



Planning for
Greater Akron

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New web site ready to launch

The new AMATS web site will make its debut in the coming weeks. The agency decided that it was time for a revamp of its online portal after more than 10 years of using the same format.

Developed by 427 Design, the new site will not only be visually appealing, but it will offer a host of user-friendly features, such as an extensive interactive map library and a blog to encourage public dialogue.



Changing the site address to a simpler, more memorable one was one of the first tasks that the agency tackled. The old address with its dots and dashes is gone. In its place is the much simpler, www.amatsplanning.org.

The agency will announce when the new site will be online soon. Until then, the current site will continue to provide up-to-date information regarding the agency and transportation planning in the Greater Akron area.



CHANGING STATE ROAD: A sign, left inset, is one of the few remnants of the old State Road Shopping Center in Cuyahoga Falls. A few yards away, another sign heralds the opening of Portage Crossing, a new estimated \$30 million project to redevelop the site into a retail and residential complex. As proposed, the project will connect both sides of nearby Portage Trail as one shopping district while improving traffic flow on Portage Trail and Graham and State roads. For more information, turn to **Community Focus: Cuyahoga Falls, Page 7.**

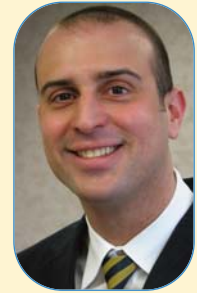
Moving beyond 1956... A new vision for transportation

by Jason Segedy

In 1956, President Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act into law. This sweeping piece of legislation appropriated \$25 billion in order to construct the Interstate Highway System, the largest and most visionary public works project in American history. It also established the Highway Trust Fund, which paid for 90 percent of the cost of building the system, using revenues that were generated through taxes on fuel.

“Essentially, we are now borrowing money from China to pay for our transportation infrastructure. This is a future that President Eisenhower would never have imagined.”

**- Jason Segedy,
AMATS Director -**



This brief bit of history is instructive for two reasons:

First, it is a reminder that there once was a time when our federal government was capable of establishing a coherent vision for transportation, mobilizing public support for it, and working tirelessly to complete it. The 47,000 mile Interstate Highway System remains the largest and most comprehensive highway network in the world, and the vast majority of it was constructed in just 20 years.

Second, it demonstrates that the American public will support a massive expenditure of federal tax dollars - \$425 billion when adjusted for inflation - if it is confident that it is bankrolling a worthwhile endeavor.

Today, 54 years later, our federal government is rudderless and broke. There is no strategic vision from Washington guiding our national transportation future. Even more disturbingly, our existing system of transportation funding is in deep trouble. Last year, for the first time in history, the Highway Trust Fund went broke. Congress had to provide an emergency infusion of \$8 billion in general revenue funds in order to keep the fund solvent. Earlier this year, another \$19.5 billion was transferred to a fund that is supposed to be self-supporting. Essentially, we are now borrowing money from China to pay for our transportation infrastructure. This is a future that President Eisenhower would never have imagined.

On the fiscal side of the transportation equation we have three options: cut spending, increase revenue, or do some combination of both. Reduced federal funding levels will mean that already cash-strapped local governments and states will have to tighten their belts even further. It will mean that our aging bridges and roads will continue to deteriorate and become more unsafe. It will also mean that transit systems will have to cut their already limited service even further, making it yet more difficult for our low-income residents to access jobs and economic opportunities.

On the policy side of the transportation equation, the situation is equally dysfunctional. The previous transportation bill expired in 2009, and Congress has yet to pass a new one. There is no national transportation plan and the federal government is unwilling or unable to come up with a coherent vision for transportation that everyday Americans can easily understand and embrace. Our current national transportation policy is schizophrenic. Over 30 percent of federal transportation funds go toward expanding highway capacity, but, at the same time we are spending \$8 billion on high-speed rail. We say we want people to consider alternatives

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to driving, but provide little real incentive to do so. Meanwhile, our existing network of roads and bridges continues to crumble. Washington is trying to be all things to all people and not doing any of them particularly well.

So what should we do?

First, the difficult truth is this: We do not have enough money to pay for the transportation system that we need. Although a tax increase may not be politically palatable, a massive national debt and decaying infrastructure are even less appealing. It is not fiscally responsible and it is not in the public interest for our federal government to resort to deficit spending and rely on other countries to pay for our transportation infrastructure. The beauty of the Highway Trust Fund has always been that it is a self-supporting source of revenue based upon a “user fee” – the gasoline tax. This is no longer the case.

The current gasoline tax of 18.4 cents per gallon has not been increased since 1993. Because the tax was not indexed to inflation, its actual purchasing power has declined significantly. Meanwhile, there are 53 million more people living in the United States than 17 years ago.

In the short term, the federal tax on gasoline needs to be raised by 10 cents per gallon and indexed to inflation. This would generate an additional \$20 billion per year in revenue. In the long term, a new mechanism for funding transportation should be found; preferably, one that is not predicated upon encouraging people to purchase more gasoline.

Second, Congress needs to pass a new transportation bill. This legislation should clearly define national transportation goals and priorities. It should adopt the same ambitious call-to-action that went into creating the Interstate Highway Act, but one that recognizes our current problems of urban sprawl and an uncertain energy future. It should also reform the convoluted system of dozens of separate federal funding categories, most of which contain cumbersome and outdated rules and regulations. This would improve flexibility and efficiency, and would allow states, MPOs, and transit agencies to better meet locally identified transportation needs. One example of this type of reform would be to allow transit agencies to spend federal funds on operating expenditures. They are currently prohibited from doing so.

Even though 2010 is an election year and Americans are justifiably concerned with high taxes, I believe that people would support an increase in the federal gasoline tax if they understood why it is necessary. According to a recent poll conducted by Building America’s Future, 60 percent of the American public erroneously believes that the gasoline tax is raised every year. At the same time, 62 percent correctly believe that funding decisions are too often based on “politics” rather than the “public good.”

As transportation professionals and policy makers, I believe that it is our duty to provide leadership on this issue; both to ensure fiscal responsibility and to establish a transportation vision that the public can support. We did it in 1956 and we can do it again.

Editor’s Note - The AMATS Policy Committee is expected to consider a draft resolution during its Aug. 12 meeting stating the committee’s support for an increase in the federal gasoline tax as a means to fund the nation’s transportation needs.

Agency's initiative defines planning areas

AMATS created the Planning Areas map and definitions shown on **pages 4 and 5** as products of its Connecting Communities Initiative, the agency's first comprehensive effort to integrate land use and transportation planning. Developed by analyzing lot sizes, street patterns and land use, both products are useful tools for communities, developers and planners.

The following paragraphs define the areas depicted in the map.

Downtown – Akron's downtown is the hub of the regional transportation system in the Greater Akron area. It supports high levels of public transportation and pedestrian activity. It is the central business district with dense, tall buildings and a mix of office, residential, government and cultural uses.

Suburban Center – Suburban Centers are major business and retail hubs. They consist of a mix of shopping centers, big-box stores and office parks. Usually these areas are auto-dependent and do not support transit and pedestrian activity.

Town Center – Town Centers are smaller hubs for business, retail, residential and government uses, predominantly along main streets. These centers are pedestrian-friendly, transit-accessible and consist of business and office space.

Urban Core – Urban Core areas consist of a grid-block street pattern with high pedestrian activity and easy access to transit. They are a dense mix of single- and multi-family housing with businesses located along main streets and corner stores.

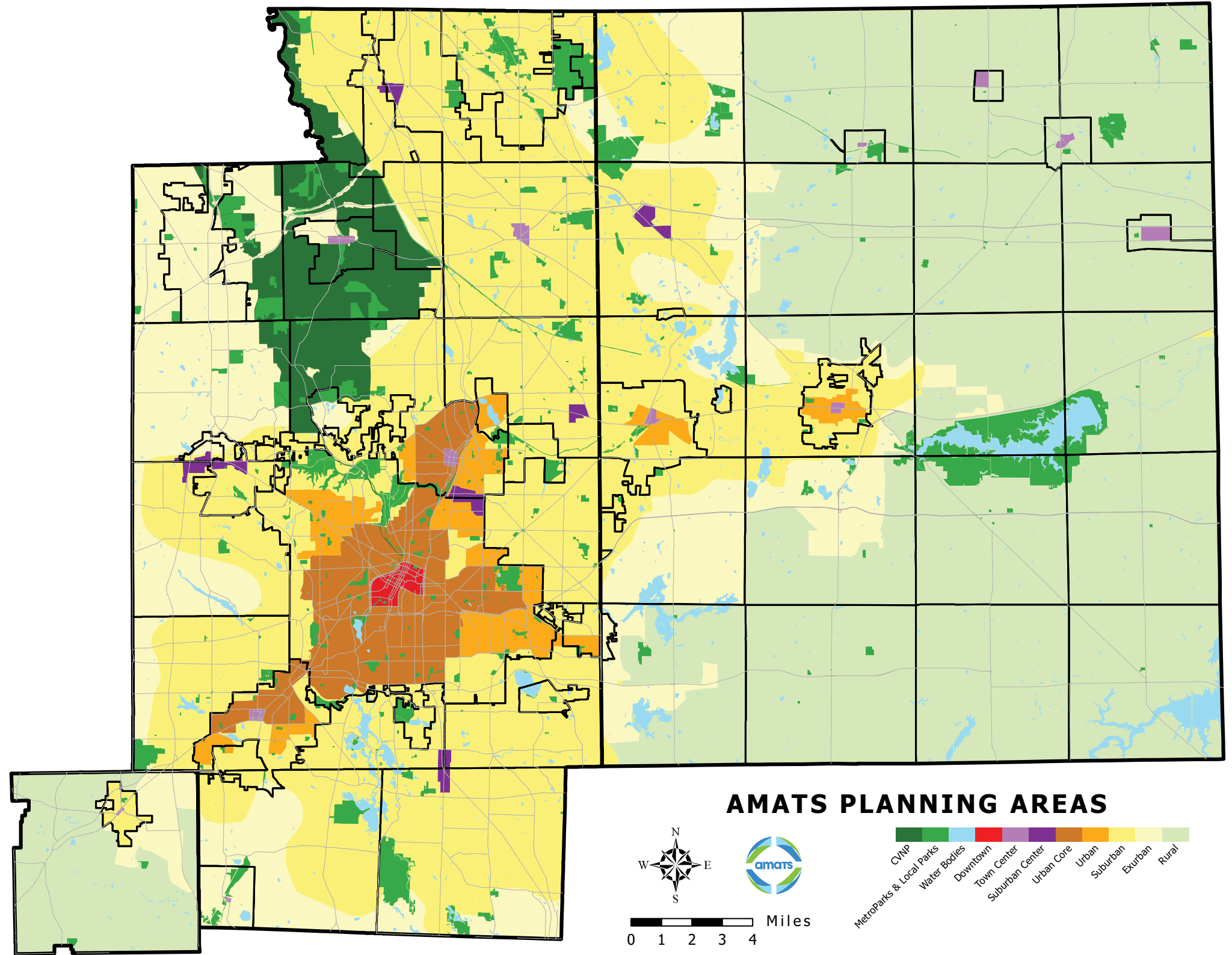
Urban – Urban areas are mature, developed neighborhoods adjacent to urban core areas. They have both grid and curving street patterns with moderate levels of transit accessibility and pedestrian activity. They are home to predominantly single-family housing units with retail businesses along main streets and small shopping centers.

Suburban – Suburban areas (suburbs) are predominantly single-family housing units with a mix of retail and other business located in shopping centers and office parks. Residential streets are predominantly curved and terminate in cul-de-sacs. Suburbs are auto-dependent with limited transit and pedestrian activity.

Exurban – Exurban areas (exurbs) are predominantly low-density and single-family units, with residential housing typically along country roads or detached subdivisions surrounded by agricultural and park land. They are auto-dependent and without sidewalks. Transit is limited to individual door-to-door service.

Rural – Rural areas consist of large tracts of agricultural, park or vacant land. Housing is predominantly along country roads and is largely low-density and auto-dependent. There are no sidewalks and transit is limited to individual door-to-door service.

Additional copies of the definitions and map are available on the agency web site at www.amatsplanning.org.



Project Updates

The following table lists transportation projects that have been awarded between March 30, 2010 and June 23, 2010.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATES	CONTRACTOR	AMOUNT
15th Street NW - Bridge replacement on 15th Street NW spanning the Akron Barberton Cluster Railway tracks in Barberton .	07/2011	Wolf Creek Engineering & Contracting, Inc. - Akron -	\$1,624,782
State Route 21 - Minor rehabilitation of state Route 21 in Chippewa Township . Project includes resurfacing and bridge repair.	10/2010	Northstar Asphalt, Inc. - North Canton -	\$4,291,918
State Route 241 - Resurfacing and bridge rehabilitation at various locations on state Route 241 in Green and Springfield Township .	09/2010	Superior Paving & Materials, Inc. - North Canton -	\$1,543,574
Interstate 77 - Resurfacing of I-77 in Bath Township .	10/2010	Shelly & Sands, Inc. - Zanesville -	\$2,926,115
Waterloo Road - Resurfacing of Waterloo Road in Springfield Township .	10/2010	Central-Allied Enterprises, Inc. - Canton -	\$1,695,852
Mogadore Road - Removal of a retaining wall and increasing turning radius on Mogadore Road at Cleveland Avenue in Mogadore .	06/2010	Perrin Asphalt Co., Inc. - Akron -	\$54,730
Greenwich Road - Resurfacing of Greenwich Road in Norton .	07/2010	Shelly & Sands, Inc. - Zanesville -	\$440,311
S. Prospect Street/N. Chestnut Street - Resurfacing of S. Prospect Street/N. Chestnut Street in Ravenna .	10/2010	Ronyak Bros. Paving, Inc. - Burton -	\$794,611

Community Focus: Cuyahoga Falls

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

Founded - In 1812 by William Wetmore and was originally called Manchester.

Population - 51,090 (2008 U.S. Census Bureau estimate)

Area - 25.96 square miles **Policy Committee Member** - Mayor Don L. Robart

History - Cuyahoga Falls was formed near the junction of the former Northampton, Stow, Tallmadge, and Portage townships. The focus was the series of Cuyahoga River waterfalls that provided power for mills and manufacturing. While industry has moved away from the river, it has not moved away from Cuyahoga Falls. In recent years, the city has had steady residential, commercial, and industrial expansion and is home to a mix of manufacturing and industrial uses. Residential development has largely focused on single-family residential homes. The 1985 merger of Cuyahoga Falls and Northampton Township, the first statutory merger of an incorporated and an unincorporated area in Ohio, nearly tripled the city's size.



Transportation Challenges - With state Route 8 bisecting the city, Cuyahoga Falls is bordered by Munroe Falls to the east, Silver Lake Village and Stow to the northeast, the Cuyahoga Valley National Park to the northwest and Akron to the south. Its main north-south roadways are Northampton, State and Wyoga Lake roads and its main east-west roadways are Broad Boulevard, Graham Road, Howe Avenue, Portage Trail and Steels Corners Road. A north-south CSX rail line extends through the city's downtown area. The METRO-owned Akron Secondary rail line also extends through Cuyahoga Falls connecting the cities of Akron and Hudson.

Commercial development has increased significantly along the city's Howe Avenue area since the mid-1980s. As a result of this growth, average daily traffic on Howe Avenue has increased 160 percent, from 13,900 vehicles in 1978 to 36,200 in 2007, according to data compiled by AMATS. Cuyahoga Falls, like many other communities in the Greater Akron area, is increasingly devoting more of its project dollars to maintenance of its aging transportation infrastructure rather than expansion. Since 2008, the city has undertaken several major resurfacings of Front Street, Portage Trail, and Graham, State and Wyoga Lake roads and has plans for additional resurfacings. At the same time, the city is striving to improve high-crash locations such as the Main Street-Howe Avenue intersection and Barney's Busy Corners. In March, AMATS allocated more than \$822,000 in federal funds for a \$2 million safety improvement project at the Main Street-Howe Avenue intersection.

Portage Crossing, a multi-million dollar redevelopment of the former State Road Shopping Center, poses its own set of unique challenges. Redevelopment of the site is a key piece of the city's efforts at economic renewal along the State Road Corridor. Demolition of the shopping center commenced last August and, earlier this year, the city selected Stark Enterprises to head redevelopment. Plans call for a new grocery store, retail businesses and up to 183 townhomes and lofts. Cuyahoga Falls officials have indicated that they hope to create a new community shopping district that is easily accessible and pedestrian friendly while minimizing impacts to traffic flow.

The State Road area is not the only location in which city officials are pursuing a pedestrian-friendly approach. Cuyahoga Falls Planning Director Fred Guerra says that the city wants to add more bike lanes and sidewalks to roadways in the old Northampton Township area.

Web site - www.cityofcf.com

Dates to Remember

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Committee</u>	<u>Location</u>
August 5	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Stow Safety Building
August 5	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Silver Lake Village Hall
August 12	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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