



2026 Connecting Communities:

Planning Grant Application

City of Rittman Active Transportation Plan

March 20, 2026



City of Rittman

Rudy Arnold, Mayor

Bobbie Beshara, City Manager

49 West Ohio Avenue

Rittman, OH 44270

AMATS Connecting Communities – 2026 Planning Grant Application

1. Applicant/Sponsor

Community/Agency	City of Rittman, Ohio
Community Project Manager	Bobbie Beshara, City Manager
Phone Number	330.925.2056
Email Address	bbeshara@rittman.com
Mailing Address	49 West Ohio Avenue Rittman, OH 44270

2. Project Co-Sponsor

Not Applicable for this Application

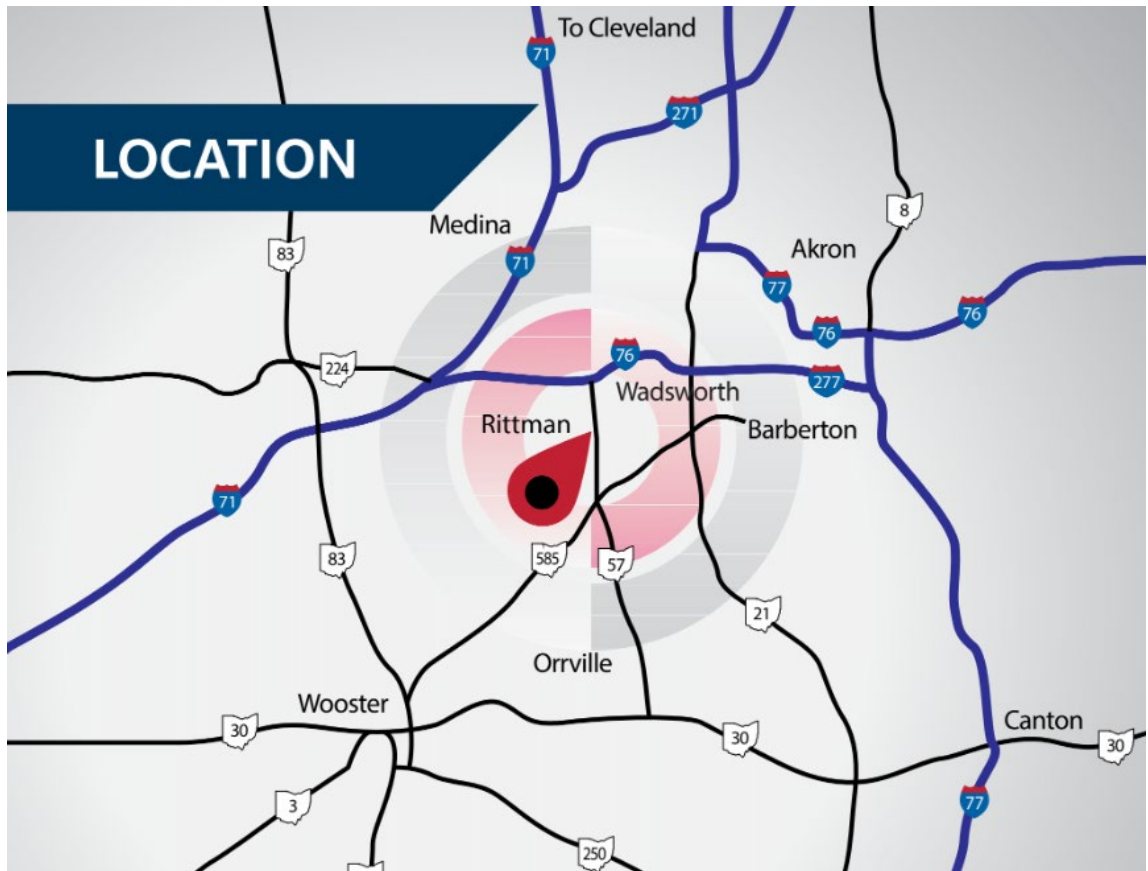
3. Planning Study Summary – List the planning study title and briefly describe the project. (150 words max)

PROJECT TITLE: *City of Rittman Active Transportation Plan*

The City of Rittman is a small, primarily residential community located in northeastern Wayne County with a mix of commercial, industrial and recreational land uses. The City is seeking \$50,000 in AMATS Connecting Communities funding to create a citywide Active Transportation Plan to improve connectivity between its residential neighborhoods and major destinations including the downtown district, County Line Trail, local schools, and parks. The Active Transportation Plan will help the City develop an actionable strategy for locating sidewalks, multi-purpose trails and crosswalks to provide pedestrians with a safe option when navigating through the community. The plan will also look at enhanced trail connectivity and adding bikeways to increase accessibility through the City. To augment the Active Transportation Plan, the City has committed \$20,000 in local funding to study economic development activities related to infill development in the downtown and Opportunity Zone that advance Connecting Communities principles.

4. Study Area & Map

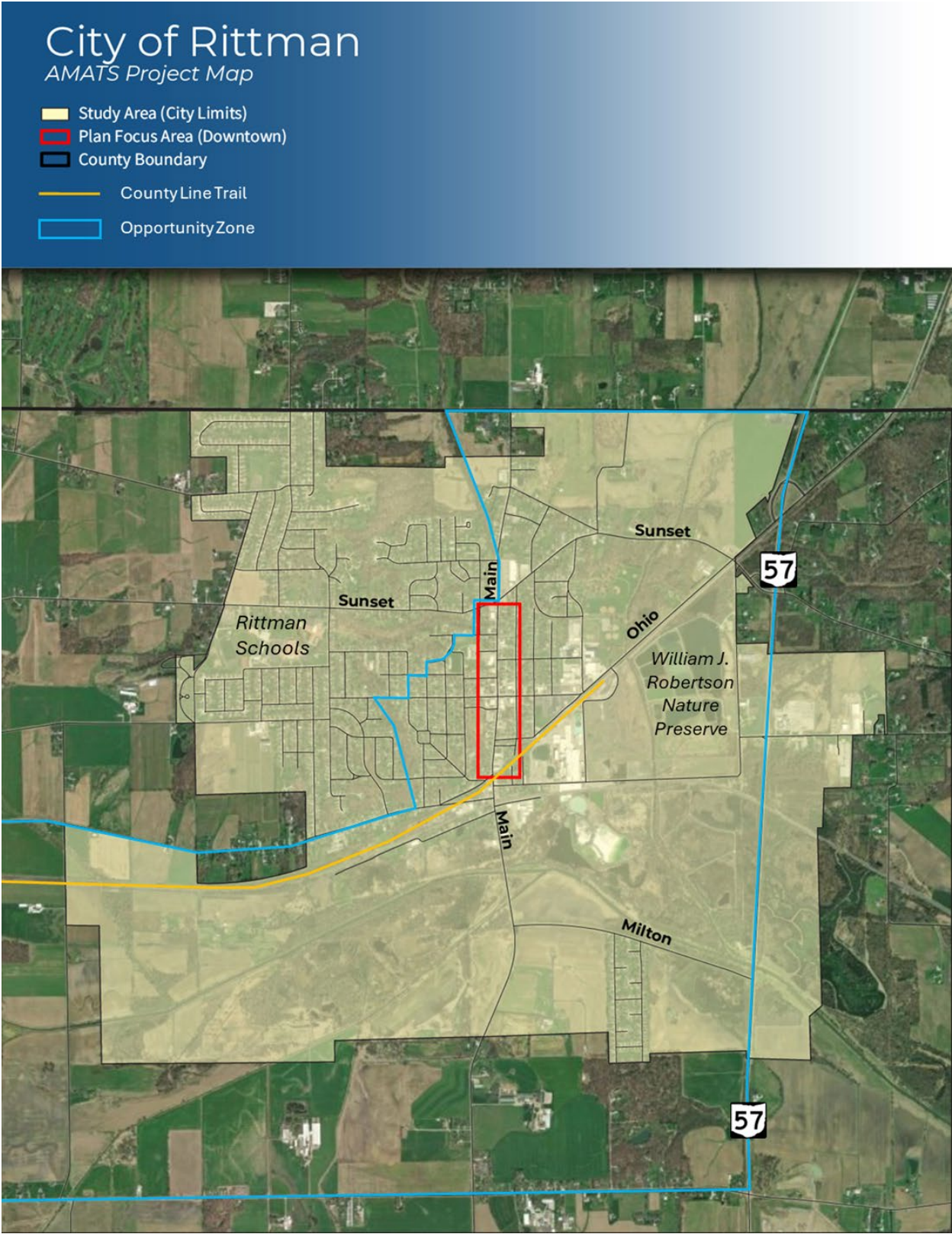
Rittman is located in Northeastern Wayne County and lies south of Seville and Wadsworth and west of Doylestown, Norton, and Barberton.



The Downtown focus area includes Main Street from Sunset to the railroad tracks and one block east and west of Main Street. The study area (see Page 4) is the City incorporation limits with a heightened focus on the downtown district and connections between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods and employment centers.

The City is located along the County Line Trail which travels the path of the former Erie Lackawanna Railroad between Rittman and Creston. The City is home to a designated Opportunity Zone set to sunset in 2028, but eligible for another nomination by the Governor in 2026 for the second round of federal opportunity zone designations.

STUDY AREA MAP



5. Purpose & Need (30 points)

The purpose of this Active Transportation Plan study is to improve connectivity within the City. The City places a high priority on connecting residents, employees and visitors who travel throughout the City and visit the downtown. The City is seeking to connect residents from neighborhoods citywide to a revitalized downtown that serves as a central gathering spot for residents to enjoy. Though the downtown district has pedestrian facilities (i.e. sidewalks and crosswalks), the need for AMATS planning assistance is demonstrated by a lack of signage and wayfinding to assist pedestrians navigate the downtown, limited streetscaping, and the absence of linkages to the County Line Trail or any bicycle facilities. The City has approved \$20K dollars in the 2026 budget to conduct an economic development/market study of the downtown district. This money will be used in concert with the Connecting Communities grant to develop a holistic plan to connect residents citywide to the downtown and stimulate infill development consistent with AMATS Connecting Communities planning principles.

The City understands that improving multi-modal connectivity throughout the City will benefit residents as well as the downtown district. As such, the need to conduct an Active Transportation Plan for the entire City that prioritizes improvements to the walk and bicycle network. The plan will focus on creating a holistic and connected multimodal network (bicycle and pedestrian) between community assets and its residents. The Plan will determine the most appropriate type of multimodal connections to link each asset together (e.g. off-road trails, bike lanes, signage, sidewalks) and prioritize those connections to provide the City with an implementation schedule going forward. Regional multimodal connections will also be assessed to ensure recommendations within City limits are in concert with regional plans and initiatives.

Need for the plan is exemplified by the lack of citywide multimodal connectivity to trails and parks. Rittman does not have dedicated bike lanes or multi-purpose trails which would enhance connections throughout the community. Latent local demand for multimodal connections is evidenced by the 2010 Downtown Revitalization Plan which indicated that 79% of survey respondents visit the downtown at least once a week. Unfortunately, respondents noted their experience as below average as the lack of shops, empty buildings and barren appearance with little or no connectivity to the rest of the City became a challenge to encourage property owners to update their buildings and attract new businesses.

Need for the plan is further demonstrated by the lack of a “Trail Town” gateway that encourages County Line Trails cyclists and pedestrians to explore Rittman, due to a lack of connectivity from the trailhead to the downtown district. Similarly, The William J. Robertson Nature Preserve is a major asset within Rittman, but it is currently difficult to access for pedestrians and cyclists. This study will also address safe ways to access this new preserve, especially due to its close proximity to the County Line Trailhead.

6. Outcomes (20 points)

The expected outcomes of this study are to identify feasible sidewalk, multi-purpose trail, and on-street multimodal transportation connections for residents, students and employees that live and work in Rittman. These amenities are currently not available to all. While Wayne County offers some public transportation options, they are limited in Rittman. Enhancing sidewalk connectivity and creating bikeways will result in better connectivity throughout the City and neighboring communities. This plan will help prioritize the development of bike lanes throughout the City with a focus on enhanced connections to the downtown district and adjacent County Line Trail. The plan will develop strategies to establish “Trail Town” connections between Rittman and the regional County Line Trail along a former rail line, and enhance multimodal connectivity to the Rittman Village Exempted Schools campus and William J. Robertson Nature Preserve and its 7.2 miles of walking and hiking trails.

Success Defined: A successful Active Transportation Plan will result in these outcomes:

- Identification and prioritization of implementable multimodal transportation and Complete Streets between neighborhoods and major local destinations
- Strategies to support the pursuit of fundable projects with local termini, conceptual alignments/cross sections, and planning-level cost estimates accompanied by attainable funding sources from AMATS, ODOT, ODNR and other potential public, private, and non-profit partners
- The provision of safe and inviting multimodal facilities for residents, employees, students, and visitors to access local businesses, civic institutions, and parks
- “Trail Town” development radiating from the County Line Trail and enhanced pedestrian/bicycle integration with the City’s new 200-plus acre William J. Robertson Nature Preserve featuring over 7-miles of walking trails
- Mixed-use infill development patterns along priority multimodal corridors that increase pedestrian and bicycle usage with accompanying City-funded strategies to support economic development (innovative finance, Opportunity Zone, etc.)

Rittman Team

The Rittman City Council (see attached legislation) and the Wayne County Economic Development Council (see attached letter of support) are committed to the project, and led by Bobbie Beshara, City Manager, bringing three decades of combined local government experience as both an elected official and appointed administrator. The City will utilize AMATS funding to hire a qualified planning consulting firm to develop the plan.

Project Development Timeline

Month 1	Consultant RFP advertisement & procurement
Month 2-3	Data Collection, Assessment & Preliminary Concepts
Month 4-5	Draft Recommendations (Facility Types, Locations & Termini)
Month 6-7	Implementation Strategy (Prioritization, Phasing, Funding & Partners)
Month 8-9	Final AMATS & City reviews, edits & formal approvals

7. Connecting Communities Principles (20 points)

Increase alternative transportation options to connect people and places

Creating better modes of transportation for cyclists and pedestrians is critical to providing better and safer access in and around Rittman. Local transit availability is limited in Wayne County. Rittman residents can apply for a fully subsidized transit program through the County via an application process. It is available to citizens with a total household income at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines. This program requires that all transportation requests must be scheduled a minimum of 48 hours in advance. Rides on this fully subsidized program are limited to two transports monthly with a two-stop limit. While this service is beneficial to those in need, it does not meet adequate daily transportation needs for residents without access to a personal vehicle. The Active Transportation Plan will identify alternative transportation connections to make local travel safer, more accessible and inviting for travelers of all mobility levels.

Promote Complete Street principles to create vibrant and safe places for all users

Rittman's Active Transportation Plan will adhere to best practices for Complete Streets development by encouraging site-specific, technically feasible, and cost-effective countermeasures for pedestrian/bicycle facilities and traffic calming such as:

- Streetscape enhancements, pedestrian-scale lighting, and sidewalk widening
- Bike lanes, sharrows and "share the road" signage
- New traffic control devices including rapid flashing beacons, signage, and pavement markings
- Mid-block crossing with pedestrian refuge islands
- High visibility crosswalks, raised intersection and speed tables for traffic calming
- Intersections curb extensions and defined on-street parking spaces in front of high-volume businesses or parking in the rear of buildings fronting the street

Leverage transportation projects to develop places which support alternative transportation and complete streets through land use and design

The Active Transportation Plan will focus on actionable recommendations that can be feasibly implemented and sustainability maintained by:

- Repurposing excess roadway width to calm vehicular traffic and provide safe, inviting, and efficient pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- Installing a functional and highly aesthetic streetscape that stimulates economic activity and encourages the development of more inclusive and diverse housing
- Addressing the spatial mismatch in local workforce and employment centers through connections between commercial areas and residential neighborhoods

The City's commitment to funding a complementary downtown revitalization strategy for economic development will encourage the requisite higher density, infill development and land use patterns to ensure pedestrian and bicycle travel is a viable travel mode for residents and visitors.

8. Level of Use (10 points)

City Residents & Underserved Populations (Source: US Census Bureau ACS)

The Active Transportation Plan will directly and positively impact the entire population of the City of Rittman which is home to over 6,100 residents, with many households facing economic headwinds. Rittman's median household income is \$60,154 which is 58% of the metro average. The City has a 14% poverty rate which is 1.3% higher than the statewide rate. It is anticipated that most of the City will be eligible as an Opportunity Zone again in 2026. The per capita income over the past 12 months was only \$31,000. Rittman is in dire need of AMATS funding to identify and prioritize safe travel routes and facilities for those who do not have ready or reliable access to vehicular transportation and those who are cost-burdened by rising housing and fuel prices.

Local Workforce (Source: US Census Bureau Center for Economic Studies LEHD)

The City of Rittman is a major employment center in northeastern Wayne County with 1,682 individuals employed within the incorporation limits. Of those local workers, 316 of (18.8%) are City residents employed and living in the Selection Area. The remaining 1,366 (81.2%) of individuals employed in the City commute from outside the incorporation limits. These non-resident employees will also benefit from the Active Transportation Plan as many local business establishments are within walking or biking distance of local dining and retail that would benefit from enhanced multimodal connectivity.

Visitors (Source: Placer.ai)

Cellphone tracking data reveals that Rittman was visited by 267,900 "out-of-market visitors" over the past 12 months. Out-of-market visitors are defined as those individuals who do not reside or work in the City but visit for at least 10 minutes. Out-of-market visitors accounted for over 1.5 million total visits over that time period for an average frequency of 6.0 annual visits. While visitor multimodal facility usage is fractional compared to those who live and work in the City on a daily or weekly basis, it does encourage more frequent and longer visits, especially when visitors park their vehicle or bicycle once and patronize multiple businesses or institutions.

Local Businesses

Stakeholder feedback from the Wayne County Economic Development Council's Opportunity Zone Market Demand Study and Investment Prospectus (2020) indicated that local businesses – ranging from storefront retailers to major manufacturers – highly valued place-based investments in Rittman's downtown district, including Trail Town connections to the County Line Trail and mixed-use infill development patterns that generate increased pedestrian activity. Private industry stakeholders will benefit from the Active Transportation Plan's implementation through increased customer visits and workforce retention and attraction efforts.

9. Legislation and Letters of Support (Attached)

Please see attached for a City Council Resolution (Page 10) and Letter of Support from Wayne County Economic Development Council (Page 12).

RECORD OF ORDINANCES

Ordinance No. 8518

Passed: March 9, 2026

RESOLUTION NO. 8518

A RESOLUTION ALLOWING THE CITY MANAGER TO APPLY FOR A CONNECTING COMMUNITIES PLANNING GRANT FUNDS PROGRAMMED BY THE AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (AMATS) TO CONDUCT A CITY-WIDE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

WHEREAS, the City of Rittman Active Transportation Plan is of great importance; and

WHEREAS, this project will study pedestrian and bicycle connectivity throughout the City, with focus on improving safety, streetscaping, and connections to the Downtown District; and

WHEREAS, Rittman's Active Transportation Plan will also address how to safely move pedestrians, bicycles, and other modes of transportation throughout the Downtown District and enhance sidewalk connectivity throughout the City.

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Council of the City of Rittman, Counties of Wayne and Medina and State of Ohio, two-thirds of all members elected and appointed thereto concurring:

SECTION ONE.

That the City Manager is hereby authorized to apply for Connecting Communities Planning Grant Funds programmed by the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) for the following Active Transportation Plan:

This project will assist the City in identifying new and improved sidewalk connections, bicycle-friendly routes to connect to the trail system and better traffic safety in the downtown. The City is requesting \$50,000.00 dollars from AMATS for this project. Further, the City has earmarked an additional \$20,000.00 to support a downtown feasibility and marketing study.

RECORD OF ORDINANCES

Ordinance No. 8518

Passed: March 9, 2026

SECTION TWO.

That the City of Rittman acknowledges and understands the AMATS "Funding Policy Guidelines" and confirms to the best of its knowledge that the information contained in the project application is accurate, that it intends to diligently pursue that project, and that a local share will be provided.

SECTION THREE.

That it is hereby found and determined that all formal actions of the Council concerning and relating to the passage of this Resolution were taken in an open meeting of this Council and that all deliberations of this Council and of any of its committees that resulted in such formal action were meetings open to the public and in compliance with law.

SECTION FOUR.

This Resolution is hereby declared to be an emergency measure necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, safety, convenience and welfare of the City of Rittman and the inhabitants thereof, for the reason that it is to apply for this funding by March 20, 2026, provided that it receives the approval of two-thirds of the members of Council, shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval; otherwise to be in full force and effect from and after the earliest period allowed by law.

Passed: March 9, 2026



Mayor

Attest:

Clerk of Council



March 19, 2026

Dear AMATS Review Committee,

On behalf of the Wayne Economic Development Council, I am pleased to offer this letter of support for the Connecting Communities Grant application benefiting the City of Rittman, particularly its downtown corridor.

This project represents a critical investment in the long-term economic vitality of Rittman. By improving connectivity, accessibility, and overall infrastructure within the downtown area, the initiative will help create a more vibrant, walkable, and economically competitive environment. Strengthening connections between neighborhoods, businesses, and public spaces encourages increased foot traffic, supports local commerce, and enhances the overall quality of life for residents.

Downtown Rittman serves as both a cultural and economic anchor for the community. Enhancements made possible through this grant—such as improved pedestrian pathways, safer crossings, and better integration of transportation options—will make the area more attractive to visitors and more functional for residents. These improvements directly support small businesses by increasing visibility and accessibility, which in turn drives sales, encourages entrepreneurship, and fosters business retention and expansion.

From an economic development perspective, the project is expected to generate both short-term and long-term benefits. In the short term, construction activity will create jobs and stimulate local spending. In the long term, a more connected and appealing downtown will attract private investment, increase property values, and expand the local tax base. These outcomes are essential for sustaining public services and supporting future community development initiatives.

The Wayne Economic Development Council supports this application and recognizes it as a strategic opportunity to advance economic development in Rittman.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maribeth Burns'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'M' at the beginning.

Maribeth Burns, President the Wayne Economic Development Council