



Planning for
Greater Akron

The AMATS Quarterly

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Congressman Tim Ryan, left, and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Raymond LaHood enjoy a conversation en route to the July grant signing ceremonies for the Kent Central Gateway. For more, see *LAHOOD VISITS PARTA*, Page 6.

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Connecting Communities provides a new planning framework

The Greater Akron area passed a milestone in regional coordination with the completion of *Connecting Communities – A Guide to Integrating Land Use and Transportation* in September.

Connecting Communities represents AMATS' effort to improve coordination between land use and transportation in the area. Transportation Planner Krista Linderud explains that it provides a framework to increase transportation choices and encourage development that supports a more effective transportation system.

"This was a large-scale effort to incorporate ideas from throughout the region. We've analyzed things that the region never has before," Linderud continues, "We've incorporated zoning, parcel sizes, watershed planning, sidewalks, and parking lots into the development of this document."

See *CONNECTING*, Page 2



A "COMPLETE" APPROACH: *Connecting Communities* recommends that "complete street" principles be incorporated into land use and transportation decisions in the Greater Akron area. Complete streets are designed and operated to create a safe and comfortable environment for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists. A current example in the area is Main Street in Kent, shown above.

Connecting Communities links land use and transportation policies

Continued from Page 1

The agency, together with a working group of representatives from urban, suburban and rural communities began crafting the guide last summer.

“This is our first attempt to address the consequences of urban sprawl. Our overall goal is to create more vibrant livable communities,” Linderud adds.

The guide is intended to be used by AMATS and other public and private entities in targeting investments and spurring regional cooperation. “While some of the recommendations and strategies are specific to our agency, many are aimed at local communities and organizations,” Linderud observes.

An outgrowth of the initiative, stemming from one of its recommendations, is the development of a pilot planning grant program (See [NEW, Page 6](#)). Communities may use these grants to develop transportation plans consistent with the initiative.

The eight recommendations of *Connecting Communities* are summarized in the accompanying table. The entire document is available as a pdf at www.amatsplanning.org/programs/connecting-communities/.

***Connecting Communities* recommends that:**

- Pedestrian planning and facilities be improved through targeted investments.
- Bicycle planning and facilities be improved through targeted investments.
- Public transportation systems be enhanced to meet the needs of current users and attract new users.
- “Complete streets” principles be incorporated into land use and transportation decisions.
- Land use policies be implemented that improve community cohesion and reduce urban sprawl.
- That environmental planning be integrated into land use and transportation planning.
- Interagency coordination on regional planning be improved.
- A planning grant program be created to implement *Connecting Communities*.



Crashes still headed down according to latest analysis

Traffic crashes on the Greater Akron area's roadways, intersections and freeways continued to decline between 2007 and 2009, according to the latest three-year analysis compiled by AMATS.

Between 2002 and 2004, the area recorded more than 68,200 crashes. Since that time, area crashes have dropped by 16 percent to nearly 59,000. Every three-year analysis conducted by AMATS since 2002 has recorded declines in crashes – the most recent analysis shows a 4 percent decline from the 2006-2008 analysis. Interestingly, the rate of decline appears to have accelerated in the last several years, according to Engineer Dave Pulay.

“We suspect that's due to a combination of factors. People are driving less because of the sour economy, which has also led to a drop in vehicle miles traveled,” Pulay continues, “A number of significant safety improvements have also been completed in recent years. Improvements in vehicle safety have also contributed to the decrease in injuries and fatalities.”

The 2007-2009 analysis identifies high-crash roadway sections, intersections and freeway locations in the Greater Akron area. AMATS uses this information to identify and plan for safety improvements throughout the region.

Among the analysis' findings are that:

- Most crashes occur in the winter months of January, February and December while the most fatalities occur in the summer months of July and August.
- Portage County is home to the highest ranked high-crash roadway section (state Route 44, between Tallmadge Road and Interstate 76) and the highest ranked high-crash intersection (state Route 14/44 and state Route 88).
- Deaths from motorcycle accidents accounted for 13 percent of area traffic fatalities between 2007 and 2009.
- Large truck-related fatalities accounted for 7 percent of area traffic fatalities during the period.

The five highest ranked roadway sections, intersections and freeway sections are detailed in the map on [pages 4 and 5](#).

The analysis is available as a pdf on the Reports page of the AMATS web site at www.amatsplanning.org/maps-data/reports/.



Project Updates

The following table lists transportation projects that have been awarded between June 24, 2010 and September 15, 2010.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATES	CONTRACTOR	AMOUNT
State Route 91 - Resurfacing on state Route 91 (Darrow Road), from Howe Avenue to North River Road, in Munroe Falls .	08/2010	Karvo Paving Co. - Cuyahoga Falls -	\$318,319

New planning grant program underway and taking applications

The new Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program – a pilot project launched by AMATS – is off the ground and accepting applications.

The program will provide \$100,000 worth of grants to help communities develop transportation plans that focus on livability practices identified in the agency’s *Connecting Communities Initiative – A Guide to Integrating Land Use and Transportation* (See **CONNECTING, Page 1**).

Heather Davis Reidl, mobility planner, says that the agency is excited about the program, which

incorporates key principles of *Connecting Communities*.

“We want to see applications for planning studies that will help implement the Connecting Communities Initiative, such as sidewalk or transit-oriented development plans,” Davis Reidl explains.

Applications for the Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program are available at **www.amatsplanning.org/programs/amats-planning-grant/**. Completed applications must be submitted to the agency by **Oct. 15**.

LAHOOD VISITS PARTA: U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, seated left, first row, was on hand for the July grant signing ceremonies for the Kent Central Gateway, the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority’s new transit center. The authority received \$20 million in a federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant for the center’s construction and is the first TIGER recipient in the nation.



PARTA officials expect ground to be broken for the \$26 million center by year’s end with its opening in October 2012. On hand for the ceremony were, from left, first row, LaHood, Rhonda Reed, Federal Transit Administration Region V deputy director and John Drew, PARTA general manager. In the second row, from left, are Lester Lefton, KSU president; Stephen Colecchi, KSU board member; Congressman Tim Ryan; Eric Czetli, Ohio Department of Transportation District 4 deputy director; Bryan Smith, PARTA planning director; and Wayne Wilson, Kent City Council president pro tem.

Community Focus: Streetsboro

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

Founded – In 1798 as Streetsboro Township by Titus Street from Connecticut.

Population – 14,711 (2009 U.S. Census Bureau estimate)

Area – 24.39 square miles

Policy Committee Member - Mayor Arthur Scott

History - Major growth occurred in Streetsboro with the opening of Interstate 80 (Ohio Turnpike) in 1955. The turnpike's Exit 13 - now known as Exit 187 – was originally the only interchange in Portage County. By 1957, with the growth of the automobile industry, Streetsboro experienced a population explosion. Its proximity to Akron and Cleveland, along with direct access to the Ohio Turnpike, Interstate 480 and state Routes 14, 43 and 303 have contributed to Streetsboro's rapid growth in manufacturing, distribution, commercial and residential development over the past 50 years.

In 1968, voters decided to merge the township and the village to become one city.

Due to the steady growth of the city and the surrounding area over the past 10 years, Streetsboro has become a retail hub for Portage County.

Transportation Challenges - The Ohio Turnpike, state Routes 14, 43 and 303, and I-480 all bisect the city. The state routes are all major thoroughfares. Streetsboro is bordered by Aurora to the north, Ravenna to the east, Sugar Bush Knolls and Kent to the south and Hudson to the west. Commercial development throughout the city provides a constant flow of cars and heavy truck traffic, which accelerates the aging of its transportation infrastructure.

In 2006, the intersection of state Routes 14 and 43 was expanded as part of a major road widening project. This intersection improvement provides easier access for those trying to reach the Ohio Turnpike and I-480. This year, an upgrade, which added turn lanes at the intersection of state Route 14 and Diagonal Road, was completed. The Ohio Department of Transportation had identified this intersection as being hazardous to the traveling public due to the large number of trucks that use state Route 14.

Streetsboro officials are interested in establishing a town center to create a more vibrant community.

Web site - www.cityofstreetsboro.com



Dates to Remember

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Committee</u>	<u>Location</u>
December 2	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Stow Safety Building
December 2	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Silver Lake Village Hall
December 8	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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