

2009 Annual Report



Planning for Greater Akron
The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study

Special Publication

Annual Report 2009

Looking Back on 2009 by Chairman Goncy

As chairman of the Policy Committee during 2009, I can say with firsthand knowledge that it was a challenging year. The Greater Akron area, along with the rest of the nation, remained locked in the grip of an economic slowdown. Yet, in the face of this adversity, AMATS accomplished a great deal.



GONCY

Perhaps the most significant accomplishment was the completion of *Transportation Outlook*, a 20-year plan that recommends over \$4 billion in regional investments. We at AMATS are particularly proud of the Plan as it represents a new direction in meeting the area's transportation needs. *Transportation Outlook* focuses on maintaining existing roads and bridges, improving safety, promoting public transit and creating a bicycle trail network.

Using federal economic stimulus funding, the Policy Committee invested more than \$14 million into the area's infrastructure and jump started development of 14 significant projects. Among the projects that received stimulus funds were the Crain Avenue Bridge replacement in Kent, the widening of state Route 43 in Aurora, and the Seasons Road Interchange project in Hudson and Stow.

The year also saw the launch of the Connecting Communities Initiative, a bold attempt to integrate land use and transportation. The aim of the initiative is to foster a more cohesive approach to planning among communities and is AMATS' first formal attempt to address the transportation challenges of suburbanization.

I invite you to read about our other accomplishments during an eventful year. These pages show that AMATS is well suited to meet new, unforeseen challenges in the future.

Bill Goncy

Mayor of Boston Heights
2009 AMATS Policy Committee Chairman

Planning

Transportation Outlook

AMATS completed *Transportation Outlook*, the latest update of the Greater Akron area's long-range regional transportation plan, in May.

Transportation Outlook emphasizes preservation of the existing transportation system rather than expansion. This "fix-it-first" approach is necessary given funding realities. The Plan reflects these new realities and focuses on maintaining existing roads and bridges, preserving transit systems, improving safety, and creating a regional network of bicycle trails. Another notable element of the Plan is that it promotes land use decisions that reduce vehicle miles traveled, promote transit, walking, and biking.

The Plan urges continued support for the area's public transit systems and advocates changes in state and federal regulations to allow METRO RTA and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) use of state and federal funding to cover their increasing operating expenses. The Plan also urges greater coordination of services among many agencies.

The 20-year *Transportation Outlook* contains over \$4 billion of recommendations and includes \$2.8 billion in recommended roadway improvements, \$1.1 billion for transit service and \$105 million for bikeway and pedestrian projects.

Significant project recommendations contained in the Plan are:

Central Interchange / West Leg Reconstruction – A major reconstruction of Interstate 76, from East Avenue to the Central Interchange, in Akron.

State Route 8 / Howe Road Interchange - A redesigned interchange to improve safety and traffic flow in Cuyahoga Falls.

State Route 43 – Projects to widen state Route 43 to four lanes in Aurora and Streetsboro.

Kent Central Gateway Project - A transfer center for PARTA in Kent.

Western Reserve Heritage Trail - Two projects to construct the Western Reserve Heritage Trail in Portage County.



Connecting Communities Initiative

In May, the Connecting Communities Initiative began in an effort to integrate land use and transportation planning. The initiative is AMATS' first attempt to address problems associated with poorly planned development.

The initiative urges the agency's member communities to consider land use patterns and their impacts on the regional transportation system. The agency began a Working Group to guide development of the initiative. The group consists of representatives from urban, suburban and rural communities, METRO RTA, the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority, Metro Parks Serving Summit County and the Portage Park District.



Through the initiative, the agency has developed a series of inventories that the agency and communities can refer to throughout the planning process. 2009 saw the completion of regional sidewalk and zoning inventories, the first products prepared under the initiative. One of the aims of the initiative is to promote development practices that communities can implement locally.

Sidewalk Inventory

In May, a *Sidewalk Inventory* was completed under the Connecting Communities Initiative. A comprehensive examination of sidewalks in the Greater Akron area, the inventory marks the first time that AMATS undertook such an effort to identify and analyze sidewalk locations.

The inventory shows that the greatest concentrations of sidewalks are located in the region's urban areas. The inventory also shows that sidewalk concentrations aren't as great in the region's suburban areas and are lacking in many commercial areas. Communities can use this inventory to locate areas in need of connectivity with transit routes, commercial centers and recreational trails.

Zoning Inventory

In September, a *Zoning Inventory* was completed under the Connecting Communities Initiative. An extensive compilation of area zoning codes, the inventory provides insight into existing and future growth patterns.

The inventory shows that the vast majority of the region's current zoning encourages sprawl, induces auto dependence and provides little ability to implement mixed-use development. AMATS wants to promote community zoning that complements mixed-use neighborhoods and provides multiple transportation choices.



Engineering

Transportation Improvement Program

AMATS manages 60 projects receiving \$79 million in funding that are included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a four-year program of highway, public transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvement projects scheduled to receive federal funds.

In 2009, \$114.6 million in federal funds were expended on highway and public transit projects in the Greater Akron area. Of this total, \$94.1 million was for highway projects and more than \$20.5 million for transit projects.

A number of significant projects were completed during the year including Phase I of the reconstruction of state Route 8 in northern Summit County and the construction of a new railroad bridge and widening of state Route 82 in Macedonia. The agency has played a major role in the planning and development of the state Route 82 project since it was first proposed more than 20 years ago. AMATS contributed \$5.5 million for the project's construction and helped sponsors secure funding from several different sources.

Two of the agency's most significant accomplishments regarding the TIP during 2009 were allocating the sudden influx of millions of federal economic stimulus dollars and preparing for the next round of funding available for projects in 2010.

Stimulus Projects

Early in 2009, the agency had to grapple with the question of which projects should receive funds from the area's share of more than \$14 million in federal economic stimulus dollars under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The act was adopted by the federal government in February 2009 as a means to spur economic growth. The Greater Akron area received its share of stimulus funds through three conduits: AMATS, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). AMATS had to identify "shovel-ready" projects that could begin construction quickly.

After much deliberation, the Policy Committee selected 14 projects in March and April to receive stimulus funds. The committee struck an important balance between spending these funds expediently and equitably.

Projects and the amount of funds approved by AMATS are detailed in the accompanying table on [page 5](#).

Ohio received \$774 million for transportation projects under the ARRA. In March, ODOT announced that seven projects in the Greater Akron area received over \$23 million of these state-attributable federal stimulus dollars.

In April, METRO RTA and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority received nearly \$10 million in stimulus funds from the FTA.



American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Projects				
Location	Limits	Description	Stimulus Funding	Location
Hilbish Ave	Triplett Boulevard to E Market St	Reconstruction	\$2,800,000	Akron
SR 43 (N Aurora Rd)	SR 82 (Garfield W Rd) to Squires Rd	Widen to 4 Lanes, Turn Lanes	\$1,000,000	Aurora
15th Street NW	Bridge over ABC RailRoad		\$270,000	Barberton
Seasons Rd	Wyoga Lake Rd to Allen Rd	Reconstruction	\$2,400,000	Cuyahoga Falls / Hudson / Stow
Arlington Rd	SR 619 (Turkeyfoot Lake Rd)	Reconstruction, Turn Lanes, Additional Thru Lanes on Arlington Rd	\$2,000,000	Green
SR 305	SR 700 to Hiram East Corp Line	Reconstruction	\$150,000	Hiram
Crain Ave	SR 43 to Water St	Replace Crain Ave Bridge, Turn Lanes, and Signals	\$3,000,000	Kent
Mogadore Rd	At Cleveland Ave	Intersection improvement	\$60,000	Mogadore
Greenwich Rd / Norton Rd	West Corp Line to East Corp Line	Resurfacing	\$500,000	Norton
S Prospect St / N Chestnut St	Ravenna South Corp Line to SR 14	Resurfacing	\$600,000	Ravenna
Liberty Rd	Cannon Rd to Cuyahoga County Line	Resurfacing	\$600,000	Reminderville / Twinsburg
Wheatley Rd / Brecksville Rd / Kinross Pkwy		Intersection improvements	\$240,000	Richfield
Waterloo Rd	US 224 to Portage Line Rd	Resurfacing	\$660,000	Springfield Twp
SR 261 (Northeast Ave)	At Howe Rd	Intersection improvement	\$270,000	Tallmadge
ARRA Projects Total			\$14,550,000	

FINISHING TOUCHES:

The widening of state Route 82 and the construction of a new railroad bridge in Macedonia, shown inset, was one of many AMATS projects completed in 2009.



Preparing for 2010

AMATS administers several funding programs that provide federal dollars for transportation projects. These programs are the Surface Transportation Program, the Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Program, the Resurfacing Program and the Transportation Enhancement Program.

The next round of funding from these programs will be available in 2010. AMATS began preparing for project applications by taking two necessary steps in 2009: updating its *Funding Policy Guidelines* and requesting letters of intent from project sponsors.

In November, the Policy Committee revised the agency's *Funding Policy Guidelines*. These revisions not only clarify the guidelines, but align them with the goals of *Transportation Outlook*. These revisions: assign a higher priority to preservation and maintenance projects; allow engineering costs for enhancement projects to be eligible for funding; and modify project evaluation criteria.

Upon the adoption of the new *Funding Policy Guidelines*, AMATS solicited projects for the next round of project funding. In December, the agency received 107 letters from sponsors announcing their intent to seek project funds in 2010.

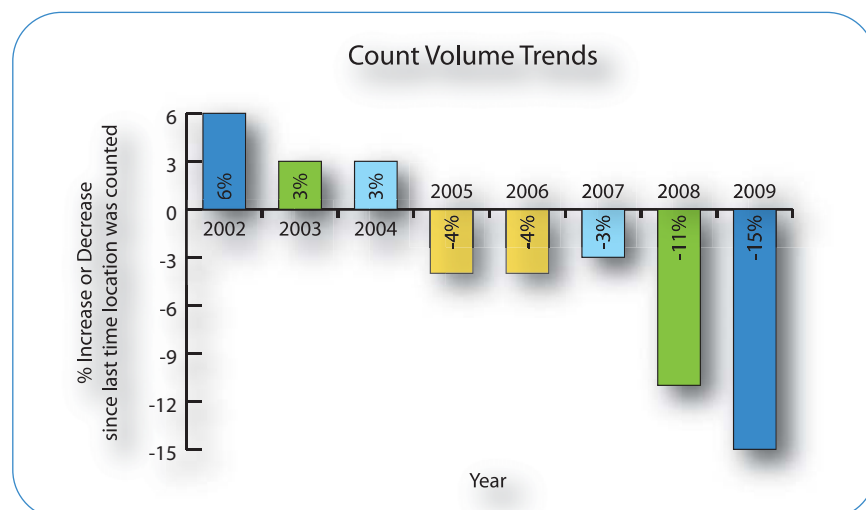
Engineering Activities

Traffic Counting Program

Traffic count data and the identification of trends are important for short-range and long-range transportation planning. During the summer, the agency compiles data regarding the volume of traffic on the area's roadways and intersections for use in many of its analyses and the evaluation of new projects.

The volume of traffic in the Greater Akron area continues its downward trend, according to findings compiled by AMATS during its 2009 traffic counting season. After conducting 299 counts at various roadway segments and at 16 intersections, the agency found that overall count volumes were down 15 percent compared to the previous count. The latest analysis shows a continuation of a trend of declining traffic volumes that began in 2002. The agency suspects that a combination of high fuel prices and rising unemployment have contributed to this trend.

COUNT DOWN:
AMATS has documented a marked decline in traffic volume on the Greater Akron area's roadways since 2002.

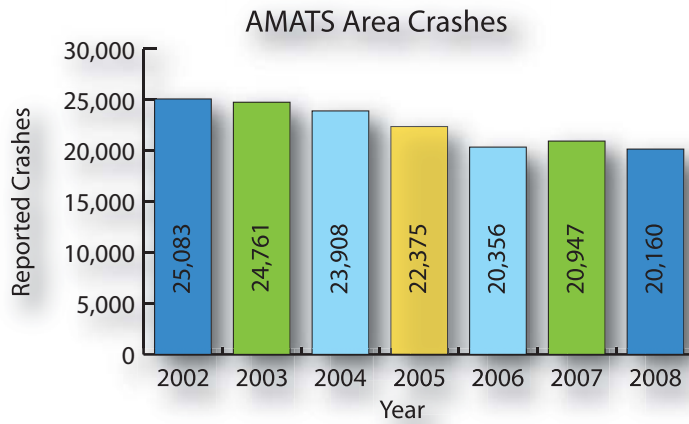


Traffic Crashes 2006-2008

The agency compiles crash analyses to plan and fund effective roadway safety improvements. In July, the agency completed an analysis of crashes on area roads and intersections using records provided by the Ohio Department of Public Safety between 2006 and 2008. The analysis identifies high-crash locations throughout the Greater Akron area.

The analysis found that crashes overall declined by 4 percent compared to the previous three-year period spanning 2005 through 2007. Crashes that resulted in injuries also dropped 4 percent while crash fatalities declined by 9 percent, to 168 from 184.

RIGHT DIRECTION:
An analysis compiled by AMATS in 2009 showed crashes overall in the Greater Akron area continuing to drop.



Annual Meeting

More than 100 planners, engineers and elected officials responsible for transportation planning in the Greater Akron area gathered at the Sheraton Suites during the AMATS 2009 Annual Meeting in October. The meeting offered attendees a unique opportunity to discuss regional issues and the nation's transportation future.

The meeting was also the first AMATS annual meeting to feature a panel discussion. With Medina County Commissioner Stephen Hambley,

North Canton Mayor David Held and Youngstown Mayor Jay Williams serving as panelists, the trio discussed the unique challenges facing rural, suburban and urban communities with the audience.

The meeting's keynote speaker was Fred Abousleman, the executive director of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC). Trends are emerging that herald sweeping economic and environmental changes, Abousleman declared. He noted that regional cooperation will play an increasingly prominent role in the creation and retention of jobs as the nation's economy transitions from an information-based one to a "logistics-based" economy.

Public Involvement

During 2009, AMATS had two significant accomplishments in public outreach: an update of its web site and the growth of its Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC).

- **Web site** – After more than a decade of relying on the same format for its web site, AMATS decided that it was time for a change. In November, the agency hired a consultant – 427 Design – to create a new site. The new site will offer a host of user friendly features such as web blog and PODcast capabilities.
- **CIC** - Membership in the CIC, the committee through which the AMATS Policy Committee receives public opinion, grew to 31 active members. During the year, the CIC also hosted guest speakers from Clean Fuels Ohio, The Corradino Group, the Federal Transit Administration, METRO RTA and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority.

OhioRideshare

2009 was a successful year for OhioRideshare, the free on-line carpool matching service sponsored by AMATS in Northeast Ohio.

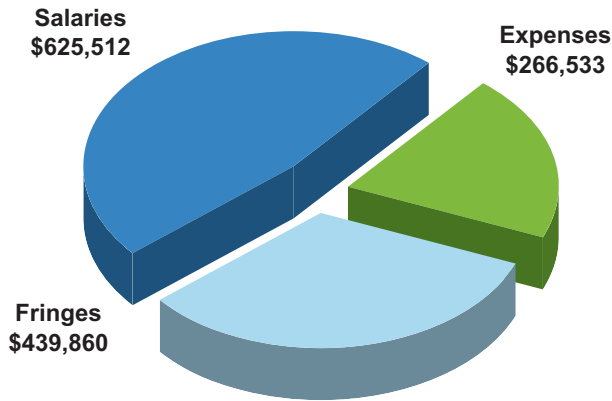
Although fuel prices eased a bit during the year, costs remained a concern for many commuters. The program ended the year with 826 active users in Portage, Stark, Summit, Tuscarawas and Wayne counties – an increase of more than 19 percent from the year before.



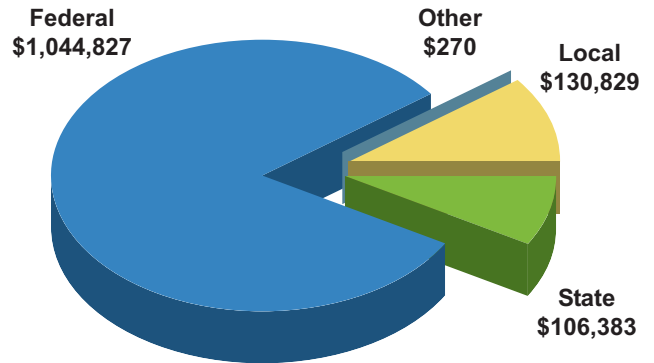
MEETING SUCCESS: The AMATS 2009 Annual Meeting featured NARC Director Fred Abousleman, inset, as the keynote speaker and included a panel discussion featuring, from left, mayors Williams and Held and Commissioner Hambley.

AMATS Financial Data for Fiscal Year 2009

Expenditures by Type



Revenues by Type



Policy Committee Members

Chairman - Mayor Bill Gony
Vice Chairman - Mayor Al Bollas

AKRON - Mayor Donald L. Plusquellic
AURORA - Mayor Lynn McGill
BARBERTON - Mayor Bob Genet
BOSTON HEIGHTS - Mayor Bill Gony
BRADY LAKE - Mayor Hal Lehman
CLINTON - Mayor Phyllis Mayberry
CUYAHOGA FALLS - Mayor Don L. Robart
DOYLESTOWN - Mayor Terry L. Lindeman
FAIRLAWN - Mayor William J. Roth
GARRETTSVILLE - Mayor Craig Moser
GREEN - Mayor Dick Norton
HIRAM - Mayor Lou Bertrand
HUDSON - Mayor William A. Currin
KENT - City Manager David Ruller
MACEDONIA - Mayor Don Kuchta
MANTUA - Mayor Donna Hawkins

METRO - Mr. David Incorvati
MOGADORE - Mayor Michael A. Rick
MUNROE FALLS - Mayor Frank Larson
NEW FRANKLIN - Mayor Al Bollas
NORTHFIELD - Mayor Victor F. Milani
NORTON - Mayor David L. Koontz
ODOT - Mr. Eric M. Czetli
PARTA - Mr. Rick Bissler
PENINSULA - Mayor Dick Fisher
PORTAGE COUNTY COMMISSIONER - Ms. Maureen Frederick
PORTAGE COUNTY COMMISSIONER - Mr. Charles W. Keiper, II
PORTAGE COUNTY COMMISSIONER - Mr. Christopher Smeiles
PORTAGE COUNTY ENGINEER'S OFFICE - Mr. Michael Marozzi
RAVENNA - Mayor Joe Bica, Jr.
REMINDERVILLE - Mayor Sam K. Alonso

RICHFIELD - Mayor Michael K. Lyons
SILVER LAKE - Mayor Bernie Hovey
STOW - Mayor Karen Fritschel
STREETSBORO - Mayor Arthur Scott
SUGAR BUSH KNOLLS - Mayor Austin C. Melton, Jr.
SUMMIT COUNTY ENGINEER'S OFFICE - Mr. Alan Brubaker
SUMMIT COUNTY EXECUTIVE - Mr. Russell M. Pry
SUMMIT COUNTY - Mr. Nick Lautzenheiser
SUMMIT COUNTY - Ms. Connie Krauss
TALLMADGE - Mayor Christopher B. Grimm
TWINSBURG - Mayor Katherine A. Procop
WAYNE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS - Mr. Earl Kerr
WINDHAM - Mayor Robert W. Donham

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