



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**COMMISSIONERS AND PARTNERS ANNOUNCE FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR
AN EQUESTRIAN CENTER**

Today, Franklin County Commissioners were joined by the City of Hilliard, the Franklin County Agricultural Society and representatives from the All American Quarter Horse Congress to announce a joint feasibility study for an equestrian center at the Franklin County Fairgrounds in Hilliard.

“Given that we have over a \$6 billion tourism industry in Central Ohio, it makes good sense to expand our largest show, the Quarter Horse Congress,” said Commissioner Paula Brooks. “This is good for the Central Ohio economy and brings \$110 million per year here. In tough times we must shore up the economy, retaining jobs wherever possible.”

Last year, Central Ohio hosted the 42nd Quarter Horse Congress at the Ohio State Fairgrounds; the world’s largest single breed horse show receiving more than 17,000 horse show entries and houses more than 8,500 registered quarter horses. Annually, the event draws more than 650,000 people to the Columbus area, contributing over an estimated \$100 million to Franklin County’s economy.

Following growth in attendance and vendor expectations, it has become apparent that the Quarter Horse Congress needs additional space to grow. Franklin County has agreed to lead the effort of engaging a consultant to review the feasibility of a satellite events facility at the Franklin County Fairgrounds and to help underwrite the costs associated with that study. The Franklin County Agricultural Society will contribute \$10,000 and the city of Hilliard will provide \$5,000 towards the cost.

“This is a wonderful example of a private-public partnership,” said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. “The Quarter Horse Congress is an important part of the central Ohio community and their success and need for additional facilities is a testament to the vital role they play in Franklin County.”

General facility requirements presented by the All American Quarter Horse Congress include a +/- 6,000 seat indoor arena, adequate stalling area and services for 75 campground units; outside riding arena, cattle pens and additional practice areas.

“The potential expansion of the Quarter Horse Congress is an excellent opportunity for our Franklin County community,” said Commissioner John O’Grady. “The 650,000

visitors, who attend the Quarter Horse Congress, stay in our area hotels, eat at our restaurants and shop at our stores. They are critical to our local economic health.”

"The Quarter Horse Congress is the world's largest single-breed horse show, Ohio's largest annual convention and the third largest convention in the U.S. When it comes to the Quarter Horse Congress, everyone wins by assuring the continued success of this event. Count on Hilliard to do what we can to help pave the way for this study and any expansion that will facilitate future growth of our partnership with the Quarter Horse Congress," said City of Hilliard Mayor Don Schonhardt.

“The Ohio Quarter Horse Congress is thrilled that a study is going forward,” said Executive Director Denny Hales. “The Ohio State Fairgrounds will remain home to the Quarter Horse Congress but it’s important for us to look at all of the options available to us as we explore our current time and space restrictions.”

To expedite the process to determine the feasibility of a new satellite facility, a study committee will be convened to analyze market conditions, facility requirements, site location options, the associated costs and possible financing scenarios.

The study is expected to be completed this fall.