link.

Resources for ARPA Reporting and Compliance

The most recent version of the US Treasury Reporting Guidance was published September 20, 2022. Counties and other local governments with populations greater than 250,000 or ARPA distributions greater than $10 million are required to file Project and Expenditure Reports no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter throughout the grant period. Other recipients will file Project and Expenditure Reports annually by April 30.

Members are urged to consult resources from US Treasury, NACo, and the Ohio Office of Budget and Management for more information about reporting and how to use ARPA funds. CCAO maintains a list of ARPA links and resources, including a comparison of state and federal procurement laws, at the ARPA Resources page.

Ohio Ethics Commission issues statement regarding stimulus funds

Last week the Ohio Ethics Commission released a statement ensuring that public officials are aware that stimulus funds, such as those received under the federal American Rescue Plan Act and the funds that communities will receive under Governor Mike DeWine's Appalachian investment program, are public funds and that conflict of interest laws must be observed.

To that effect, the Commission also recirculated its Advisory Opinion No. 2009-006, issued in 2009 regarding stimulus funds made available to governments under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. It provides a more in-depth examination of potential conflicts of interest with stimulus funds, including a discussing regarding vendors.

CCAO encourages members refamiliarize themselves with this Advisory Opinion and conflict of interest laws to ensure good stewardship of ARPA and Appalachia funds.

Guidance and overview of available BIL funding available from NACo and the Ohio Department of Transportation

NACo and ODOT each host a resource page providing information to counties about the Bipartican Infrastructure Law. The pages are rich with information including multiple tables providing overviews and links to funding opportunities, a timeline of upcoming grant programs, and much more.

The NACo website can be found here and the ODOT website can be found here.

CCAO strongly encourages counties to frequently visit the sites and apply for funding through the myriad of programs to bring valuable federal funds to Ohio communities.

COUNTY NEWS

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Each week Counties Current highlights the happenings in our counties in the words of their local media. One county from each of the CCAO's five districts is highlighted.

Northwest District

Wood County highlights pandemic recovery

Toledo Blade, March 22, 2023

After two pandemic-affected years, Wood County Commissioner Craig LaHote is glad to be back to business as usual.

"Given the many challenges of the prior two years," Mr. LaHote said Wednesday during the board of commissioners' state of the county address. "We are thankful that 2022 was a more normal year for our county government."

Mr. LaHote, county commission president, appeared alongside fellow commissioners Doris Herringshaw, and Theodore Bowlus in addition to county Probate Court Judge David Woessner, and county Prosecutor Paul Dobson.

The annual address at the Wood County Courthouse in Bowling Green highlights the accomplishments of the previous year and looks forward to the next year.

Among the major announced accomplishments, Mr. LaHote said the county finished with a budget surplus of more than $1 million gleaned largely from sales tax revenues.

Northeast District

Cuyahoga County 'Pay-to-Stay' legislation on hold

Cleveland.com, March 21, 2023

Just six days after it was introduced, Pay-to-Stay legislation has been put on hold indefinitely, while Cuyahoga County Council reviews its legality.

The legislation, sponsored by Councilman Dale Miller, was designed to prevent unnecessary evictions due to nonpayment, including being one-day late on rent, by allowing tenants to bring their account current before an eviction judgment. It read that if tenants could pay the past due rent, any late fees and any applicable court costs, then they should be allowed to remain in the home, and the eviction filing would be dismissed.

However, an hour before council's Community Development Committee was scheduled to discuss it, the county's law department issued a legal opinion, citing an Ohio law that, it says, preempts the county – and the eight municipalities with similar ordinances already on the books – from enacting the legislation.

Central District

Commissioners award bid for Beaver-Seckel Ditch project

Marion Star, March 16, 2023

The Marion County Board of Commissioners has chosen the company that will conduct the rehabilitation project of the Beaver-Seckel Ditch #506.

The entire Beaver-Seckel ditch extends from Linn-Hipsher Road in Grand Prairie Township to South Avenue in Marion Township and runs through the Grandview Estates subdivision. It was built in the 1940s when the United States Army operated the Scioto Ordnance Plant in the area.

After numerous delays and some backtracking due to errors in calculating assessments, the commissioners have awarded the contract to Brennstuhl Construction, Inc., 500 S. Main St., Bellville. Of the six companies that bid on the project, Brennstuhl submitted the low bid of $159,811.

Southwest District

Warren County officials say tourism rebounds post-COVID, sets record in 2022

Journal-News, March 17, 2023

Tourism keeps on growing in Warren County, as the area's largest industry continues to rebound after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Phillip S. Smith, president and CEO of the Warren County Convention & Visitors Bureau, said the county's tourism industry "isn't just ticking up... it's jumping up," in the wake of losing 2,000 jobs because of the pandemic.

"The research continues to show people are favoring destinations that are suburban/rural; outdoor activities; and drivable," he said.

Smith added some of the increased tourism is "revenge tourism" where people are traveling after spending the past few years of staying home due to the pandemic.

Southeast District

Jefferson County commissioners: Budget decisions have not been easy

Herald Star Online, March 20, 2023

As the 2023 budget deadline draws near, Jefferson County Commissioners made it clear last week balancing budget requests with anticipated revenues hasn't been easy.

General fund revenue this year is expected to be about $16.2 million.

At Thursday's meeting, commissioners discussed the price of crime and punishment and the role mental health and drug addiction play in that, and asked Jefferson County Prevention and Recovery Board Executive Director William Holt if there's something else they could be doing to fix the system.

"We're a shrinking community, population wise, and probably an aging community from a demographics standpoint," Commissioner Dave Maple said. "So to see an increase in the cost of crime and metal health, it's going the wrong way. We should see a decrease, I would hope. I realize over time mental health problems have been redefined, it's a moving target … but it does prompt us to (ask), 'Are we pulling the right levers if those two things are pointed in different directions?'"

DATES TO REMEMBER

Please view the CCAO Calendar for a comprehensive list of events to note.

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MARCH 29
NW Ohio Commissioners and Engineers Association meeting
Group Rating Annual Meeting

MARCH 31
CEBCO Annual Meeting

APRIL 5 - 13
Passover

April 9
Easter

APRIL 19
CCAO Board of Directors Meeting
OCCO Legislative Reception

APRIL 27 - 28
CEBCO Board of Directors Retreat

DID YOU KNOW?

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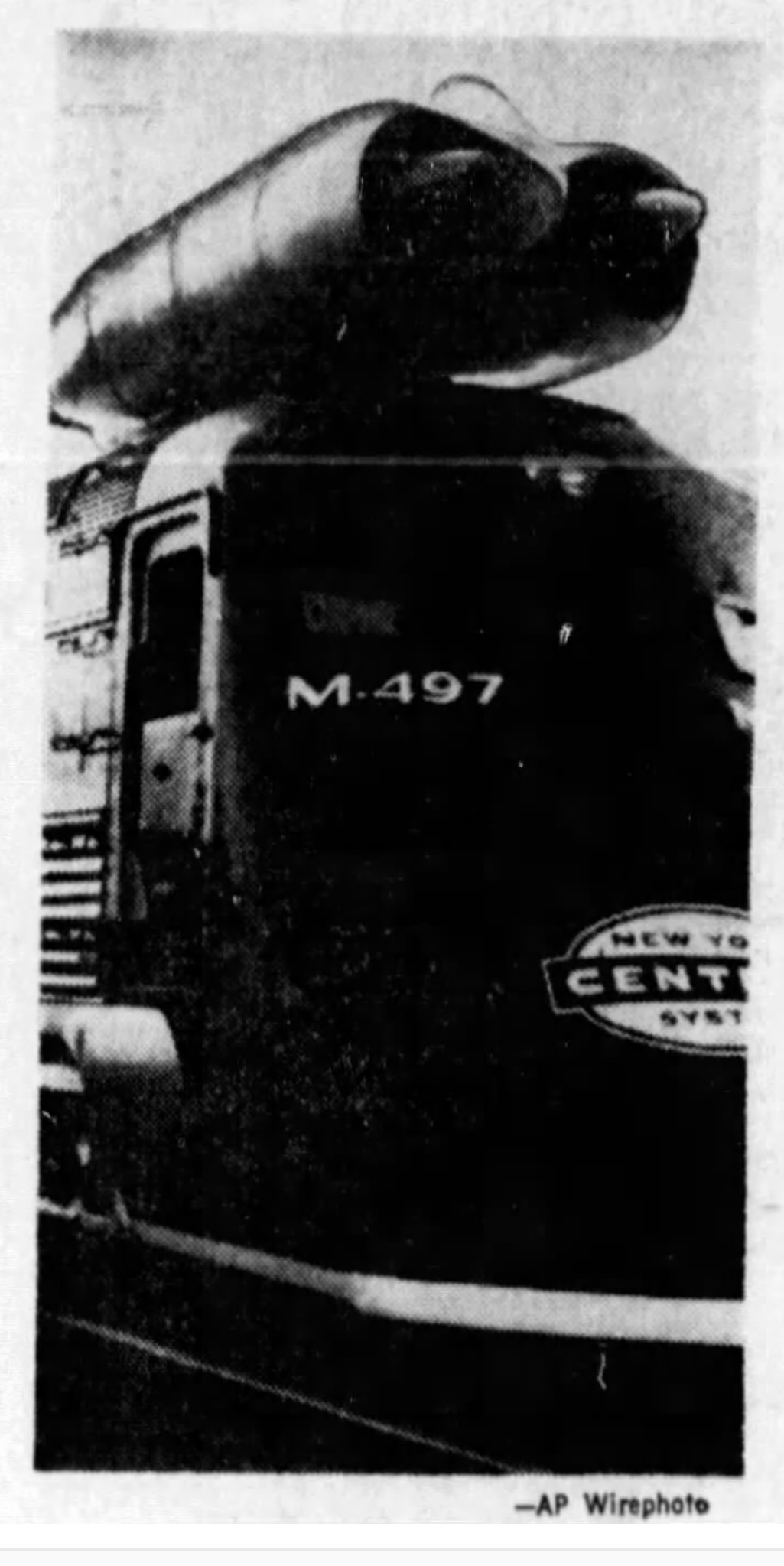
Williams County

Bryan, Ohio, the county seat of Williams County, is the site of a rail record that remains unbroken today.

On July 23, 1966, the New York Central Technical Research Department selected a 67-mile stretch of track from Bryan to Butler, Indiana to perform stress tests on passenger rail cars. The stretch was selected due to its flat elevation and its lack of curves.

The researchers mounted two jet engines to the roof of the passenger car to see how it would perform under high speeds. The passenger car reached a speed up of just under 184 miles per hour, which remains the speed record on rail tracks in the state.

Below is the train car with two jet engines mounted atop it to conduct the stress tests that set the US rail speed record. Photo from the July 27, 1966 issue of the Cincinnati Enquirer.



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