



Planning for
Greater Akron

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Inside

Panel Spurs
Discussion
Regarding
Regional Needs
and Issues
.....page 2.

Land Use Changes
Through the Years
.....pages 3 & 5.

Community Focus:
Boston Heights
.....page 7.

Annual Meeting promotes regional awareness of transportation challenges

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

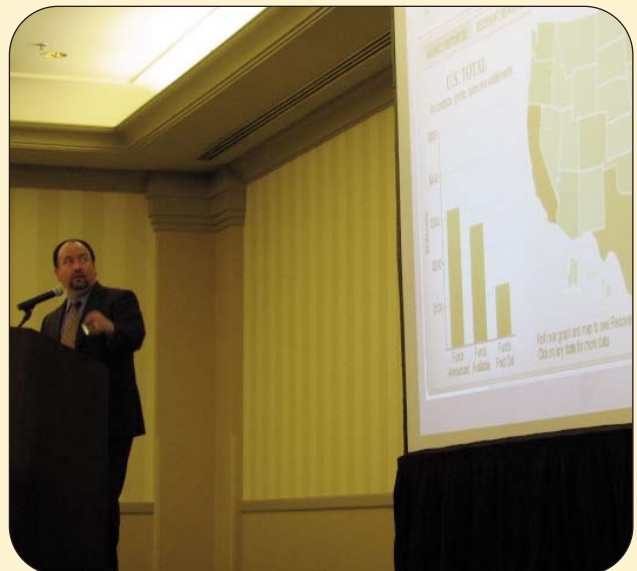
This year's meeting was the first AMATS annual meeting to feature a panel discussion. The agency invited Medina County Commissioner Stephen D. Hambley, North Canton Mayor David J. Held, and Youngstown Mayor Jay Williams to discuss the unique challenges facing rural, suburban and urban communities (See **PANEL, Page 2**).

The meeting's keynote speaker was Fred Abousleman, the executive director of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC). Abousleman's audience came to hear his insights regarding the nation's transportation future and the director didn't disappoint them.

See **JOBS, Page 3**

A CHANGING MAP:

NARC Director Fred Abousleman, at podium, described demographic, economic and environmental changes that are impacting the U.S. and their implications for Northeast Ohio during the AMATS 2009 Annual Meeting.



Panel spurs discussion regarding regional needs and issues

Along with a keynote speaker (See [ANNUAL, Page 1](#)), this year's AMATS annual meeting included a three-member panel discussion with representatives from neighboring regions.

The panel's members – Medina County Commissioner Stephen D. Hambley, North Canton Mayor David J. Held, and Youngstown Mayor Jay Williams – described the transportation challenges facing their respective communities and fielded questions from audience members.

The discussion dovetailed with AMATS' ongoing efforts to promote regional cooperation in Northeast Ohio. Under its Connecting Communities Initiative, the agency has been promoting regional connectivity among its member communities and surrounding areas in an effort to spur a comprehensive approach to planning that extends beyond a community's borders.

The panelists discussed the growing economic interdependence among the region's communities, especially in the face of foreign competition. The panelists concurred that the need for cooperation with regards to economic development, environmental issues and transportation planning is likely to increase in the coming years.

Mayor Held observed that regional agencies such as AMATS are an important, but frequently overlooked resource for communities. "You don't know about regional agencies until you need them," Held noted.

Another common need expressed by the three leaders was improved transit service. Commissioner Hambley noted that, although Medina County is a predominantly rural area, it still needs transit, especially for those residents that work in Cuyahoga County.

Mayor Williams added that Youngstown not only needs transit, but improved coordination of services. With three transit authorities – Niles-Trumbull Transit, the Western Reserve Transit Authority and Shenango Valley Shuttle Service – operating in the area, there is occasional jurisdictional overlap, according to Williams. "The region might be better served by one," the mayor noted.

The discussion and meeting were informative and very well received, according to AMATS Director Jason Segedy. "Our panel was truly the highlight of the meeting for me. I can honestly say that this was one of the best panel discussions that I have ever seen on the topic of regional planning. All three elected officials provided an extremely valuable perspective on the day-to-day challenges that they face in the arenas of urban planning, economic development, and regional cooperation. I cannot thank the panelists enough for their time and their willingness to share their points of view," Segedy said.



ESTEEMED PANELISTS: Mayors Williams and Held look on from left as Commissioner Hambley makes a point during the panel discussion regarding regional transportation challenges. The panel was part of the day's events during the AMATS 2009 Annual Meeting.

Jobs, environment topics of discussion during annual meeting

Continued from Page 1



ABOUSLEMAN

Trends are emerging that herald sweeping economic and environmental changes, Abousleman declared. He urged those in attendance to not merely react to these trends, but to anticipate and embrace them.

Abousleman observed that regional cooperation will play an increasingly prominent role in the creation and retention of jobs as the nation’s economy is in yet another transition. The director noted that planning in the U.S. is still adapting and reacting to the last major economic transition: the movement from a manufacturing-based economy to an information-based one. A more prudent planning approach would be to prepare for the emerging “logistics-based” economy, he advised the attendees.

“Many of our information-based resources - companies, research and development, and support services - are being outsourced to India and China. A new (logistics) industry is rising: warehousing, shipment centers, inland and water port facilities, air cargo hubs, rail intermodal terminals, and light manufacturing,” Abousleman said.

The director said that Northeast Ohio must develop the capacity to absorb this new and different growth. He noted that regions such as the south and mountain west are increasingly unable to fund critical infrastructure necessary to sustain the rapid economic growth that they have enjoyed in recent years.

“The reality of regionalism is moving faster than our ability to conceptualize it,” Abousleman observed. If a new age of regionalism is to develop, it is likely that the importance of metropolitan planning organizations such as AMATS will grow as communities and regions grapple with a host of increasingly intertwined issues such as land use, transportation, energy and, above all, the environment.

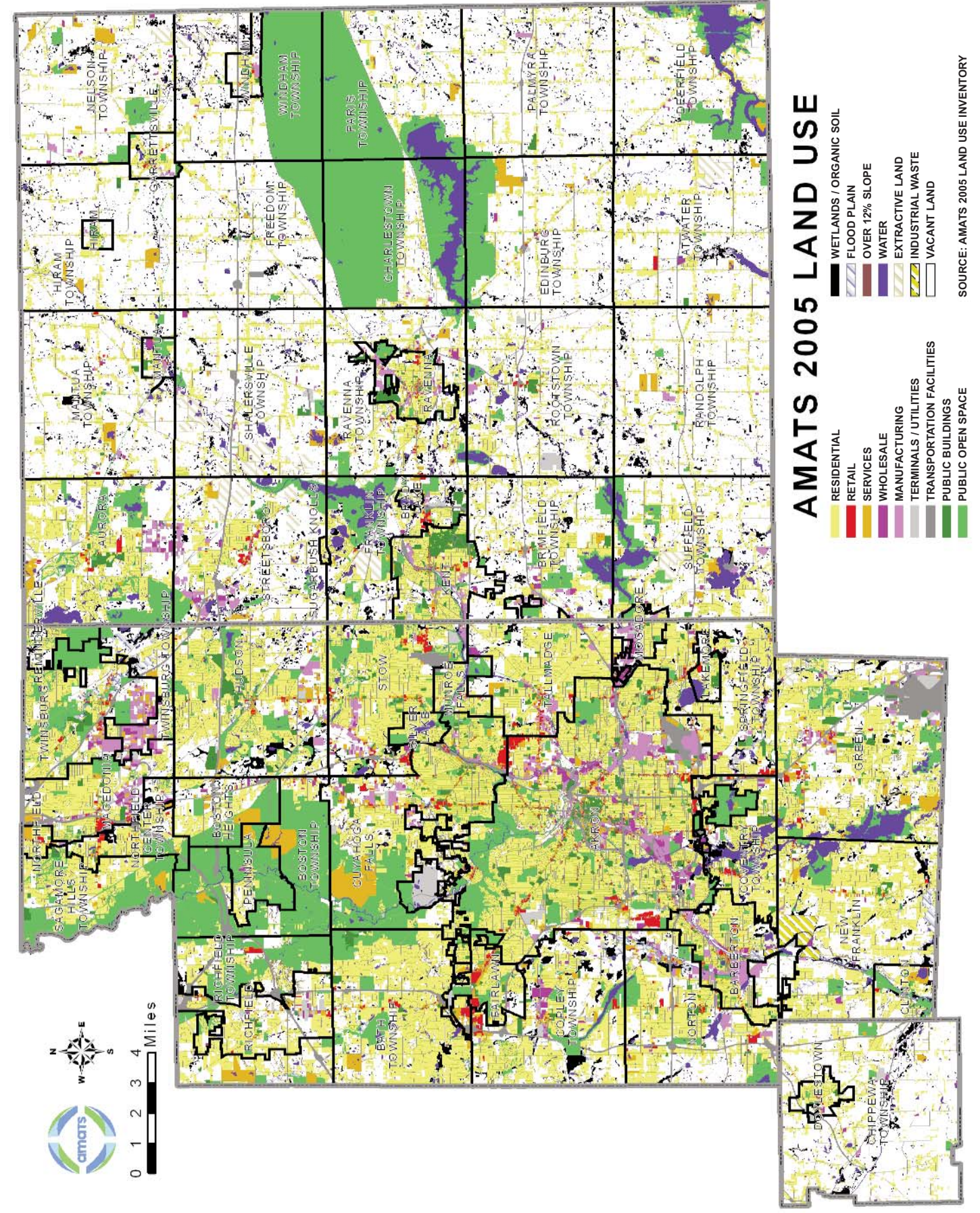
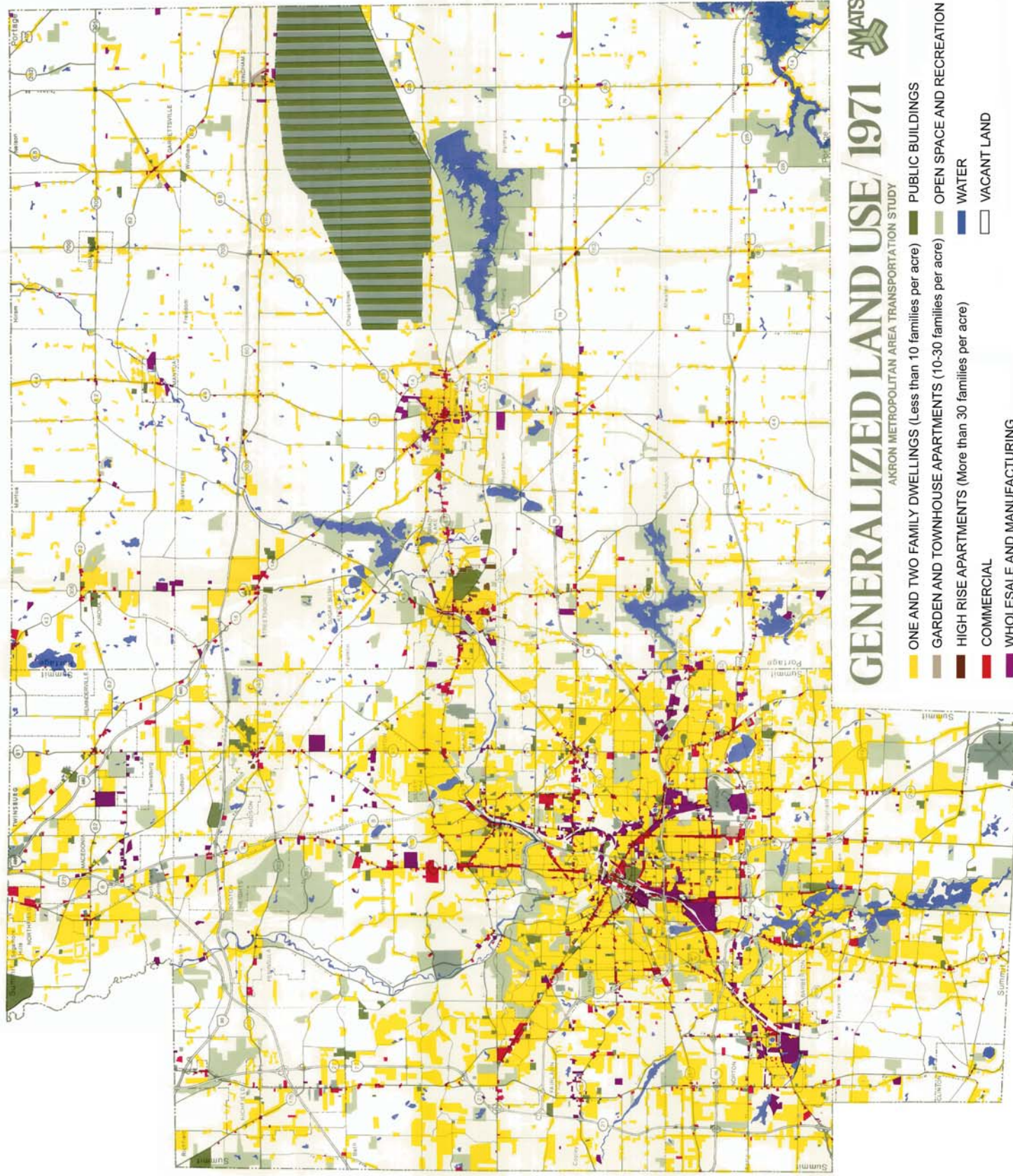
Jason Segedy, the AMATS director, said that the reaction to Abousleman’s address among attendees was overwhelmingly positive. “Fred gave our members a lot of great information that points to the need for greater regional cooperation. Fred is a true leader on many public policy issues and he also happens to be a big supporter of Northeast Ohio. In fact, NARC will be having its annual conference in Cleveland next year. We look forward to working with Fred and his group on many important planning initiatives such as the federal reauthorization bill, public transit funding, and better integration between land use and transportation,” Segedy said.

“The reality of regionalism is moving faster than our ability to conceptualize it.”

- Fred Abousleman, executive director,
National Association of Regional Councils -

Land use changes through the years

The Land Use maps on [pages 4 and 5](#) depict development patterns in the Greater Akron area for 1971 and 2005. The maps show that there was considerable residential and commercial development outside the area’s urban core during the intervening 34 years while the population of Summit and Portage counties grew by slightly more than 2.3 percent or less than 16,000 during the period. The maps also show that previously rural areas, primarily in northern and southern Summit County and northwestern Portage County, became residential suburban areas and that commercial and industrial growth followed.



Project Updates

The following table lists transportation projects that have been awarded between September 2, 2009 and December 3, 2009.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATES	CONTRACTOR	AMOUNT
Interstate 480 - Resurfacing and bridge rehabilitation on I-480, from north of state Route 82 to Interstate 80 (Ohio Turnpike), in Hudson, Streetsboro and Twinsburg.	10/2010	The Shelly Co. - Thornville -	\$4,851,014
Liberty Road - Resurfacing of Liberty Road, from Cannon Road to Cuyahoga County line, in Reminderville and Twinsburg.	11/2009	Burton Scott Contractors - Newbury -	\$486,000
All-America Bridge - Bridge rehabilitation and new fencing on the All-America Bridge ("Y-Bridge") spanning the Little Cuyahoga River in Akron.	12/2010	Posen Construction, Inc. - Shelby Township, Michigan -	\$6,152,499

New Regional Transportation Plan available

Transportation Outlook, the new 20-year regional transportation plan for the Greater Akron area, is now available.

The plan utilizes a "fix-it first" approach for the area's transportation system. Planning Coordinator Curtis Baker explains that the plan emphasizes preservation of the existing system rather than expansion. Baker adds that this approach is necessary given emerging trends and funding realities for transportation.

Volatile fuel prices and construction costs, a renewed public interest in transit services and environmental concerns have all combined to place new demands on transportation systems, Baker observes.

"These trends have appeared over the last few years; the question is whether they are permanent or temporary?" he continues, "While many things are sure to change between now and 2030, *Transportation Outlook* ensures that the region's transportation system will continue to remain an efficient and reliable asset."

The plan:

- Establishes road and bridge preservation as the area's highest priority while continuing to address the issues of safety and congestion.
- Urges continued support for the area's existing transit systems and advocates for more federal and state operating funding for Regional Transit Authorities.
- Recommends that, as the Towpath Trail is completed in Summit County, investments be focused on completing other regional bikeways, especially in Portage County.
- Promotes land use decisions that reduce vehicle miles traveled, promote transit, walking, and biking.

Bound copies of *Transportation Outlook* are available to the public from the AMATS office free of charge.

Community Focus: Boston Heights

Community Focus presents information about communities within the Greater Akron area.

Founded - Incorporated in 1924.

Population - 1,220 (2008 U.S. Census Bureau estimate)

Area - 4,467 acres

Policy Committee Member - Mayor Bill Goncy

History - In the early 1800s, Alfred Wolcott and his family were the first recorded settlers in the northeastern corner of Boston Township - the area that would later become the Village of Boston Heights. The village was officially incorporated in 1924 with the election of village officers.

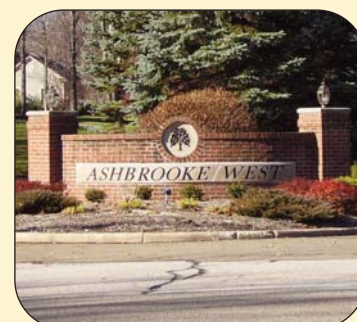
The village is home to: Air Power of Ohio - APO Holdings Inc.; Bevan & Associates LPA, Inc.; The Carr Law Office, LLC; Churchwell Fire Consultants, Inc.; C.T. Taylor Company Inc.; DLZ Ohio, Inc.; Dun-Rite Roofing, Inc.; Family First Moving, Inc.; Liberty Harley-Davidson North; Ultraspec / American Ultra Specialties Inc.; and U.S. Wings Inc. / Moku Man LLC.

Transportation Challenges - Boston Heights is served by several major highways: state Routes 8 and 303, the Ohio Turnpike and Interstate 271.

Because of its location between Akron and Cleveland, Boston Heights experiences high traffic volumes. Between 37,000 and 47,000 vehicles travel on the portion of state Route 8 extending through the village each day, according to 2007 Average Daily Traffic totals compiled by AMATS. Ron Dick, the village's representative on the AMATS Citizens Involvement Committee, notes that rush hour traffic in the area has been particularly bad for the last several years. Dick adds that another concern is that a portion of the village is separated from emergency services by intersections along state Route 8.

Phase II of the state Route 8 improvement project will address these issues. Scheduled for completion in late 2011, the \$81 million project will eliminate at-grade intersections at Hines Hill and Boston Mills roads and re-establish access to local roads through several ramps. A frontage road will also be built to facilitate access to state Route 8. The project will also modify the Ohio Turnpike interchange.

Web site - www.bostonheights.org



Dates to Remember

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Committee</u>	<u>Location</u>
January 21	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Stow Safety Building
January 21	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Silver Lake Village Hall
January 27	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Martin University Center The University of Akron

Persons with disabilities needing assistance are asked to contact Billy Soule, Assistant to the Mayor for Community Relations, 166 S. High Street, Room 503, Akron, Ohio 44308, (voice) 330-375-2189, (TDD) 330-375-2345, at least seven (7) days in advance.

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