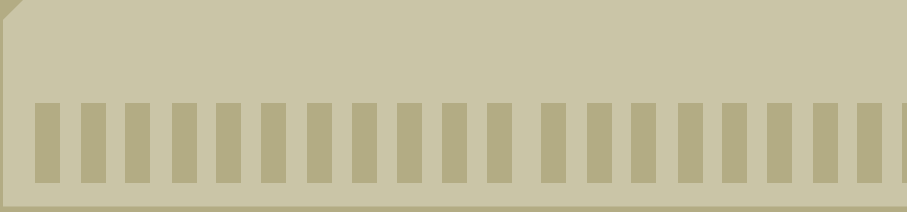


Public Transportation Needs



2030

Transportation Outlook



Public Transportation Needs

**AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
806 CITICENTER BUILDING
146 SOUTH HIGH STREET
AKRON, OHIO 44308**

October 2008

This report was prepared by the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Ohio Department of Transportation, and the village, City and County governments of Portage and Summit Counties and Chippewa Township in Wayne County. The contents of this report reflect the views of AMATS, which is responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official view and policies of the Ohio and/or U.S. Department of Transportation. This report does not constitute a standard, specification or regulation.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Report, Goals

The purpose of this report is to identify and describe the public transportation needs of the AMATS Area between 2010 and 2030. In the process of identifying the area's transportation needs, several important AMATS transportation objectives were considered. These include:

- System Preservation
- Basic Mobility for All Persons
- Cost-Effectiveness and Efficiency of Travel
- Coordination among the Area's Transportation Providers
- Safety and Security
- Environmental Impacts
- Support for the Planning Objectives of the Area Communities
- Support of the Region's Economy

Strategies, Implications, Prognoses

In the process of identifying the area's public transportation needs, the staff will consider several important transportation objectives: mobility, cost-effectiveness and efficiency, and system preservation.

Specific issues to consider for the Transit Needs Report include:

- Coverage Needs (current needs and possible expansion)
- Route Restructuring
- Transit's Role in Congestion Management
- Park and Ride Lots
- Coordination among the area's providers and mobility management
- Preserving and expanding the existing transit infrastructure (cost considerations)
- Rail Issues (Development Patterns and Funding Issues)
- The availability of funds for operations (e.g., METRO's sales tax increase)

Issues and Strategies

A fundamental concern facing public transportation is the availability of funds for operations. As ODOT no longer directly assists with operating grant funding, transit authorities must obtain operating subsidies locally. METRO RTA and PARTA both have county sales tax revenue as a source of these operating funds. However, the amount of

revenue generated every year fluctuates. In recent years, METRO has seen revenue from the Summit County sales tax remain stagnant in the face of rising operating costs. In March 2008, METRO successfully passed an increase in the county sales tax, doubling the former rate. Both METRO and PARTA sales tax levies are permanent (not subject to a renewal vote by the taxpayers).

As the result of the stagnant Summit County sales tax, METRO was forced to cut service repeatedly over the last five years. Following the passage of the levy in March, METRO is proceeding with a restoration of some of the lost service. Initially, METRO will provide more frequent service on the popular routes, as well as additional service at extended times of the day. This restoration and modification of increased service will continue methodically into the foreseeable future. Currently, METRO's route structure is under review in order to ensure that the area's needs are met. It has been the decision of the AMATS Policy Committee to emphasize system preservation and efficiency as a central goal in public transportation.

In terms of capital expenditures, the greatest amount of funding goes to preventive maintenance and bus replacements. Both sets of expenditures are for preserving the public transportation system. Over the next several years, METRO will be restoring its bus fleet to serve their restored transit service. Historically, there is a 12-18 month lead-time on bus purchases. It will take several years for METRO to restore its fleet size. The amount of capital funds available is, for both METRO and PARTA, a chief consideration in scheduling bus replacements.

Recently, AMATS and the transit authorities have taken steps to assist in the coordination of transportation services with one another and with the area's human service providers. In May, the AMATS Policy Committee approved the Coordinated Plan for assisting in meeting the transportation needs of the area's elderly, disabled and low income. These efforts will continue over the life of *Transportation Outlook*, utilizing the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom Programs. ODOT's policies in managing the FTA Elderly and Disabled (Specialized Transportation) Program have now been modified to allow more latitude in the funding of coordination and mobility management projects.

The ultimate goal of the Coordinated Plan is to institute a mobility management system where clients can gain access to a wide range of transportation options and service providers through one contact point. It also focuses on coordinating these services and providers in order to achieve a more efficient transportation service. An example of mobility management is a single dispatch service for all of the area's transportation providers. Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology is central to these efforts.

In terms of congestion management, public transportation may be effective in certain cases. Commuters in the AMATS area have used park and ride lots effectively for a number of years. The addition or expansion of these park and ride lots would be beneficial. Equally important, express bus service to Cleveland has functioned in tandem with the park and ride system. Frequently at capacity, express bus service has been

limited by a lack of operating funds of late. In the future, additional express bus service in the I-77 corridor, and new service, perhaps in the SR 91 corridor, would help alleviate congestion.

In keeping with the Policy Committee's desire to preserve the transportation system, expansion projects proposed for *Transportation Outlook* are primarily limited to increased bus service, coordination and mobility management development, congestion management solutions and improvements to existing facilities. In particular, rail service will only be considered in terms of planning studies when the situation warrants it.

Chapter I

Overview of the Existing Public Transportation System

Two regional transit authorities, the METRO Regional Transit Authority (METRO) and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA), operate public transportation services in the Akron metropolitan area. Chippewa Township in Wayne County has no public transportation services. The area's public transportation system was described and analyzed in the *Transit Coverage and Performance Report*, approved by the AMATS Policy Committee in September 2007.

METRO currently serves the residents of Summit County with a variety of services. The bulk of METRO service consists of twenty-two fixed line routes radiating from downtown Akron. METRO's fixed route service also consists of two neighborhood circulators, which run a fixed circuit within a defined area: one route focusing on the businesses and neighborhoods near Chapel Hill Mall and one route focusing on the businesses and neighborhoods near Montrose and Summit Mall. METRO's other fixed route service includes two express routes that run direct service to Cleveland; five-grocery routes/ that allow transportation disadvantaged residents the ability to get to a grocery store in their neighborhood and five town center routes, focusing on extended sections of the county.

METRO also provides extensive curb-to-curb demand-response services to the elderly and disabled, and to the low-income population as part of the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program throughout the county. The demand-response service, known as SCAT, transports people who may be unable to utilize the fixed route service, from their particular point of origin to their destination throughout the county.

PARTA, the regional transit authority for Portage County, also operates a variety of transportation services. In contrast to METRO's line routes, PARTA runs three flexible fixed routes. The difference between the two types is that PARTA's flexible fixed routes allow for deviation of the route if necessary, to provide door-to-door service if possible. They also run two express routes, two circulators and three campus routes covering Kent State University. It should be noted that Kent State's Campus Bus Service (CBS) previously operated the campus routes until 2004, when PARTA took over the service. As is the case with METRO, PARTA also provides door-to-door demand-response services to the elderly and disabled, and to the low-income population.

AMATS Area – Current Service Coverage

The *Transit Coverage and Performance Report* found that overall, fixed route transit coverage for the Akron Metropolitan Area provides adequate mobility for all persons. The analyses performed for both METRO RTA and PARTA show that large portions of populations in both Summit and Portage Counties receive fixed route coverage.

For the combined Summit and Portage Counties, nearly 50% of the entire population is within ¼ mile of a fixed route. In terms of providing people with a means to get to work, approximately 82% of all jobs in the Akron Metropolitan Area are covered by a fixed route at some point during the day. However, not all jobs are covered with the same frequency of service, or throughout the entire day. Limited service is provided on the weekends.

For the transportation-disadvantaged population, consisting of the elderly, low income, transportation disabled and minority populations, adequate fixed route transit service is being provided.

The elderly population of the Akron Metropolitan Area receives slightly less than 50% coverage by fixed route transit. The disabled population receives approximately 52% coverage while the low-income and minority populations receiving 70% and 72% coverage, respectively. However, most importantly, both METRO and PARTA provide curb-to-curb demand response service to the elderly and disabled.

METRO Regional Transit Authority - Current Routes and Services

METRO's operations have been supported with a permanent 0.25 percent countywide sales tax since 1990. In March 2008, voters approved an additional 0.25 percent sales tax levy in support of METRO's operations, with collections beginning in July.

As of October 2008, METRO is operating the following types of services:

Local Bus Routes – METRO currently operates 22 local bus routes. The local bus route network is designed as a traditional radial system, with all but one of the routes (#23) operating to/from downtown Akron. These routes serve primarily the cities of Akron, Barberton, and Cuyahoga Falls, and carry the bulk of METRO's daily ridership. The fare for local bus routes is \$1.25. Transfers between routes are no longer free, and are considered an additional trip. On January 18, 2009, downtown routes will begin using the newly constructed Downtown Transfer Center near the intersection of South Broadway and Bartges Streets.

Neighborhood Circulators – Currently, METRO operates two neighborhood circulator routes, the #50 Montrose Circulator, and the #59 Chapel Hill Circulator. These routes transport passengers within a particular community and do not operate to downtown. The fare to ride this service is \$1.25.

Town Center Routes – Five town center routes provide service to areas in the outer portions of the county. A significant portion of the ridership on these routes is from reverse commuters who travel from the Akron area to employment destinations in the outer suburban areas. The fare for the town center routes is also \$1.25.

Express Bus Routes – METRO currently operates two long-distance express bus routes to destinations in and around Downtown Cleveland. The X60 provides peak period service between Chapel Hill Mall and downtown Cleveland, making limited stops at park and ride lots in northern Summit County. The X61 provides peak period trips between downtown Akron and Downtown Cleveland via Montrose. The cost per single trip is \$5.00.

Board of Education Enhanced Service – The Akron Board of Education (BOE) contracts with METRO to run additional service at peak times in order to transport students who attend schools that are outside of their immediate neighborhood. The additional service is available to the general public, and operates in the morning and afternoon, when school is in session.

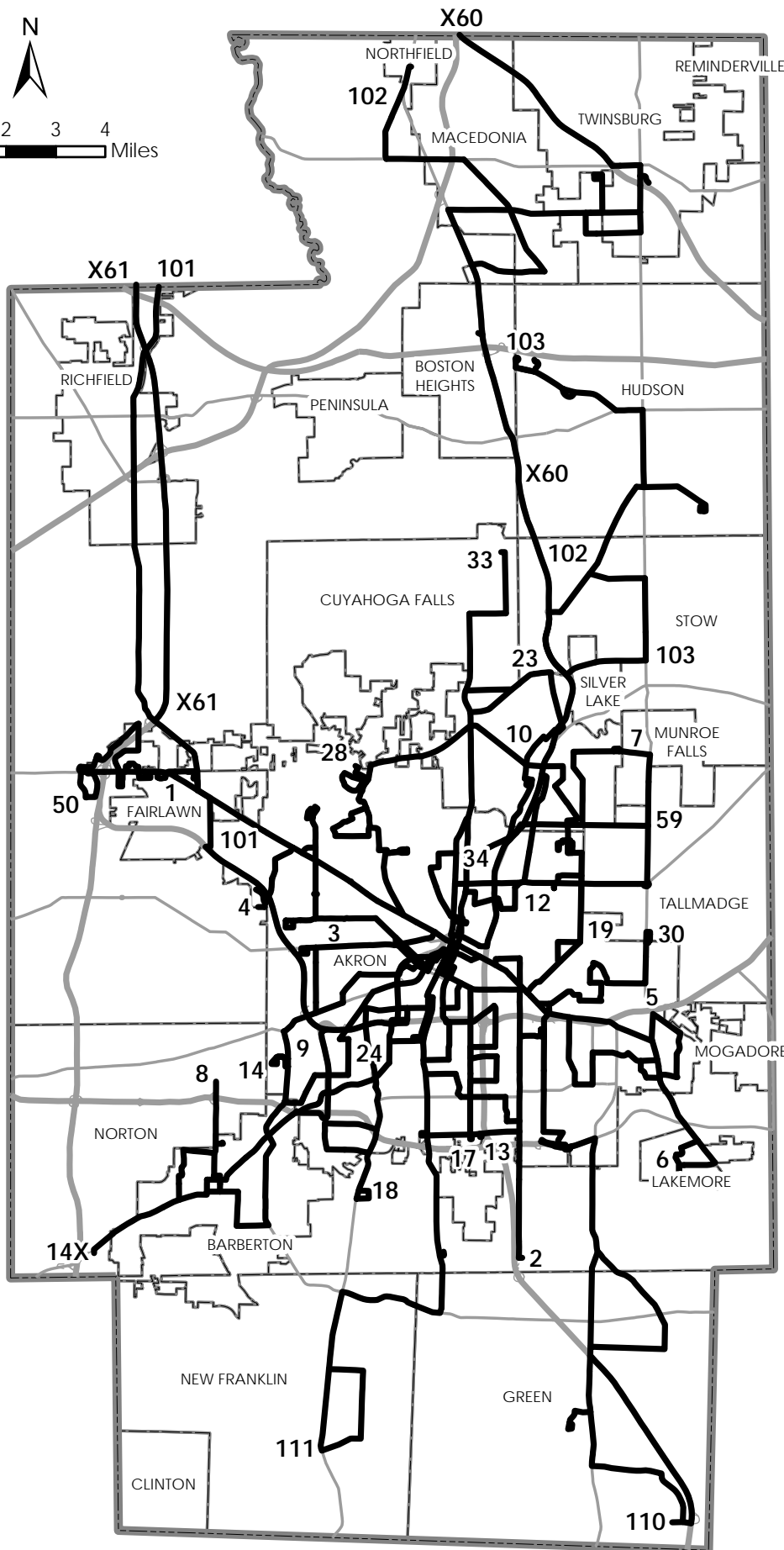
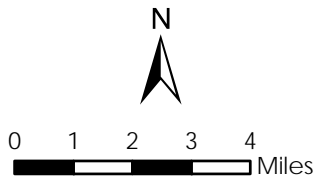
Grocery Bus Routes - METRO began operating grocery store trips in 2003. There are 5 grocery bus routes (one per weekday) that operate between senior apartment complexes and nearby grocery stores. The purpose of these routes is to provide a lower cost, lower fare alternative to individually scheduled demand response trips to grocery stores. The benefits to passengers have been lower fares and the elimination of the need to call ahead for trips. While the benefit to METRO has been the reduced scheduling of costly demand response (SCAT) service.

SCAT Service – METRO SCAT service is a comprehensive set of demand response curb-to-curb services. In general, the fare is \$2.00 per trip and passengers must call in advance (up to the day before) to reserve a trip. SCAT services include:

- Curb to Curb service for the elderly and disabled
- ADA complementary paratransit services to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990
- Enhanced Medical Transportation, which is a variety of medical related paratransit services including dialysis and Medicaid-funded trips
- Contract paratransit service for a variety of agencies and social service programs

Rail Service to Cuyahoga Valley National Park – METRO has contracted with the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railway (CVSR) to operate roundtrip service from Downtown Akron to the National Park. Since its inception in 1999, it has operated on weekends during the summer and the fall foliage season. METRO reimburses the CVSR for the costs that are not covered by passenger fares. This service was recently suspended due to budgetary issues, but may be reinstated at a later date. In addition, METRO owns 9 former Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) railroad coaches which are currently on lease to the CVSR.

Map 1 shows the current structure of METRO’s fixed route services (except for the BOE and grocery store routes).



Map 1 METRO ROUTES

— METRO Routes

Route Key

- 1 - West Market
- 2 - Arlington
- 3 - Copley Road / Hawkins
- 4 - Delia / White Pond
- 5 - East Market / Ellet
- 6 - East Market / Lakemore
- 7 - Cuyahoga Falls Ave.
- 8 - Kenmore / Barberton
- 9 - Wooster / East Ave.
- 10 - Howard / Portage Trail
- 12 - Tallmadge Hill
- 13 - Grant / Firestone
- 14 - Euclid
- 14X - Barberton Express
- 17 - Brown / Inman
- 18 - Thornton / Manchester
- 19 - Eastland
- 23 - Portage / Graham
- 24 - Lakeshore
- 28 - Merriman
- 30 - Goodyear / Darrow
- 33 - State Road / Wyoga Lake
- 34 - Cascade Village / Uhler
- 50 - Montrose Circulator
- 59 - Chapel Hill Circulator
- X60 - NCX - Chapel Hill
- X61 - NCX - Montrose
- 101 - Richfield / Bath
- 102 - Northfield / Twinsburg
- 103 - Stow / Hudson
- 110 - Green / Springfield
- 111 - South Main / Waterloo

METRO Regional Transit Authority - Current Service Performance

Table 1-1 (following page) displays ridership and operational performance data, by route, for all of the services METRO operated in 2007, excluding the BOE and Grocery Bus routes.

It is important that the regional transportation system provides adequate mobility for all persons, offering suitable options for area residents and providing basic personal mobility. With this goal in mind, a suitable coverage area was analyzed in conjunction with METRO's fixed routes. A suitable coverage area is determined by using ¼ mile walking distance to a fixed route, the industry standard identified by the Transportation Research Board (TRB).

As shown in Table 1-2, most transit service is provided in the larger cities such as Akron, Barberton and Cuyahoga Falls. Each of these cities has at least 60% coverage. Cities such as Green and Stow, which can be categorized as suburban cities, have population coverage slightly over 20%. Overall, 50% of Summit County's population is covered by METRO's fixed route system.

Table 1-2
2007 FIXED ROUTE TRANSIT COVERAGE
FOR SUMMIT COUNTY AND CITIES
TOTAL POPULATION

POLITICAL UNIT	TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION COVERED	PERCENT COVERAGE
Akron	220,614	178,416	80.9%
Barberton	27,913	21,366	76.5%
Cuyahoga Falls	49,848	31,830	63.9%
Fairlawn	6,645	2,510	37.8%
Green	22,814	5,224	22.9%
Hudson	22,389	3,504	15.6%
Macedonia	9,230	1,152	12.5%
Munroe Falls	5,325	1,026	19.3%
New Franklin	18,355	897	4.9%
Norton	11,524	653	5.7%
Stow	32,144	6,695	20.8%
Tallmadge	16,174	3,097	19.1%
Twinsburg	16,889	12	0.1%
City Total	459,863	256,381	55.8%
Non-City Total	83,036	15,540	18.7%
Summit County Total	542,899	271,921	50.1%

Note: Political unit totals are summaries of traffic zones, approximate to the actual political unit boundaries.

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, AMATS analysis

Table 1-1

METRO RTA SERVICES										
2007 PERFORMANCE										
SERVICE TYPE/ROUTE	FAREBOX REVENUE	EXPENSE	TOTAL PASSENGERS	REVENUE MILES	REVENUE HOURS	PASSENGERS PER:		NET COST PER:		FAREBOX RECOVERY
						REV MILE	REV HOUR	PSGR	MILE	
FIXED ROUTE BUS SERVICE										
1 West Market	\$ 334,926	\$ 1,281,726	474,929	138,794	10,317	3.42	46.0	\$ 1.99	\$ 6.82	26.1%
2 Arlington	\$ 371,586	\$ 1,666,977	526,913	148,452	13,418	3.55	39.3	\$ 2.46	\$ 8.73	22.3%
3 Copley / Hawkins	\$ 244,371	\$ 1,181,096	346,520	125,138	9,507	2.77	36.4	\$ 2.70	\$ 7.49	20.7%
4 Delia / White Pond	\$ 117,951	\$ 892,624	167,256	91,428	7,185	1.83	23.3	\$ 4.63	\$ 8.47	13.2%
5 East Market / Ellet	\$ 62,787	\$ 611,978	89,033	66,270	4,926	1.34	18.1	\$ 6.17	\$ 8.29	10.3%
6 East Market / Lakemore	\$ 131,460	\$ 890,760	186,412	108,520	7,170	1.72	26.0	\$ 4.07	\$ 7.00	14.8%
7/7A Cuyahoga Falls Ave	\$ 106,609	\$ 733,728	151,172	80,832	5,906	1.87	25.6	\$ 4.15	\$ 7.76	14.5%
8 Kenmore / Barberton	\$ 199,904	\$ 1,276,011	283,466	133,417	10,271	2.12	27.6	\$ 3.80	\$ 8.07	15.7%
9 Wooster / East Ave	\$ 112,994	\$ 650,864	160,227	74,346	5,239	2.16	30.6	\$ 3.36	\$ 7.23	17.4%
10 Howard / Portage Trail	\$ 194,347	\$ 1,109,661	275,586	116,617	8,932	2.36	30.9	\$ 3.32	\$ 7.85	17.5%
12 Tallmadge Hill	\$ 99,845	\$ 723,417	141,581	69,423	5,823	2.04	24.3	\$ 4.40	\$ 8.98	13.8%
13 Grant / Firestone	\$ 144,656	\$ 714,845	205,123	71,281	5,754	2.88	35.6	\$ 2.78	\$ 8.00	20.2%
14/14X Euclid / Barberton Express	\$ 187,893	\$ 1,631,818	266,434	202,288	13,135	1.32	20.3	\$ 5.42	\$ 7.14	11.5%
17 Brown / Inman	\$ 167,834	\$ 978,718	237,990	109,678	7,878	2.17	30.2	\$ 3.41	\$ 7.39	17.1%
18 Thornton / Manchester	\$ 158,675	\$ 995,614	225,002	120,425	8,014	1.87	28.1	\$ 3.72	\$ 6.95	15.9%
19 Eastland	\$ 154,519	\$ 980,209	219,109	84,925	7,890	2.58	27.8	\$ 3.77	\$ 9.72	15.8%
23 Portage / Graham	\$ 9,855	\$ 228,715	13,974	15,901	1,841	0.88	7.6	\$ 15.66	\$ 13.76	4.3%
24 Lakeshore Blvd	\$ 36,080	\$ 263,998	51,162	22,998	2,125	2.22	24.1	\$ 4.45	\$ 9.91	13.7%
28 Merriman Valley	\$ 27,995	\$ 380,281	39,697	58,797	3,061	0.68	13.0	\$ 8.87	\$ 5.99	7.4%
30 Goodyear / Darrow	\$ 81,062	\$ 681,177	114,946	80,534	5,483	1.43	21.0	\$ 5.22	\$ 7.45	11.9%
33 State Rd / Wyoga Lake	\$ 47,376	\$ 288,721	67,179	20,070	2,324	3.35	28.9	\$ 3.59	\$ 12.03	16.4%
34 Cascade Village / Uhler	\$ 130,816	\$ 1,080,218	185,498	100,433	8,695	1.85	21.3	\$ 5.12	\$ 9.45	12.1%
50 Montrose Circulator	\$ 53,534	\$ 567,627	75,912	48,556	4,569	1.56	16.6	\$ 6.77	\$ 10.59	9.4%
59 Chapel Hill Circulator	\$ 13,608	\$ 233,188	19,296	25,513	1,877	0.76	10.3	\$ 11.38	\$ 8.61	5.8%
101 Richfield / Bath	\$ 17,147	\$ 365,870	24,315	38,719	2,945	0.63	8.3	\$ 14.34	\$ 9.01	4.7%
102 Northfield / Twinsburg	\$ 28,041	\$ 815,226	39,763	125,045	6,562	0.32	6.1	\$ 19.80	\$ 6.30	3.4%
103 Stow / Hudson	\$ 19,613	\$ 529,735	27,811	59,931	4,264	0.46	6.5	\$ 18.34	\$ 8.51	3.7%
110 Green / Springfield	\$ 16,149	\$ 430,596	22,899	61,383	3,466	0.37	6.6	\$ 18.10	\$ 6.75	3.8%
111 South Main / Waterloo	\$ 19,972	\$ 305,989	28,320	57,891	2,463	0.49	11.5	\$ 10.10	\$ 4.94	6.5%
X60 North Coast Express- Chapel Hill	\$ 15,735	\$ 209,086	22,312	53,747	1,683	0.42	13.3	\$ 8.67	\$ 3.60	7.5%
X61 North Coast Express- Montrose	\$ 36,087	\$ 376,430	51,172	91,157	3,030	0.56	16.9	\$ 6.65	\$ 3.73	9.6%
TOTAL - All FIXED ROUTES	\$ 3,343,425	\$ 23,076,906	4,741,009	2,602,509	185,753	1.82	25.5	\$ 4.16	\$ 7.58	14.5%
SCAT (Demand Response Service)	\$ 353,028	\$ 3,663,480	164,296	1,044,019	116,571	0.16	1.4	\$ 20.15	\$ 3.17	9.6%

Source: METRO RTA 2007 Performance Reports

A complete analysis of the area’s transit services was completed in 2007. The *Transit Coverage and Performance Report* was approved by the AMATS Policy Committee in September 2007.

METRO Regional Transit Authority - Existing Facilities and Equipment

METRO Fleet

Table 1-3 provides a listing of all vehicles currently in the METRO fleet. The large transit buses are used for standard fixed routes that carry substantial numbers of passengers. The over-the-road buses are used for express commuter service to Cleveland. The light duty buses are generally used for demand-response SCAT trips. And the medium duty buses can be used for SCAT service or for lower volume fixed routes.

**Table 1-3
METRO RTA Fleet**

Vehicle Type	Quantity
Large Transit Buses -	
30’-40’ Buses	107
Over the Road Buses	8
Paratransit Buses -	
Light Duty	79
Medium Duty	10
Non Revenue Vehicles -	
Supervisor/Staff Vehicles	13
Service Trucks	5
Rail Equipment -	
Passenger Coaches	9
Hi-Rail Truck	1

METRO Facilities

Administration and Maintenance – The administration and maintenance facility for the METRO system is located on Kenmore Blvd in Akron. It has 14 maintenance bays for performing service and repair work on the vehicles in METRO’s fleet. The facility includes 2 vehicle service lanes and indoor storage for 100-140 vehicles. Outdoor parking is available for an additional 80 vehicles.

Main Street Transitway – Completed in 1991 as a joint project with the City of Akron, the Main Street Transitway features widened sidewalks, landscaping, and passenger shelters on Main Street in downtown Akron, and is currently the primary transfer location for the METRO system.

METRO is currently constructing an off-street transfer facility in downtown Akron. The Downtown Transfer Center is a \$17 million facility on 8 acres, that will shift bus transfers from the present location on South Main Street in downtown Akron to the new location near Bartges Street and South Broadway. The transfer center will have public restrooms, a small retail area, vending machines, a taxi stand, and an in-door waiting room that can hold 300 people. The Greyhound bus facility will be moved from Grant Street to the new facility. Its location could also allow the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad to become a tenant in the future.

Transit Centers – METRO currently has three transit centers, with the Downtown Transfer Center scheduled for opening on January 18, 2009. Any routes which go to downtown Akron will stop at the newly constructed Downtown Transfer Center near the intersection of South Broadway and Bartges Streets.

- Downtown Transfer Center
- Rolling Acres Mall
- Barberton
- Akron Zoo

The Rolling Acres Transit Center is the largest of the three current locations, with 10 boarding locations. It is an off-street facility that provides an indoor waiting area for passengers. It is currently served by three METRO bus routes. The Barberton and Akron Zoo Transit Centers are smaller, but they offer passenger waiting areas that are an improvement over standard bus shelters.

Park and Ride Lots – METRO currently serves eight park and ride lots, where passengers can park their cars and board METRO buses to reach their final destination. Currently, the Ghent Road and Twinsburg-Creekside park and ride lots are owned by METRO. The remaining six lots are provided through agreements with the parking lot owners. Because of the year to year uncertainty of maintaining agreements with parking lot owners, METRO has indicated that their long-term goal is to have all of their park and ride lots either owned by METRO or another public entity.

Current Park and Ride Lots and Number of Parking Spaces:

- Twinsburg – Creekside: 60
- Northfield Plaza: 10
- Holiday Inn - Hines Hill: 10
- ODOT SR 303 & SR 8: 20
- Chapel Hill: 20
- Ghent Road: 104
- Staples – Springfield: 20
- Portage Lakes Career Center – Green: 10

Rail Infrastructure

METRO owns three rail lines, totaling 51 miles in length. These rail lines were purchased in order to preserve them for future use. Possible uses include transit service, freight service, excursion rail service, or recreational trail usage. The three rail lines that METRO owns are:

- The former Conrail Akron Secondary between Hudson and Akron (Eastwood Avenue)
- The former Conrail Freedom Secondary between Akron (Mill St.) and Kent (near Mogadore Road)
- The former CSX Transportation Sandyville Line between Akron (Howard Street) and Canton (Marion Avenue SW).

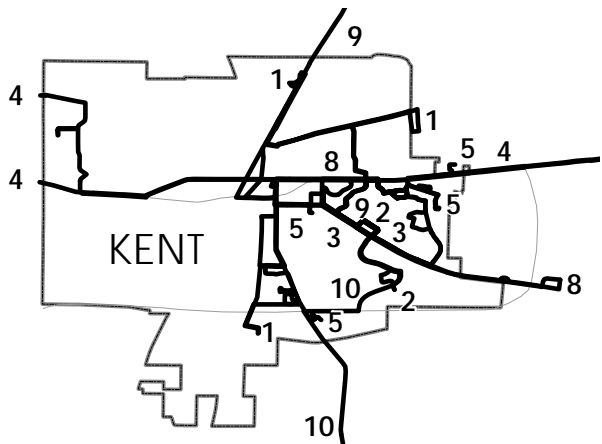
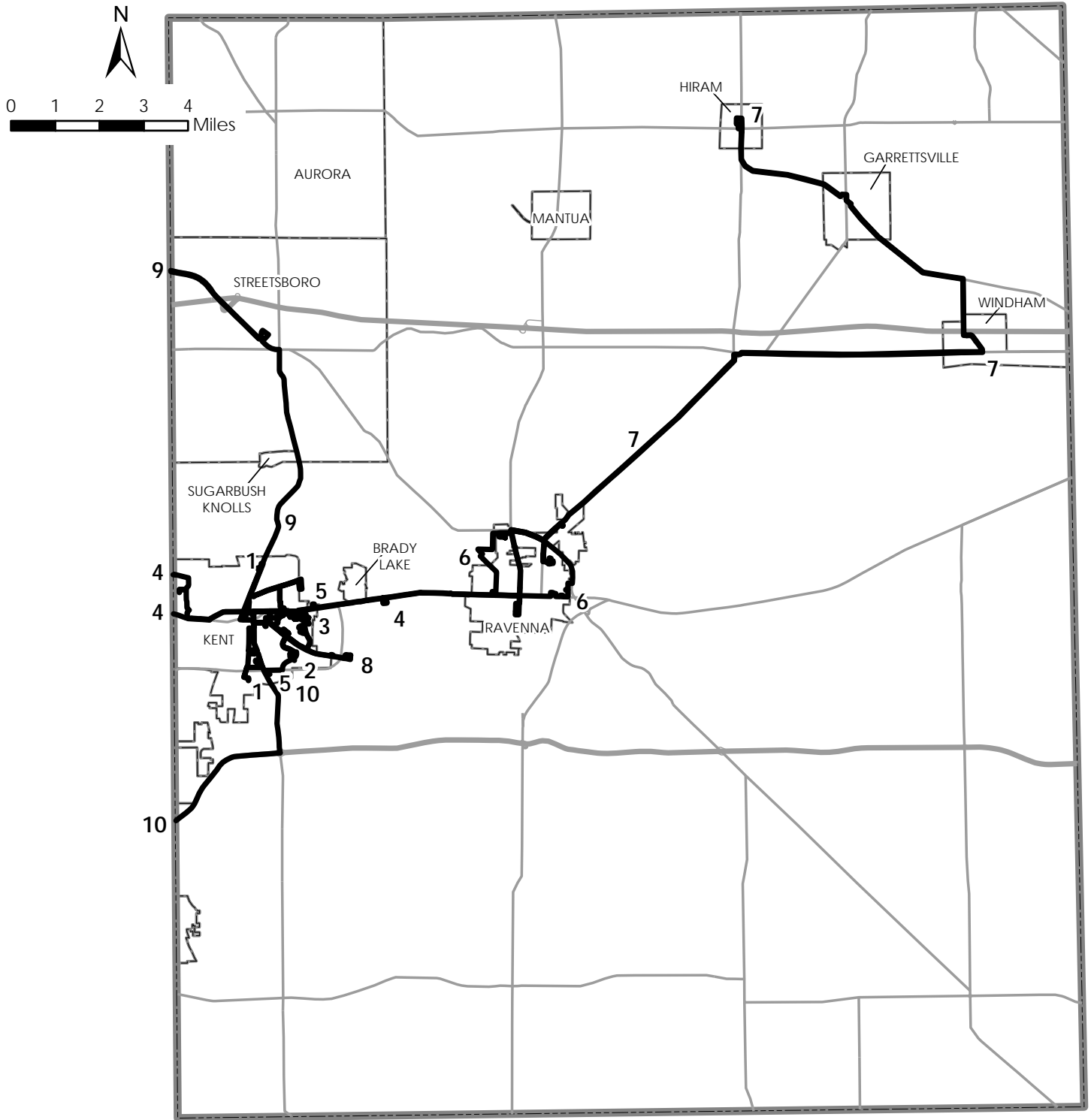
The Sandyville Line and a short section of the Freedom Secondary near Kent are in active use for local freight service. In addition, the Sandyville Line is also used by the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railway for excursion service to Canton.

Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) - Current Routes and Services

The Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) is the public transit operator for Portage County. Its operations are supported by a countywide 0.25 percent sales tax, and by service contracts with Kent State University and a number of social service agencies. PARTA's sales tax was approved in November 2001, and made permanent in 2005. As of October 2008, PARTA is operating the following types of services:

Fixed Route Service – PARTA currently operates eleven bus routes that operate on fixed alignments. Several of those routes may deviate up to 0.75 miles from those routes to pick-up or discharge passengers upon request. Two of these routes are circulators: the Southeast Kent and Ravenna routes. PARTA's fixed routes can be found on Map 2.

In 2004, PARTA assumed operation of six bus routes formerly operated by Kent State University's Campus Bus Service. This service is now operated under contract with the university. In addition to serving campus, two express routes serve Akron and Cleveland.



Route Key

- 1 - Suburban
- 2 - Allerton
- 3 - Campus Loop
- 4 - Interurban
- 5 - Kent Circulator
- 6 - Ravenna Circulator
- 7 - Ravenna / Hiram
- 8 - Stadium Loop
- 9 - Cleveland Express
- 10 - Akron Express

**Map 2
PARTA ROUTES**
 PARTA Routes

Demand Response Service – PARTA’s demand response services can be grouped into three general categories. Passengers schedule trips at least one day in advance.

- General Purpose – Door-to-door paratransit service is available to all residents of Portage County regardless of age or disability. In rural areas of the county, service is only available on specified days of the week. Reduced fares are charged for elderly and disabled riders.
- ADA complementary paratransit service is provided to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).
- Contract paratransit service is available for various social service agencies.

Portage Area Regional Transit Authority - Current Service Performance

Ridership and operational performance data, by route, was unavailable for PARTA’s services for 2007.

Table 1-4 below shows the amount of fixed route coverage available in Portage County. Service is generally concentrated around the cities of Kent and Ravenna. Much of the remainder of Portage County is rural. As seen in the table, over 74% of the population of Kent is within ¼ mile of a fixed route, including Kent State University. Sixty-one percent of Ravenna’s population is within the desired ¼ mile walking distance of a fixed route. For the cities of Aurora and Streetsboro, there is no fixed route coverage, resulting in the lack of coverage noted in the table below.

Table 1-4
2007 FIXED ROUTE TRANSIT COVERAGE
FOR PORTAGE COUNTY AND CITIES
TOTAL POPULATION

POLITICAL UNIT	TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION COVERED	PERCENT COVERAGE
Aurora	13,561	0	0.0%
Kent	28,051	20,994	74.8%
Ravenna	12,215	7,500	61.4%
Streetsboro	12,330	0	0.0%
City Total	66,158	28,494	43.1%
Non-City Total	85,903	6,355	7.4%
Portage County Total	152,061	34,849	22.9%

Note: Political unit totals are summaries of traffic zones, approximate to the actual political unit boundaries.

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, AMATS analysis

A fuller analysis of PARTA’s services was completed by the staff in 2007. The *Transit Coverage and Performance Report* was approved by the AMATS Policy Committee in September 2007.

Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority - Existing Facilities and Equipment

Table 1-5 contains a listing of PARTA’s vehicle fleet. The large buses are generally used to serve the campus routes at Kent State University. The smaller buses are lift-equipped and are used for county-wide demand response service or for the flexible fixed routes.

**Table 1-5
PARTA Fleet**

Vehicle Type	Quantity
Large Transit Buses - 30’-40’ Buses	36
Paratransit Buses - Light Duty	46
Non Revenue Vehicles - Supervisor/Staff Vehicles	7
Service Trucks	2

PARTA Facilities

Administration and Maintenance – The PARTA administration and maintenance facility is located on Summit Road in Franklin Township near the intersection of Summit Road and SR 261. It has 2 maintenance bays for performing service and repair work on PARTA’s vehicles fleet. The facility includes 3 vehicle lifts, a portable washer and indoor storage for 28 small buses and 7 large buses. Outdoor parking is available for the remainder of the PARTA fleet.

Other Public Transportation Services

Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services

SAFETEA-LU requires that the region produce a Coordinated Public Transit / Human Services Transportation Plan. The purpose of the Coordinated Plan is to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, older Americans, and individuals with lower incomes. Human service agencies that assist these groups work with the transit agencies to ensure that transportation is provided in an efficient, cost-effective manner.

Specifically, this plan is necessary for the area to obtain and utilize funds from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316), and New Freedom (Section 5317) programs. Eligible projects seeking to use these funding sources must be consistent with the Coordinated Plan.

The Section 5310 Program was established to award capital grants to private non-profit agencies to serve the transportation needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities. Towards this end, FTA provides financial assistance for transportation services planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special transportation needs of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities. Private non-profit organizations, and public transit providers who are charged with an area's coordination, are eligible to apply. The Section 5310 Program is administered by the ODOT Office of Transit as the Specialized Transportation Program.

The Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program is intended to improve access to transportation services to employment and employment related activities for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals and to transport workers to suburban employment opportunities. Eligible subrecipients of JARC funds include private non-profit organizations, state or local governments and operators of public transportation services.

The Section 5317 New Freedom Program is a new program authorized in SAFETEA-LU to support new public transportation services and public transportation alternatives beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et. seq.). Eligible subrecipients of funds include private non-profit organizations; state or local governmental authorities; and operators of public transportation services.

The Coordinated Plan seeks to bring the JARC, New Freedom and Specialized Transportation Programs together into a cohesive set of activities for the area. The Coordinated Plan for the AMATS Area was approved by the Policy Committee in May 2008.

The Coordinated Plan recommends a number of activities eligible under the JARC and New Freedom programs. The Coordinated Plan also makes recommendations pertinent

to the ODOT-administered Specialized Transportation Program (FTA Section 5310) for our area.

The following are a summary of the Coordinated Plan recommendations. The general recommendations are applicable to all of the funding categories. Program specific recommendations follow.

General Recommendations –

Develop and Maintain a Regional Mobility Management System by:

- Integrating and coordinating services for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals.
- Supporting short-term management activities to plan and implement coordinated services.
- Supporting local coordination policy bodies and councils.
- Coordinating providers and customers, and funding agencies for the operation of a transportation brokerage.
- Providing travel training for clients.
- Developing and operating one-stop transportation traveler call centers to coordinate transportation information on all travel modes and to manage eligibility requirements and arrangements for customers among supporting programs.
- Operational planning for the acquisition of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies to help plan and operate coordinated systems inclusive of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, Global Positioning System (GPS) Technology, coordinated vehicle scheduling, dispatching and monitoring technologies as well as technologies to track costs and billing in a coordinated system and single smart customer payment systems (acquisition of technology is also eligible as a stand alone capital expense).

Program Specific Recommendations -

The Coordinated Plan recommends projects that are consistent with the list of eligible activities published in each of the program circulars issued by the Federal Transit Administration. The following recommended projects are contained in the area's Coordinated Plan, approved by the AMATS Policy Committee in May 2008.

JARC Recommendations:

1. Supporting new mobility management and coordination programs.
2. Expansion of fixed-route public transit routes.
3. Integrating automated regional public transit and human service transportation information, scheduling and dispatch functions.

4. Implementing Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).
5. Demand-responsive van service.
6. Late-night and weekend public transportation service.
7. Ridesharing and carpooling activities.
8. Subsidizing the costs associated with adding reverse commute bus routes or service from urbanized areas and non-urbanized areas to suburban work places.

New Freedom Recommendations:

1. New public transportation services beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements: enhanced paratransit (door-to-door) service.
2. Making accessibility improvements to transit and intermodal stations not designated as key stations: new accessibility enhancements that remove barriers to individuals with disabilities so they may access greater portions of public transportation systems, such as fixed-route bus service.
3. New public transportation alternatives beyond the ADA: Supporting new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation.

Specialized Transportation Program Recommendations:

1. Supporting new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies that provide transportation.
2. Transit-related intelligent transportation system (ITS) improvements.
3. Capital expenses so that social service agencies can obtain vehicles to transport the elderly and disabled. Vehicle procurement for human/social service agencies has been the traditional criterion for this program. The vehicles are necessary to meet the unmet needs or gaps in service of the public transportation provider if there is one available in the area.

The FTA Section 5310 Elderly and Disabled Program is managed by the ODOT Office of Transit as the “Specialized Transportation Program.” The ODOT Office of Transit is responsible for the development of the program criteria and final project selection. The recommendations listed above may or may not be chosen by ODOT for final approval. ODOT is currently restructuring the program. The FTA 5310 Program allows a wide

range of eligible program activities. However, in the past, ODOT Office of Transit has emphasized the procurement of vehicles for social service agencies in transporting the elderly and disabled. A number of social service agencies currently operate vehicles awarded through the FTA 5310 Program.

PARTA was recently awarded JARC and New Freedom funds to assist in the implementation of a mobility management system in Portage County. PARTA intends to use these funds for planning, computer hardware and software for the further development and integration of the area's coordinated scheduling and dispatch functions. JARC and New Freedom funds will also be used for the acquisition of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology to be shared with the area's social service agencies. Following full-scale implementation in Portage County, METRO RTA will also be participating in this mobility management system and the acquisition of compatible ITS technology.

At present, METRO RTA uses JARC funds for operating expenses to continue their current transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low-income individuals to and from jobs, allowing residents of urban centers to access suburban employment opportunities. METRO has worked with the Summit County Department of Jobs and Family Services since 1998 to provide regular fixed route as well as targeted demand-response trips for low-income workers.

The AMATS Staff intends to hold annual project selection for JARC and New Freedom funds for the area. Under the direction of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Subcommittee, the staff will pursue the implementation of the recommendations of the area's Coordinated Plan as discussed above. The prime recommendation of the Coordinated Plan is the institution of a mobility management system for the area.

OhioRideshare

Initially launched in 2007, the OhioRideshare Program is a free on-line carpool matching service sponsored by AMATS, and its counterparts to the north and east, NOACA and Eastgate, serving thirteen counties in Northeast Ohio. The program web site can be found at www.ohiorideshare.com.

The OhioRideshare Program succeeds the Rideshare! Program sponsored by ODOT through the Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) Program. There are currently 650 commuters registered as participants in the OhioRideshare Program. Additional information and the recommended continuation of the OhioRideshare Program can be found in the Congestion Management Process Report.

Chapter II

Identifying System Preservation Recommendations

The AMATS Goals and Objectives identify preserving the existing transportation system as a top priority. System preservation requires both continued operating expenditures and investments in capital assets. This chapter provides a general description and cost estimates for each type of preservation need over the life of *Transportation Outlook*. The preservation recommendations for METRO RTA are shown in Table 2-1. The preservation recommendations for PARTA, along with the area's other preservation needs, are shown in Table 2-2.

Capital Needs

Bus Fleet Replacements

The replacement of vehicles used in operations is a major capital expense for transit operators. In order to determine the number of buses METRO and PARTA will need to replace through 2030, replacement schedules have been completed in coordination with the RTAs. Based on these schedules, METRO will need to purchase 212 large (30'-45') transit buses and 339 small paratransit buses at an estimated total cost of \$98.8 million. METRO's planned bus replacements include those buses needed to resume service that was cut over the last several years due to budget constraints and declining sales tax revenue.

PARTA will need to purchase 34 large transit buses and 176 small buses at an estimated cost of \$24.6 million over the life of *Transportation Outlook* in order to maintain current levels of service.

Non-Revenue Service Vehicle Replacement

Non-revenue vehicles are used by the administrative, supervisory and maintenance staff of METRO and PARTA in their role of supporting transit operations. It is estimated that METRO will need \$722,500 and that PARTA will need \$873,000 in order to replace non-revenue vehicles through 2030.

Maintenance and Rehabilitation of Existing Facilities

Major repairs and rehabilitation of the existing capital facilities of METRO and PARTA are summarized in Tables 2-1 and 2-2. In order to maintain these facilities, several rehabilitation projects will need to be completed through 2030. PARTA expects to spend \$2 million on the rehabilitation of their Administration and Service Building. METRO anticipates spending \$13.3 million on a number of projects over the life of *Transportation Outlook*.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PRESERVATION
RECOMMENDATIONS**

2010 through 2030

Table 2-1

METRO RTA

Description	Total Cost	
Capital		
1. Bus Replacements		
204 Large Transit Buses (30'-40')	\$	68,340,000
8 Commuter Transit Buses (45')	\$	5,000,000
339 Small Paratransit Buses (LTVs)	\$	25,425,000
2. Non-Revenue Vehicle Replacements		
Supervisor/Staff Vehicles & Service Trucks	\$	682,500
Hi-Rail Truck	\$	40,000
3. Rehabilitation of Existing Facilities	\$	13,300,000
4. Farebox Replacement	\$	2,500,000
5. Radio System Replacement	\$	3,000,000
6. Shop Equipment	\$	250,000
7. Computer Hardware	\$	250,000
8. Security Cameras on Buses	\$	2,040,000
9. Park and Ride Lot Maintenance and Rehab	\$	500,000
10. Bus Stop Shelters/Benches	\$	840,000
11. Bus Stop Signs	\$	25,000
TOTAL - Capital		\$ 122,192,500
Operating		
1. Preventive Maintenance Expenses	\$	115,500,000
2. Leasing Expenses	\$	2,100,000
3. Planning Expenses	\$	3,150,000
4. Safety and Security	\$	525,000
5. Remaining Operating Expenses - Labor, Fuel, Utilities	\$	687,225,000
TOTAL - Operating		\$ 808,500,000
TOTAL - Capital and Operating		\$ 930,692,500

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

2010 through 2030

Table 2-2

PARTA

Description	Total Cost
Capital	
1. Bus Replacements	
34 Large Transit Buses (30'-40')	\$ 11,390,000
176 Small Buses (LTVs)	\$ 13,200,000
2. Non-Revenue Vehicle Replacements	
Staff Vehicles	\$ 300,000
Supervisor Vans	\$ 300,000
Service Trucks	\$ 273,000
3. Rehab PARTA Administration and Service Bldg	\$ 2,000,000
4. Shop Equipment	\$ 500,000
5. Computer Hardware	\$ 250,000
6. Dispatching Software Upgrade	\$ 300,000
7. Bus Stop Shelters/Benches	\$ 100,000
8. Bus Stop Signs	\$ 15,000
TOTAL - Capital	\$ 28,628,000
Operating	
1. Preventive Maintenance Expenses	\$ 13,230,000
2. Planning Expenses	\$ 1,680,000
3. Safety and Security	\$ 3,423,000
4. Remaining Operating Expenses - Labor, Fuel, Utilities	\$ 140,301,000
TOTAL - Operating	\$ 158,634,000
TOTAL - PARTA Capital and Operating	\$ 187,262,000

Other

Description	Total Cost
Coordinated Public Transit Human Services	
1. Specialized Transportation Program (FTA Sec. 5310)	\$ 2,100,000
2. Job Access Reverse Commute Service (FTA Sec. 5316)	\$ 10,500,000
3. New Freedom (FTA Sec. 5317)	\$ 4,725,000
TOTAL - Other	\$ 17,325,000

The following projects comprise METRO's rehabilitation needs:

- Rehabilitation work for the METRO administration building - \$500,000
- Rehabilitation of METRO bus garages - \$3.5 million
- Rehabilitation work on METRO's Sandyville Rail Line - \$5.3 million
- Replacement of METRO's Backup Generator - \$250,000
- Replacement of METRO's Diesel Fuel Tanks - \$500,000
- Replacement of METRO's CNG Compressors - \$1 million
- METRO Facility Asphalt - \$500,000
- Replacement of METRO's Wash Rack - \$750,000
- Replacement of METRO's Hoist System - \$1 million

The rehabilitation work on the Sandyville rail line includes bridge replacements, tie and rail replacements, and other track surfacing work. The rail projects will allow the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railway service to Canton to be maintained.

Farebox Replacement

Between now and 2030, it is anticipated that METRO will need to replace their existing fare collection equipment. The cost to do this is estimated to be \$2.5 million. The new system will allow the implementation of smart card technology.

Radio System Replacement

METRO anticipates that they will need to upgrade their radio system before 2030. The estimated cost to do this is \$3 million.

Shop Equipment

In order to maintain buses, a variety of shop equipment is required. Over the life of *Transportation Outlook*, the cost to replace obsolete equipment is estimated to be \$250,000 for METRO and \$500,000 for PARTA.

Computer Hardware

METRO and PARTA each expect to spend \$250,000 on computer hardware over the life of *Transportation Outlook*.

Computer Software

PARTA intends to spend \$300,000 upgrading its dispatching software in the next several years.

Security Cameras on Buses

In order to provide security for passengers and drivers, METRO installs cameras in all new transit buses. The cost per bus is \$8,000. Over the life of *Transportation Outlook*, the cost to equip all of the replacement buses identified above is approximately \$2 million. PARTA orders their buses with security cameras, and the costs are included in the bus replacement cost estimates discussed above.

Park and Ride Lot Maintenance and Rehabilitation

In order to maintain its current park and ride lots at Ghent Road and at Twinsburg-Creekside, METRO intends to spend \$500,000.

Bus Stop Shelters, Benches and Signs

METRO and PARTA have identified the following bus stop related needs between 2010 and 2030:

- METRO Bus Stop Shelters and Benches - \$840,000
- METRO Bus Stop Signs - \$25,000
- PARTA Bus Stop Shelters and Benches - \$100,000
- PARTA Bus Stop Signs - \$15,000

Operating Needs

Preventive Maintenance

Preventive maintenance expenses are those related to the maintenance of buses, other types of vehicles, buildings, and other capital equipment. While preventive maintenance is listed as an operating function, the FTA allows expenditures to be funded as an eligible capital expense. METRO estimates its preventive maintenance expenses through 2030 will be \$115.5 million, and PARTA estimates that its preventive maintenance expenses for the same period will be \$13.2 million.

Leasing Expenses

Transit operators frequently find it useful to lease, rather than purchase, bus tires, office space and equipment, vehicles, and other items. METRO estimates that its leasing expenses through 2030 will be \$2.1 million. Currently, PARTA does not lease tires or equipment.

Planning Expenses

Transit authorities conduct a variety of planning related activities including monitoring and analyzing ridership and revenue data; evaluating new services and modifications to existing services; conducting passenger and community surveys; and applying for and administering grants. METRO and PARTA anticipate that their expenses for planning activities will be \$3.2 million and \$1.7 million, respectively, through 2030.

Safety and Security Expenses

METRO's and PARTA's safety and security operating expenses through 2030 are estimated to \$525,000 and \$3.4 million respectively. PARTA's expenses are higher than METRO's due to having personnel specifically assigned to security related matters.

General Operating Expenses

The remaining operating expenses for METRO and PARTA include items such as driver wages and benefits, administrative staff salaries, fuel and other material, utilities and insurance. These items make up the bulk of operating expenses. METRO estimates that their general operating expenses through 2030 will be \$687.2 million and PARTA estimates that same expenses will be \$140.3 million for the same period.

Other Preservation Needs

Coordinated Public Transit Human Services

As discussed earlier in this report, the purpose of the area's Coordinated Plan is to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, older Americans, and individuals with lower incomes. Human service agencies that assist these groups work with the transit agencies to ensure that transportation is provided in an efficient, cost-effective manner.

Specifically, the Coordinated Plan utilizes funds from the FTA's Elderly and Disabled (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316), and New Freedom (Section 5317) Programs. Funding from these programs will be used to pursue the recommendations of the Coordinated Plan. It is estimated that the area will expend \$17.3 million through 2030, in meeting the goals of the Coordinated Plan

Summary – Preservation Recommendations

METRO RTA is estimated to expend \$122.2 million to preserve their capital stock over the life of *Transportation Outlook*, with operating expenses of \$808.5 million. See Table 2-1.

PARTA is estimated to expend \$28.6 million to preserve their capital stock over the life of *Transportation Outlook*, with operating expenses of \$158.6 million. See Table 2-2.

It is estimated that \$17.3 million is needed to implement and preserve the recommendations and current service associated with the area's Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Plan.

Chapter III

Identifying System Expansion Recommendations

The following opportunities to expand the area's transit service have been identified based on the *Transit Coverage and Performance Report*, as well as input from the AMATS Plan Update Subcommittee. The suggested improvements discussed below are offered without consideration to the availability of funds. Some of the suggested improvements may only be considered when additional funding becomes available. Tables 3-1 and 3-2 present the area's public transportation expansion recommendations.

Coverage and Service Expansion

Regional Service Opportunities

Extension of service hours

If operating funds are available, METRO and PARTA may both have an opportunity to expand the morning start and evening end times of their fixed bus routes to cover the first shift start times and second shift ending times of the area's businesses. Additional routes are needed to run at or before 5:30 a.m. Additional routes may also be needed until 12 midnight or even later.

Currently, with many companies having second or third shifts, many employees are not able to use public transportation to get to work. Extending the service hours of METRO and PARTA's fixed routes will provide greater options to the unemployed and low-income population.

Inter-county transit service

There is also a need for greater connectivity by means of inter-county transit service. Because of the movement of jobs and of concentrations of retail, service and industry to more outlying areas (such as the Stow-Kent area, and the Brimfield area), more people would benefit in reaching these locations. Residents of Portage County may wish to travel to nearby portions of Summit County. And residents of Summit County may wish to travel to nearby portions of Portage County.

To the west, express service from Wadsworth may capture commuters who travel to Akron for work, alleviating congestion in the I-76 corridor. AMATS recommends that this service only be implemented if a transit needs study be completed. Once this is completed the route should only be implemented on an experimental basis to gauge ridership demand. In addition, some form of financial support should be obtained from the City of Wadsworth, as their residents would be the primary beneficiaries of this service. METRO will also need to coordinate implementation of this service with NOACA, the MPO for Medina County. It is estimated that this service would require two additional commuter buses at a cost of \$1.3 million and \$5.3 million in operating expenses over the life of *Transportation Outlook*.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION EXPANSION
RECOMMENDATIONS
2010 through 2030**

Table 3-1

METRO RTA

Description	Total Cost
Capital	
1. Improved Frequency on Local Bus Routes (20 buses)	\$ 6,700,000
2. Crosstown Bus Routes (15 buses, 3 routes)	\$ 5,025,000
3. Neighborhood Circulators (24 buses, 6 routes)	\$ 1,800,000
4. SCAT Restructuring (5 buses)	\$ 500,000
5. More Frequent Express Bus Service (7 buses)	\$ 4,550,000
6. Wadsworth Service (2 buses)	\$ 1,300,000
7. Feasibility Study of Rail Service from Akron to Cleveland	\$ 100,000
8. Additional Facilities	
SCAT Facility	\$ 5,000,000
New employee parking lot	\$ 1,000,000
9. Mobility Management / ITS Technology	\$ 1,500,000
10. Park and Ride Lots	
Cuyahoga Falls Park and Ride Lot	\$ 1,500,000
Boston Hts./Hudson Park and Ride Lot	\$ 1,000,000
11. Bus Route Terminal Facilities	\$ 2,000,000
12. Additional Bus Garage	\$ 3,000,000
13. Automatic Vehicle Locator System Phase #3	\$ 1,000,000
14. Security Improvements at Admin./Maint. Facility	\$ 250,000
15. Land	
Employee Parking Lot Expansion	\$ 750,000
TOTAL - Capital \$ 36,975,000	
Operating	
Additional Annual Operating Costs for Expanded Service:	
1. Improved Frequency on Local Bus Routes	\$ 105,000,000
2. Crosstown Bus Routes	\$ 4,200,000
3. Neighborhood Circulators	\$ 10,500,000
4. SCAT Restructuring	\$ 3,150,000
5. More Frequent Express Bus Service	\$ 10,500,000
6. Wadsworth Service	\$ 5,250,000
TOTAL - Operating \$ 138,600,000	
TOTAL - METRO Capital and Operating \$ 175,575,000	

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION EXPANSION
RECOMMENDATIONS
2010 through 2030**

Table 3-2

PARTA

Description	Total Cost
Capital	
1. New Service to Adjacent Counties - 2 Additional Buses	\$ 670,000
2. Changes to Existing Routes - 8 Additional Buses	\$ 2,680,000
3. Improvements to Summit Road Admin./Maint. Facility	\$ 750,000
4. Mobility Management / ITS Technology Upgrades	\$ 5,000,000
5. Automatic Vehicle Washing Facility	\$ 1,000,000
6. Park and Ride Lots	
Streetsboro Park and Ride Lot	\$ 1,500,000
Brimfield Park and Ride Lot	\$ 1,500,000
7. Downtown Kent Transit Center	\$ 6,500,000
TOTAL - Capital	\$ 19,600,000
Operating	
Additional Annual Operating Costs for Expanded Service:	
1. New Service to Adjacent Counties	\$ 7,350,000
2. Expansion of Existing Routes	\$ 6,720,000
3. Downtown Kent Transit Center	\$ 4,200,000
TOTAL - Operating	\$ 18,270,000
TOTAL - PARTA Capital and Operating	\$ 37,870,000

In addition, more people would profit from connections to the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA). The nearby communities of Bedford and Solon possess a high density of shopping and employment locations. More people in Summit and Portage Counties would benefit from inter-county service in reaching these destinations, and then also gain greater access to the entire GCRTA system.

This report does not attempt to determine the precise routes or the appropriate agency for implementing these services. If funds become available at a later date, the interested transit agencies may wish to entertain viable alternatives in implementing inter-county transit service.

Service Opportunities for METRO RTA

METRO provides service to most of the people in Summit County. The service provided by METRO's fixed routes could be increased in terms of the frequency of routes throughout the day, and as stated above, in terms of providing service over a longer period of the day. Also, the service provided by METRO's current linear configuration of its system routes could be augmented by adding some routes that do not radiate from downtown Akron. Opportunities for enhancing METRO's service are discussed below.

Increase Service Frequency of Local Bus Routes

METRO intends to increase the frequency of some its local bus routes. In recent years METRO was forced to cut service because of the stagnant Summit County sales tax that provides operating funds to METRO. Unfortunately, it was even necessary to cut service that was highly productive. In March 2008, voters passed a levy to provide additional funds to METRO. These funds will allow METRO to restore service that was cut, and to make further expansions of routes with solid ridership. In particular, METRO will increase the number of trips per day (increased headways) on selected routes. Expanded service requires additional capital expenses (buses) and additional operating expenses (fuel, labor). Table 3-1 presents the expansion recommendations, and the costs associated with them.

Increase Service Frequency of Express Routes

METRO may wish to consider increasing the frequency of their existing express route service to Cleveland. It is recommended that service levels on the X60 and X61 initially be brought up to 30-minute frequencies in the morning and afternoon. Also, the formation of at least one midday round trip on each route is recommended to improve mobility for riders with destinations in either Akron or Cleveland. One concern of METRO users is the possibility of being stranded in Cleveland for the entire day or evening because of the limited opportunity for a return trip to Akron.

Increased express service is identified as an alternative in the Congestion Management Process (CMP) Report. Express service in the I-77 corridor could remove single occupancy vehicles during rush hour.

Initiate Crosstown Bus Routes

METRO may also wish to consider additional crosstown routes that do not go to downtown Akron in the standard radial pattern. The need for additional crosstown routes is to ensure that riders are not required to come to downtown Akron and then go back out again to the suburban areas. To that end, METRO may wish to examine crosstown routes in the near south, east and west portions of Summit County near, or along, the Akron corporate limits. For example, a bus route in the SR 91 corridor extending to Hudson or Twinsburg may be useful, and provide some mitigation of traffic congestion in the area.

Service Opportunities for PARTA

The lower population density of Portage County offers unique challenges to PARTA. Due to the lower population density in Portage County (only 43% of the population lives in cities), it is more difficult to provide fixed route transit service that is cost effective. As a result, the majority of PARTA's service in the non-urban areas is door to door demand response service. This service is more expensive than fixed route transit service, but more closely tracks with the needs of the county. Because of the expense of the service, coordination with multiple funding sources and providers is necessary to service the large area.

PARTA serves 23% of the population of Portage County with fixed bus routes. Currently there is no such service to two of the larger, growing cities in the county, Aurora and Streetsboro. Since the employment opportunities in both communities are geographically disperse, traditional fixed routes may not be effective. Creative demand response service would allow the people of Portage County access to the retail, service, and industrial jobs in Aurora and Streetsboro.

Expanded service in Northwestern Portage County

PARTA may wish to investigate expanded demand response service to the cities of Aurora and Streetsboro. Because of the increases in commercial activity in the northwestern part of the county, this area has a need for employees from other areas of Portage County. Low-income areas in Kent, Ravenna, and Windham are potential sources of employees for this area. Since much of the development in the Aurora/Streetsboro area is unfriendly to pedestrian or traditional fixed route transit access, creative alternatives should be explored.

Facilities and Equipment Expansion

Facilities

METRO would like to expand their demand response (SCAT) presence in Northern Summit County. In order to provide the level of service that they would like, a facility to house and service their light transit vehicles would help in reaching this goal. The estimated cost for a facility of this nature is \$5 million. METRO has also identified two

areas where they need to construct terminal facilities for their bus routes. Currently, buses in these areas layover on private property, where they are subject to eviction on short notice. These proposed terminal facilities would include an off-street turnaround and layover area for buses and a small waiting area for passengers. These terminals could provide a common location for multiple routes to terminate, which would allow for easy transfers. These terminal facilities are estimated to cost \$1 million each.

In addition, METRO would like to expand their employee parking area. Estimated cost is \$750,000 for the property and \$1 million for the improvements. An additional bus garage would cost \$3 million.

PARTA would need to expand their Summit Road Facility to accommodate their vehicle fleet and service areas. Estimates to improve their main facility are \$2.7 million to improve the buildings and \$1 million to add an automatic vehicle washing facility.

Park and Ride Lots

Park and ride lots are not only vital to public transportation; they serve a vital part of the Congestion Management Process. METRO and PARTA have each identified two locations that they would like to construct park and ride lots.

- Cuyahoga Falls – near SR 8: \$1.5 million
- Boston Heights/Hudson: \$1 million
- Streetsboro: \$1.5 million
- Brimfield – near I-76: \$1.5 million

Mobility Management and ITS Improvements

Integral to the development of the Coordinated Plan recommendations is the acquisition of appropriate technologies. METRO and PARTA have both identified hardware and software necessary for the phased implementation of a mobility management system for the area. The mobility management system would involve Global Positioning System (GPS) and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) technologies, improved public communications and web organization, customer service and dispatch services. The area's social service agencies would participate in this integrated system.

Summary – Expansion Recommendations

This report recommends an estimated \$37 million to expand the capital stock of METRO RTA over the life of *Transportation Outlook*, with additional operating expenses of \$138.6 million. See Table 3-1.

It is recommended that PARTA spend an estimated \$19.6 million to expand their capital stock over the life of *Transportation Outlook*, with additional operating expenses of \$18.3 million. See Table 3-2.

Chapter IV

Summary

This report describes and analyzes the existing public transportation system of the area, and the coverage provided by METRO and PARTA. In addition, this report has identified the capital and operating needs for 1) preserving the existing public transportation system; and for 2) strategically expanding that system.

A total of \$1.1 billion in capital and operating preservation needs, and a total of \$213.4 million in capital and operating expansion needs, have been identified for public transportation in the AMATS area between 2010 and 2030.

The needs included in this report will be considered for inclusion in the financially constrained, *Transportation Outlook*, the area's Regional Transportation Plan. Projects included in *Transportation Outlook* will be eligible to use federal funds.

Appendix
Public Comments



Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
806 CitiCenter • 146 S. High Street
Akron, OH 44308-1423
Phone: (330) 375-2436 • Fax: (330) 375-2275
Web Site: www.ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/



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