



Planning for
Greater Akron

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2010 Annual Meeting speakers foresee changes ahead

“Please don’t paint me red or blue, but green,” declared AMATS Policy Committee Chairman Al Bollas in his opening remarks at the agency’s 2010 Annual Meeting on Oct. 8.

Bollas, the mayor of New Franklin, urged his fellow mayors and other officials gathered at the Sheraton Suites in Cuyahoga Falls to look beyond traditional politics when planning transportation decisions for their respective communities. The mayor said that land use and zoning must be considered as communities pursue economic development.

The mayor urged those present to read the agency’s recently completed *Connecting Communities Report*. He noted that the report provides a framework for the agency and Greater Akron area communities to pursue greater transportation choices beyond single-occupant automobiles and encourage development that supports a more effective transportation system.

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A PACKED HOUSE: The AMATS 2010 Annual Meeting drew over 120 attendees to the Sheraton Suites in Cuyahoga Falls on Oct. 8. Among the meeting’s featured speakers were Congressman Stephen LaTourette (R-14), a member of the House Subcommittee on Transportation, and Dr. Bradley Hull, an associate professor and Reid chair with the department of management, marketing and logistics at the John M. and Mary Jo Boler School of Business at John Carroll University.

New revenue, new approaches needed for nation’s transportation needs

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“Walking and biking are once again viable forms of transportation. That’s what *Connecting Communities* is all about,” the mayor continued, “Let’s make the best decisions that we can with the limited funds that we have.”

The mayor’s remarks set the tone for the meeting. Speaker after speaker noted that, in the future, transportation planning must evolve. Changes are approaching, including how transportation is funded at the federal level.

“Transportation’s in trouble,” said Congressman Stephen LaTourette in a blunt warning. The Lake County Republican added that the nation risks losing President Eisenhower’s vision of a self-sufficient, fully funded interstate system if changes aren’t made to how the nation funds its transportation needs.

A member of the House Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, the congressman recounted the work that he did with the Republican Bush administration and now with the Democratic Obama administration with regards to transportation funding.

LaTourette said that the only way to solve problems with the nation’s Highway Trust Fund is to raise revenue. The fund went bankrupt last year – the first time since its creation in 1956 - and required two multi-billion dollar bailouts by Congress. The nation must identify a sustainable funding mechanism in its next six-year transportation funding bill and abandon the “band-aid” approach of cash infusions to a fund that is supposed to be self-sufficient, the congressman observed.

“It’s either a gas tax, a VMT (Vehicle Miles Travelled tax), toll roads or an additional tax per barrel of oil,” LaTourette said.

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GETTING READY: AMATS Director Jason Segedy, left, and Dr. Bradley Hull took a few moments to discuss the day’s proceedings shortly before the annual meeting began.



VIEW FROM THE HILL: Congressman Stephen LaTourette stopped by the annual meeting to summarize legislative issues concerning transportation.



PANEL TALK: The meeting featured a panel discussion with, from left, State Director of Urban Development and Infrastructure Marvin Hayes; Kent City Manager Dave Ruller; Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Robart; and AMATS Director Jason Segedy.

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The congressman stated that, of those options, he supports an increase in the tax per barrel of oil. His remarks came roughly one week after the AMATS Policy Committee approved a resolution urging a 10 cent increase in the federal gasoline tax (See [GAS, Page 3](#)).

“If you use something, you should pay for it. If you don’t use it as much, you shouldn’t pay as much... If we take the attitude that ‘I don’t want to be on the team that raises taxes’ then we’re going to be in trouble,” LaTourette said. The congressman had criticism for other Congressional practices which he views as harming the fund. He said that the Congress must end diversions from the fund for purposes that are not directly related to highway transportation. He also criticized Congressional earmarks and discretionary spending by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation.

The day’s events included a panel discussion regarding Smart Economic Development moderated by AMATS Director Jason Segedy and featuring Marvin Hayes, director of the governor’s office of Urban Development and Infrastructure, Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Robart and Kent City Manager Dave Ruller as panelists. The trio addressed questions regarding balancing economic development with commercial sprawl and strategies to foster job growth.

The meeting’s keynote speaker was Dr. Bradley Hull, an associate professor and Reid chair with the department of management, marketing and logistics at the John M. and Mary Jo Boler School of Business at John Carroll University. Dr. Hull’s message was that Northeast Ohio has tremendous opportunities to revitalize its economy if it is willing to invest in its infrastructure for water, rail and truck transportation and utilize its resources, such as its pipeline network, its airports, Lake Erie and the Ohio River.

Segedy says that the response to the 2010 Annual Meeting was overwhelmingly positive among attendees. “This was a great opportunity to celebrate our agency’s accomplishments through the year. We’re also pleased about the reception to Dr. Hull’s speech. He presented some ideas that many of our members may not have considered before,” Segedy says.

Gas tax resolution approved by Policy Committee

In a 15-12 vote, the AMATS Policy Committee narrowly endorsed a resolution during its September meeting stating its support for a 10 cent per gallon increase in the federal gasoline tax as a way to fund the nation’s transportation needs. The resolution, which urges Congress to increase the federal gasoline tax, was first proposed by AMATS Director Jason Segedy in May.

Segedy explains that he urged the passage of the resolution because the Highway Trust Fund is bankrupt and the nation does not have enough money to address its transportation and infrastructure needs. He acknowledges that a tax increase is never a politically attractive option, but says that the alternatives – a decaying infrastructure and a massive national debt – are even less appealing options. The current federal gasoline tax of 18.4 cents per gallon has not been increased since 1993. Because the tax is not indexed to inflation, its actual purchasing power has declined significantly. Segedy says that, in passing the resolution, the committee recognized that - from a fiscal standpoint – the nation must increase its revenue to pay for transportation needs.

A copy of the resolution is available on the AMATS web site at www.amatsplanning.org/2010/09/30/agency-endorses-federal-gasoline-tax-increase/.

Communities, county and agency weighing the costs of commercial sprawl in the Montrose area

The proposed move of the Wal-Mart and Sam's Club from Rosemont Commons in Fairlawn to a site one mile away in Copley Township has grown into an issue enveloping the communities of Fairlawn, Copley, Bath Township, two developers, Summit County officials, and - the agency responsible for transportation planning in the Greater Akron area – AMATS.

Representatives of the developers – Levey & Company and Summit Management Services, Inc. – addressed the Policy Committee regarding their concerns in September. The committee also heard from fellow committee member, Fairlawn Mayor William Roth, concerning the city's position on the proposed project.

The representatives' comments came before the committee was to discuss the agency's recently completed *Rothrock Road/Montrose Planning Study: Analyzing the Effects of Commercial Sprawl*.

Montrose is one of the largest shopping destinations in the region and the new development, proposed by Larry Levey of Levey & Company, could have a major impact on the area's transportation network. The proposed site is a wooded 40-acre area along a two-lane residential street, Rothrock Road. Nearby residents are worried that traffic to a new commercial development would disrupt access to their homes.

In Fairlawn, the owner of the current home of Wal-Mart and Sam's Club, Herb Newman of Summit Management Services, Inc., doesn't want to lose his investment. (Along with building the stores, Newman contributed \$2.4 million to the widening of nearby West Market Street (state Route 18) from four to seven lanes.) Although Newman has new tenants to move into the buildings if the stores relocate, he is concerned that the move could be detrimental to traffic in the area.

In his comments before the committee, Mayor Roth said that the city of Fairlawn is facing the twin prospects that one of its residential areas will be adversely affected by the stores' move and the

possibility that hundreds of thousands of square feet of retail space within its borders will sit vacant.

Newman and Roth both stated their preference that a regional, comprehensive traffic study of the site be conducted before construction begins on a new development.

Levey Managing Vice President of Development Kevin Woodman defended the project noting that the proposed project would be built on a site that has been zoned for commercial development for 24 years. Woodman also cited a recently completed traffic study of the area by URS Consultants that he argued proves that Rothrock Road has the capacity to handle the increased traffic related to the development.

Woodman reminded the committee that the Summit-Medina county line is roughly two miles away from the proposed site and a site with the same attributes sought by Wal-Mart management, which is interstate visibility off of state Route 18, is seven miles down the road in Medina County.

It's the classic conundrum of commercial sprawl, observes Curtis Baker, AMATS planning administrator.

He notes that retail developments in the Montrose area tend to be clustered along state Route 18 (Market Street/Medina Road) and Cleveland-Massillon Road. "This particular development would deviate from the area's traditional development pattern. Our agency believes that the relocation of these stores could have a number of negative effects in Fairlawn and Copley Township," Baker observes.

He adds that commercial sprawl is one of the reasons that AMATS completed its *Connecting Communities Report*, its first attempt to improve coordination between land use and transportation planning. The ink was barely dry on the report, when the agency tackled the situation in Montrose and compiled an extensive analysis of the proposed development based on principles identified in *Connecting Communities*.



FOUR POINTS:
The accompanying map shows the current site of the Wal-Mart and Sam's Club stores in Fairlawn and the proposed site for these stores in nearby Copley Township. In its recent analysis, AMATS predicts that four key intersections, depicted in red in the map, could become highly congested traffic "choke points" if the development proceeds.

The agency's analysis finds that, if the development proceeds, it will have a substantial impact on the surrounding area's traffic and land use. The analysis states that existing traffic congestion in the Montrose area could increase by 150 percent or more upon completion of the development.

The analysis also warns that four key Montrose-area intersections could become highly congested traffic "choke points" due to the development. The intersections are Interstate 77 and Cleveland-Massillon Road; Rothrock Road and Cleveland-Massillon Road; Rothrock Road and state Route 18; and Springside Drive and state Route 18 (See map above).

Rothrock Road currently carries about 4,300 vehicles per day. AMATS anticipates that, if the new Wal-Mart and Sam's Club are built, the number of vehicles per day would increase to nearly 9,400 vehicles on an average weekday. While Rothrock Road could accommodate traffic resulting solely from the new stores if improvements such as a proposed traffic signal and three new right-turn lanes are made, the road will not accommodate the levels of traffic anticipated under

a full "build-out" of businesses that would likely follow the new stores, according to the agency's analysis.

If a full build-out of the area occurs, traffic on Rothrock Road will reach the maximum daily capacity for a two-lane road – 14,000 to 15,000 vehicles per day – on any given weekday. The agency further predicts that traffic on some portions of Rothrock Road could increase as much as 300 percent from current levels.

Traffic tie-ups aren't the only potential cost to the Montrose area if the project proceeds. The surrounding transportation system – especially the four key intersections - would require improvements estimated to cost about \$7 million, Baker warns. Additional funding would also be required for the maintenance and repair of roads and other supporting infrastructure.

The analysis recommends that a comprehensive traffic study be conducted to determine more accurate costs. The *Rothrock Road/Montrose Planning Study* is available on the agency's web site at www.amatsplanning.org/maps-data/reports/.

Project Updates

The following table lists transportation projects that have been awarded between September 16, 2010 and December 16, 2010.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATES	CONTRACTOR	AMOUNT
Interstate 76 - Redecking and painting of bridges on Wayland and McClintocksburg roads in Palmyra Township .	09/2011	A.P. O'Horo Company - Youngstown -	\$1,754,000
State Route 14 - Resurfacing and bridge rehabilitation from east of state Route 303 to eastern Streetsboro corporate line in Streetsboro .	07/2011	Karvo Paving Co. - Cuyahoga Falls -	\$960,585
State Route 43 - Minor rehabilitation and resurfacing from southern Streetsboro corporate line to south of state Route 303 in Streetsboro .	06/2011	Shelly Company - Twinsburg -	\$382,053
East Summit Street - Resurfacing from east of Loop Road to west of state Route 261 in Kent .	Not Available	Perrin Asphalt Co., Inc. - Akron -	\$247,209
Hilbish Avenue (state Route 241) - Replacement of bridge spanning Springfield Lake Outlet in Akron .	Not Available	Kenmore Construction Company - Akron -	\$550,417
State Route 619 - Resurfacing and bridge repairs from Manchester Road to the eastern New Franklin corporate line in New Franklin .	07/2011	Shelly Company - Twinsburg -	\$457,787

Community Focus: Norton

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

Founded – Organized in 1818 as Norton Township. (Norton became a city in 1969.)

Population – 11,466 (2008 U.S. Census Bureau estimate) **Area** – 20.53 square miles

Policy Committee Member - Mayor David Koontz

History – In September 1785, the area to become Norton was purchased as part of the Connecticut Western Reserve and grew to be comprised of seven Hamlets including Norton Center, Loyal Oak, Western Star, Hametown, Sherman, Johnson’s Corners and New Portage. At its formation, Norton was named after Birdseye Norton, one of the original property owners in the township. The Great Scioto Indian Trail ran through the township from the northeast. Crossing Wolf Creek, the trail turned southwest to what would become Johnson’s Corners and continued southwest in an almost identical route to modern Wooster Road.

Construction of the Ohio and Erie Canal, which began in 1827, allowed improved north-south boat travel options until its abandonment in 1913. The township’s eastern hamlet of New Portage was a canal port and was the southern-most terminus of the Portage Path Trail. The township’s first industries were sawmills, gristmills, tanneries, and blacksmith shops. Thomas Johnson built the township’s first sawmill in 1823 and first gristmill at Johnson’s Corners around 1830. By the 1890s, New Portage was a station stop on the Erie, Cleveland, Akron and Columbus railroads. Electric trolley lines were installed from Barberton to Wadsworth through Norton in 1905.

Transportation Challenges – Interstate 76, U.S. Route 224, state Route 261 (Wadsworth Road), Greenwich and Eastern roads and a portion of Wooster Road provide east-west access to Norton. State Route 21 and Hametown, Cleveland-Massillon and Barber roads provide north-south access to the city. Norton City Engineer David White says that traffic congestion is a regular occurrence along I-76. Also, a study is underway to widen and provide safety and other improvements on Cleveland-Massillon Road, from the I-76 interchange to Shannon Avenue in Barberton.

White says that a study is also needed for the Eastern Road Corridor, from state Route 585 to state Route 619. Such a study should identify how to close a gap across the Tuscarawas River and the Ohio & Erie Canal, which would benefit Norton and adjacent communities, he explains. He adds that the city also needs a new interchange in the vicinity of Dorothy Avenue to provide better access from state Route 21.

Funds are needed to implement the Wolf Creek-Pigeon Creek Trail, which would connect Barberton to Copley Township through Norton, and for trails in the vicinity of Lake Dorothy to connect the city to Medina County. There is also a need to improve pedestrian access in the central portion of Norton.

Web site - www.cityofnorton.org



Dates to Remember

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Committee</u>	<u>Location</u>
January 20	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Stow Safety Building
January 20	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Silver Lake Village Hall
January 26	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Martin University Center The University of Akron
March 17	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Stow Safety Building
March 17	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Silver Lake Village Hall
March 23	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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Director - Jason Segedy

Editor/writer - Kerry Prater

Phone - 330-375-2436 / Fax - 330-375-2275

E-Mail - amats@akronohio.gov

Please visit our web site at: www.amatsplanning.org

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