



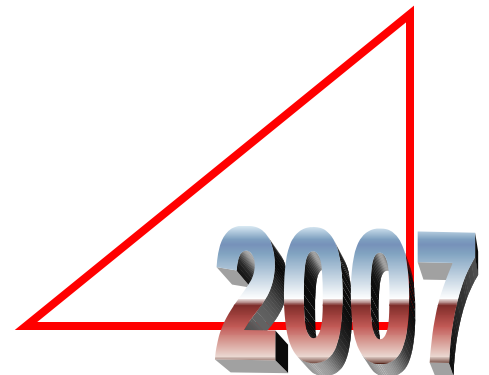
# Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study



# Public Participation Plan



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AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY  
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This report is the product of a study financed (in part) by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and the Ohio Department of Transportation.

The contents of this report reflect the views of the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study, which is responsible for the facts, and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of the U.S. Department of Transportation. This report does not constitute a standard, specification or regulation.

Cooperative transportation planning by the Village, City and County governments of Portage and Summit Counties and the Chipewewa Township area of Wayne County; in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Ohio Department of Transportation.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study, (AMATS), is one of the 17 transportation planning agencies in Ohio. These, and similar agencies throughout the United States were established as a result of the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act. One of the provisions of this piece of legislation was to require urban areas with more than 50,000 residents to establish a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (or “3-C”) transportation planning process in order to receive federal funding for transportation improvements.

AMATS is composed of three committees and a technical staff. The Policy Committee is the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for Summit County, Portage County, and Chippewa Township in Wayne County. It is comprised of mayors, county officials, transit authority chairpersons, and regional and state agency representatives. As the MPO, the Policy Committee is responsible for directing the “3-C” transportation planning process in the Akron metropolitan area and for making decisions on regional transportation policies, plans, and programs. Assisting the Policy Committee in the planning process are the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) and the Technical Staff.

The Policy Committee believes public participation in the transportation planning process is of paramount importance. It ensures that projects and planning activities evolve from and address regional transportation needs. By providing an open forum, a two-way channel of communication can flow freely, and provide a voice for the public. It allows the general public to have access and participate as well as give an opportunity to those who are traditionally underserved (such as minority or low income populations) to have a voice in the planning process, thus resulting in a more informed and legitimate decision making process. Hearing how the public feels allows the Policy Committee to make better decisions.

AMATS administers a regional planning process for recommending and financing transportation improvements and strategies in the area. After the Regional Transportation Plan is completed and projects are included in the Transportation Improvement Program, project sponsors are expected to continue to work with and involve the public through the remainder of project development.

The most recent federal transportation law, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), provides the opportunity to re-evaluate the Public Involvement Policy that has been developed with the interests of the public in mind. The *Public Participation Plan* builds on the previous Public Involvement Policy and is designed to:

- Seek and consider input from interested citizens in the AMATS region
- Provide public access to the decision making process
- Provide timely public notice of meetings
- Provide information to citizens on the transportation planning process

- Conduct meetings in locations and a manner which is accessible for all citizens
- Employ visualization techniques to make public information available in electronically accessible format and means (such as the World Wide Web).

The purpose of the AMATS *Public Participation Plan* is to engage the public in developing and updating the Regional Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The objective is to use a variety of effective means to provide early and continuing involvement with the public.

This *Public Participation Plan* contains four main chapters that give an overview of the opportunities available for the public to be more involved in the transportation planning process.

# CHAPTER I

## AMATS COMMITTEES

The Policy Committee is the designated MPO for Summit County, Portage County, and Chippewa Township in Wayne County. The Policy Committee directs the overall planning process by administering and developing transportation plans, policies and programs. The committee is comprised of mayors, county officials, transit authority chairpersons and regional and state agency representatives. The Policy Committee has regularly scheduled meetings throughout the year that are open to the public. Assisting the Policy Committee in the planning process are the Technical Advisory Committee, the Citizens Involvement Committee and the Staff.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) advises the Policy Committee on matters relating to policies, plans, and programs. It is made up of county and city engineers, planners, traffic engineers, transit operators, regional and state agency representatives, representatives of private providers of transportation, and the environmental community.

The Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) advises the Policy Committee on transportation matters of public interest. CIC membership is open to all area residents and anyone is eligible to join. The CIC reviews and comments on transportation matters and provides input to the Policy Committee.

The current year's meeting schedule is posted on the AMATS website at the beginning of each year and is updated when needed.

The Policy Committee is supported by the Staff, which is comprised primarily of planners and engineers. The Staff generates forecasts, reports and project recommendations for consideration by the Policy Committee.



## CHAPTER II

### GENERAL PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Policy Committee believes that public participation is a vital component of the transportation planning process. Three ways to access this process are Policy Committee meetings, Citizens Involvement Committee meetings, and electronic communications. To avoid inefficiencies and to maintain orderly and effective public participation, guidelines have been established to aid this process.

#### Policy Committee

First and foremost, public participation is welcomed at the Policy Committee meetings, and audience participation is included as an agenda item at each meeting.

#### Policy Committee Meetings

To enable public participation that is orderly and effective, the following criteria must be followed:

- The public is encouraged to limit their comments to items on the agenda for that meeting.
- Members of the public wishing to address the committee must register their intent by completing the sign in sheet prior to the start of each meeting.
- Public comment will be limited to three minutes per person.
- Anyone desiring more time to discuss an agenda item must contact the AMATS Study Director or Transportation Planning Administrator by the Friday preceding the committee meeting so that they may be allocated a maximum of five minutes.
- Organized groups wishing to address the AMATS Policy Committee should select a representative to present the group's position to the committee.
- The total maximum allotted time for the public comment period is up to the Chairman's discretion.
- The AMATS Policy Committee Chairman reserves the right to terminate comments or ask any individual to end their comment.
- Members of the public who would like to present written comments to the Committee, may submit their comments at any time up to the day before the Committee meeting.
- Thirty-five copies of written comments are needed for distribution to all members of the committee in order to receive proper consideration.

The opportunity for public comment at the AMATS Policy Committee is not intended, nor should members of the public expect to initiate debate with the committee, an individual member or presenter, or members of the AMATS Staff. Likewise, members of the public should not expect immediate responses to any questions, concerns, or comments provided. At the Chairman's discretion, comments may be referred to the committee or the Staff for further consideration.

### Technical Advisory Committee

The TAC meetings do not include audience participation, but the public is welcome to attend these meetings.

### Citizens Involvement Committee

The overall task of the Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) is to involve the public in the transportation planning and decision making process in the AMATS region. Membership is open to anyone in the AMATS region. Members can either be voluntary or be appointed.

Some of the duties of a CIC member are to:

- Provide a forum for the Staff to disseminate information about plans or upcoming decisions regarding transportation.
- Make recommendations to the Policy Committee.
- Assist with special public involvement meetings.

### Citizens Involvement Committee Meetings

The CIC conducts its regularly scheduled meetings in the evening so that it is convenient for the public to attend. The meetings are held in locations that are accessible for all citizens, including the disabled and transit dependent. Approximately seven days prior to the meeting, a paid advertisement announcing the date, time and location of the CIC meeting as well as any special topics, is placed in the Akron *Beacon Journal*. The advertisement briefly describes the agenda and encourages the public to attend.

### Electronic access to the Planning Process

Among the many avenues to actively participate in the transportation planning process is the use of the World Wide Web and the many tools available on it. The AMATS website, located at <http://ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/>, is used as a tool to communicate with the public over the Internet. The website contains important documents such as the TIP, the Regional Transportation Plan, congestion studies and many other reports AMATS produces. An up to date Policy Committee Agenda, quarterly newsletter, and schedule of all upcoming AMATS committee meetings are also provided on the website. The agency's E-mail address is [amats@ci.akron.oh.us](mailto:amats@ci.akron.oh.us). In addition to the website, the public can contact AMATS by phone at 330-375-2436.

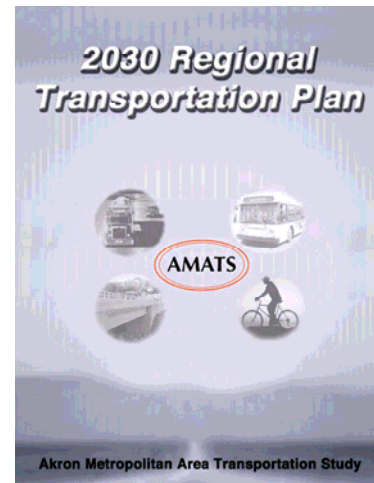
## CHAPTER III

### REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

A primary responsibility of AMATS is to prepare and maintain a Regional Transportation Plan that meets the travel needs of the region. This Plan ensures that proposed transportation improvements are coordinated and support area-wide goals and objectives. The planning process provides for a clear understanding of both the positive and negative impacts of proposed transportation improvements and supports the orderly development of the region. The Plan is updated every four years.

In addition, the Plan acts as a guide to state and local officials in implementing transportation improvements with Federal funds. This is because a project must be included in the Regional Transportation Plan in order to qualify for funding assistance from the Federal Highway Administration or the Federal Transit Administration.

The development of the Regional Transportation Plan is completed in three steps. The first step is to identify transportation problems and determine possible solutions. The second step is to develop a series of recommendations, which take the form of a draft Plan. The last step is to adopt a final Regional Transportation Plan that contains a list of recommendations and strategies.



#### Draft Regional Transportation Plan

During the development of the Regional Transportation Plan, the public will be provided the opportunity to comment on local and regional transportation problems and offer alternatives for solving the problems. Once the draft Plan has been completed, AMATS will:

- Hold at least two public meetings, one in Summit County and one in Portage County.
- Send news releases to newspapers, radio and television stations
- Place paid advertisements in newspapers in Summit and Portage Counties including:
  - the *Akron Beacon Journal*
  - the *Kent-Ravenna Record Courier*
  - *The Reporter*
- Send notifications to:
  - Neighborhood and community groups and social service agencies
  - Private providers of public transportation

- Common carriers (both trucking and rail) serving the AMATS area
  - METRO Regional Transit Authority and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority requesting that their employees be informed.
  - Local and Regional airports serving the AMATS area
  - Environmental Resource Agencies
- Make available a copy of the draft Plan for a 30 day comment period at the:
    - AMATS Office located at 146 South High Street, Room 806 of the CitiCenter Building in Akron
    - Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority office located at 2000 Summit Road in Kent, Ohio
    - ODOT District 4 office located at 2088 South Arlington Road in Akron
    - AMATS website

Comments received during the review of the draft Plan will be presented to the Policy Committee for consideration before adopting the final Plan.

Notification of Policy Committee action on the final Plan will take place through news releases, the agency newsletter (*The AMATS Quarterly*) and the website.

#### Availability of the Plan

The Plan will be available at the AMATS office located at 146 South High Street, Room 806 of the CitiCenter Building in Akron and will be posted on the AMATS website.

#### Amending the Plan

Periodically, state or local officials request that the approved Plan be modified, or that a project recommendation be added or dropped. Such requests will be identified as either a major or minor amendment. The individual amendment determines which public involvement procedure is appropriate.

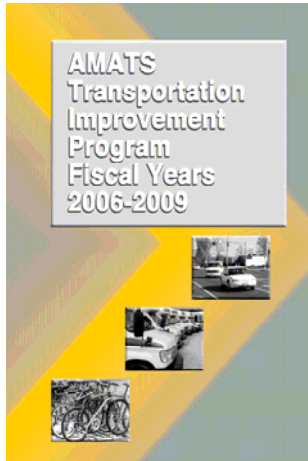
If the amendment involves a project recommendation that includes a new interchange; a new roadway or lane addition greater than one mile in length; commuter rail; busways; or has a significant impact on air quality, then it will be considered a major amendment and public involvement for the amendment will follow the same procedures as the draft Plan.

However, if the amendment does not include a project such as one previously mentioned, it will be considered a minor amendment, and will be discussed at a regularly scheduled CIC meeting for public consideration and comment prior to Policy Committee action.

Once adopted, the amendments will be included in the Plan and will be posted on the website.

## CHAPTER IV

### TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



A key publication from AMATS transportation planning and project development activities is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP, which draws from the Regional Transportation Plan, is a comprehensive listing of specific transportation improvement projects scheduled for implementation over a four-year time span. The TIP is updated every two years.

#### Draft TIP

During the development of the TIP, the public will be provided the opportunity to comment and be involved in the decision-making process leading to the adoption of the TIP. Once the draft TIP has been completed, the following actions will be taken to inform the public:

- Hold a public meeting during the two week public comment period
- Place paid advertisements approximately 30 days prior to expected action by the Policy Committee in newspapers in Summit and Portage Counties such as:
  - the *Akron Beacon Journal*
  - the *Kent-Ravenna Record Courier*
  - *The Reporter*
- Send news releases to area newspapers, radio and television stations
- Send notifications to:
  - Private providers of public transportation
  - Common carriers (both trucking and rail) serving the AMATS area
  - METRO Regional Transit Authority and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority requesting that their employees be informed
  - Local and Regional airports serving the AMATS area
  - Environmental Resource Agencies
- Make available a copy of the draft TIP for a two week comment period at the:
  - AMATS Office located at 146 South High Street, Room 806 of the CitiCenter Building in Akron
  - Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority office located at 2000 Summit Road in Kent, Ohio
  - ODOT District 4 office located at 2088 South Arlington Road in Akron
  - AMATS website

Comments generated during the review of the draft TIP will be presented to the Policy Committee for consideration before adoption of the final TIP.

Notification of Policy Committee action on the final TIP will take place through news releases, the agency newsletter (*The AMATS Quarterly*) and on the AMATS website.

### Availability of the TIP

The final TIP document will be available at the AMATS office located at 146 South High Street, Room 806 of the CitiCenter Building in Akron. The complete TIP will be posted on the AMATS website.

### Amending the TIP

Periodically, state or local officials request that a project in the approved TIP be modified or cancelled or that a new project be added. Such requests will be identified as either a major or minor amendment. The individual amendment, determines which public involvement procedure is appropriate.

If the amendment involves a project that includes a new interchange; a new roadway or lane addition greater than one mile in length; commuter rail; busways, or has a significant impact on air quality, then it will be considered a major amendment and public involvement for the amendment will follow the same procedures as the draft TIP.

However, if the amendment does not include a project such as one previously mentioned, it would be considered a minor amendment and will be discussed at a regularly scheduled CIC meeting for public consideration and comment prior to Policy Committee action.

Once adopted, the amendments will be included in the TIP and will be posted on the website.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **OTHER REPORTS**

In addition to the Regional Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program, AMATS produces many reports as part of the continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process.

Such reports will be presented at CIC meetings for comment prior to Policy Committee meetings at which committee action is scheduled. All public comments will be forwarded to the Policy Committee before the Policy Committee takes final action.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **SUMMARY**

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study is committed to providing early and continuing opportunities for full public access to the transportation planning process, consistent with SAFETEA-LU. Accordingly, the preceding public involvement procedures were developed. Public involvement procedures are documented in the Regional Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, and other reports that AMATS produces, when appropriate.

This public involvement process is only the first step in an open-ended and evolving public participation process that will be refined and revised as needed. This public participation process will be periodically reviewed to determine its effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to everyone. If changes are needed, AMATS will provide for 45 days of public comment before revising this plan.