



Planning for Greater Akron

# The AMATS Quarterly

THE JOURNAL OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING FOR THE GREATER AKRON AREA

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## Sustainability grant will help Northeast Ohio take first steps to new regionalism

In its simplest terms, Northeast Ohio received a \$4.25 million grant from the federal government to answer one question: How can the region be better than it is?

While that question may oversimplify the task before the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium, it does summarize the challenge the group faces.

*“In the past, we’ve been too focused on institutions rather than ideas. We need to change that culture.”*

**- Jason Segedy, Director, AMATS -**

The consortium has three years to develop a regional sustainability plan that integrates planning strategies for housing, land use, transportation, community development, environmental protection, infrastructure and economic development for a 12-county planning area encompassing Cleveland, Akron, Canton and Youngstown.

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**MAKING THE CASE:** Clean Fuels Ohio sponsored “The Compelling Case for Natural Gas Vehicles” conference at the Canton Memorial Civic Center in mid-March. Stephe Yborra, NGV America market development director, shown at left, was the day’s featured speaker. CFO Executive Director Sam Spofforth, shown at right, says that 2011 will be a big year for the group as it works with its partners to establish eight new natural gas refueling stations throughout the state by year’s end.

## Consortium aims for regional cooperation over competition

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Northeast Ohio received the grant from the new federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities last October.

The partnership is an interagency collaboration among the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).

Among the aims of the collaboration is the promotion of planning practices that foster sustainability, regional connectivity and cooperation. The consortium will promote practices that revitalize existing urban neighborhoods, retrofit suburban neighborhoods, and preserve rural and agricultural land.

Another aim of the collaboration is curbing the competition among communities for economic development projects that may be at odds with each others' interests. The collaboration will encourage cooperation and strategic planning among communities in how they grow.

AMATS, along with Northeast Ohio's other three metropolitan planning organizations, is one of the key leadership organizations in the group. Jason Segedy, AMATS Director, will be vice chairman of the effort. Steve Hambley, Medina County Commissioner, will be the chairman. Hunter Morrison, the former planning director for the city of Cleveland, will be hired as program director.

The task before the consortium may seem daunting, but it represents a unique and tremendous opportunity for the region, according to Segedy.

"We're viewing this as a catalyst to rethink our approach to planning in Northeast Ohio. Our current approach is obsolete," Segedy observes. He cites as an example outdated policies that prohibit the sharing of services among municipalities, counties, and townships or collaborative efforts among agencies. Such measures could help local governments reduce their costs.

"In the past, we've been too focused on institutions rather than ideas. We need to change that culture," Segedy continues, "This effort is a step in that direction."



## Improvements in area traffic congestion may impact future project funding

The news that traffic congestion is improving in the Greater Akron area may bring some sense of relief to the area's motorists as they pay higher fuel prices.

The *2010 Existing Congestion Study* compiled by AMATS shows a marked improvement on area roadways when compared to a similar study compiled just four years earlier. Existing congestion studies measure the capacity of the area's freeways, arterials and intersections to accommodate traffic volume during busy travel times.

AMATS Engineer Amy Prater says that the area saw significant declines in congestion compared to 2006. A combination of people driving less and the completion of a number of major improvement projects, such as state Route 8 in northern Summit County, may be the reasons for the improving numbers, Prater says.

These findings are consistent with other agency analyses such as crash studies and volume trends. Crashes and traffic counts have been much lower in the last few years as the economy has continued to struggle and fewer cars and trucks are on the road.

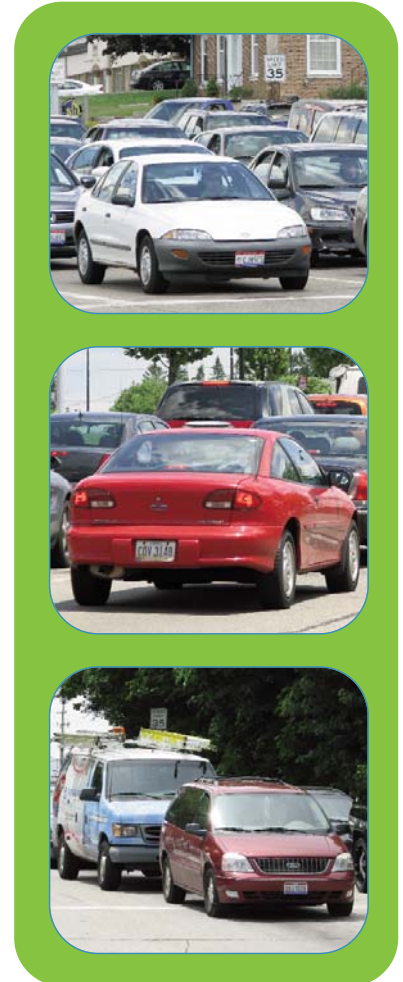
"However, this is probably welcome news to motorists who are spending less time in traffic. It also means that communities will have the ability to devote more of the area's increasingly scarce funding resources to maintaining what we have rather than taking on costly expansion projects," she observes.

While the Greater Akron area saw improvements, the latest totals do not mean that the area does not have its share of congestion problems. Prater notes that the analysis identified a number of freeway and arterial segments as deficient. "While congestion improved overall, clearly it will continue to be an issue in some locations well into the foreseeable future," she says.

Congestion studies are key elements in the transportation planning process as they provide accurate and current assessments of traffic conditions. The *2010 Existing Congestion Study* will be an integral resource used by the agency to update its long-range regional transportation plan for the Greater Akron area through the year 2035.

Unique to the latest study is the inclusion of weave analyses of 19 area freeway segments. AMATS Engineer Dave Pulay explains that the agency believed that analyses were necessary because of the high number of vehicle lane changes in these locations due to closely spaced entrance and exit ramps. "When you have a lot of vehicles merging right to get off and left to get on, that can be a dangerous situation which impedes traffic flow," Pulay says. The two most closely spaced interchanges, Wolf Ledges/Grant Street and Main Street/Broadway in Akron, were among the segments analyzed. These segments, together with the Central Interchange, rank as the region's top congestion and safety concerns.

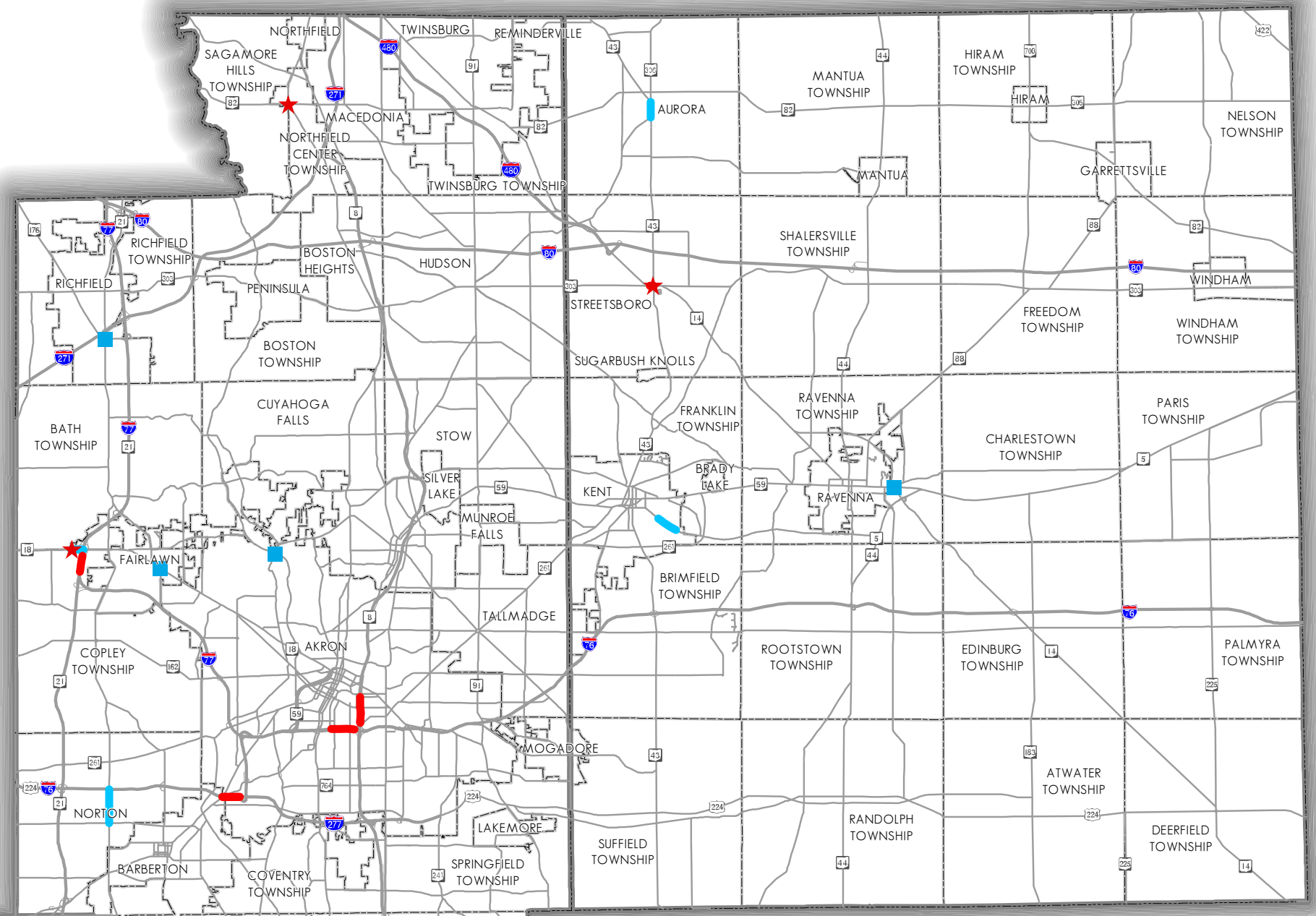
Tables and a map detailing the six most deficient freeway segments under the weave analysis, the five most deficient arterial segments and a capacity analysis of seven intersections are presented on **pages 4 and 5**. The *2010 Existing Congestion Study* is available on the agency web site at [www.amatsplanning.org](http://www.amatsplanning.org).



Six Most Deficient Freeway Weave Segments		
Freeway	From	To
State Route 8 Southbound	Carroll Street	Interstate 76 / 77 Interchange
Interstate 76 / US 224 Eastbound	Wooster Road North	Interstate 277
Interstate 76 / 77 Westbound	Interstate 77 / State Route 8	Wolf Ledges / Grant Street
Interstate 76 / US 224 Westbound	Interstate 277	Wooster Road North
State Route 8 Northbound	Interstate 76 / 77	Carroll Street
Interstate 77 Southbound	State Route 18	State Route 21

Five Most Deficient Arterial Segments		
Arterial	From	To
State Route 14	State Route 303 (West Leg)	State Route 43
Summit Street	Campus Center Drive	Loop Road
State Route 18 (Medina Road)	Crystal Lake Road	Interstate 77
State Route 43 (Chillicothe Road)	Aurora-Hudson Road	State Route 306
Cleveland-Massillon Road	Norton Avenue	Interstate 76 Westbound Ramps

Intersection Capacity Analysis	
Intersection	Average Daily Traffic Volume
State Route 18 (Medina Road) / Crystal Lake Road	49,876
State Route 82 / Olde Eight Road / Brandywine Road	31,038
State Route 14 / State Route 43 / State Route 303	57,240
State Route 176 (Wheatley Road) / Brecksville Road	22,970
State Route 14 / State Route 59 / Newton Falls Road	29,400
North Portage Path / Merriman Road	24,710
State Route 18 (West Market Street) / Miller Road	38,910



2010 MOST CONGESTED ROADWAYS / INTERSECTIONS

- FREEWAYS / ARTERIALS
- INTERSECTIONS
- ★ Level of Service "F"
- ★ Over Capacity
- Level of Service "E"
- At Capacity



## Project Updates

The following table lists projects that have been awarded between December 16, 2010 and March 16, 2011.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATES	CONTRACTOR	AMOUNT
<b>State Route 18</b> - Resurfacing of state Route 18 (West Market Street), from western Akron corporate line to Waldorf Drive and Westgate Circle to Twin Oaks Road, in <b>Akron</b> .	07/2011	Shelly & Sands, Inc. - Zanesville -	\$689,089
<b>Bike and Hike Trail</b> - Construction of a bike and hike trail in <b>Sagamore Hills</b> and <b>Northfield Center townships</b> .	08/2011	Shelly & Sands, Inc. - Zanesville -	\$1,093,308
<b>State Route 82</b> - Resurfacing and bridge repair on state Routes 82 and 306 in <b>Aurora</b> and <b>Mantua Township</b> .	07/2011	The Shelly Company - Twinsburg -	\$825,303

## Planning on doing some biking soon? So are we! We should meet!

If cycling is one of your passions, AMATS wants to hear from you during its upcoming Public Bike Meetings in April. Specifically, the agency wants to know:

- Where do you like to ride and how do you get there?
- What can be done to our roads and trails to improve your experience?
- How can we better promote biking in our region?

Your insights will help us in crafting a Bike Plan and a Bike User’s Map for the Greater Akron area.

The plan will guide the development of future bicycle facilities and amenities in the region. The map will identify bikeable trails and lanes and will be a resource available to cyclists plotting their routes and communities planning new bike and pedestrian-friendly projects.



The agency hosted an April 13 meeting at the Highland Square Branch Library in Akron to launch its outreach to the cycling community. A second meeting is scheduled in Kent at the following date, time and location.

### Kent Free Library

312 West Main Street in Kent  
Wednesday, April 27 at 5:30 p.m.

If you would like additional information, please contact AMATS Transportation Planner **Jennifer Rose** at **330-375-2436** or at **JRose@AkronOhio.gov**.

## Community Focus: Aurora

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

**Founded** – 1799 by Ebenezer Sheldon. (Aurora became a city in 1960.)

**Population** – 15,548 (2010 U.S. Census Bureau total) **Area** – 24.18 square miles

**Policy Committee Member** - Mayor Lynn E. McGill

**History** – Much of Aurora Township's early settlements were along three main roadways, with the first being Cleveland-Warren Road (Pioneer Trail and state Route 43) which was constructed in 1802. The second main roadway was the Chillicothe Turnpike, which began at Lake Erie and extended south until it reached Aurora, where it continued to Hudson and ended at the then-state capital of Chillicothe. The Aurora segment of the turnpike is now called Aurora-Hudson Road.

The third roadway was Bissell and David (Old Mill) roads. By opening up landlocked property for settlement through road construction, the Connecticut Land Co. encouraged purchasers of land to settle in this area and not merely hold the property for speculation.

Over the years, businesses were established at the intersections of these early roads. Aurora developed three major areas of commerce, especially for grist and saw mills given the location of the Chagrin River as a power source. These areas were: Chillicothe Road in what is known as the Town Center area; the intersection of Garfield Road and the Chagrin River now known as Aurora Station; and Centerville Mills near Chillicothe and Crackel roads and the Chagrin River.

The New York Pennsylvania and Ohio Railroad began construction through Aurora in 1853. Railroad lines were fully operational three years later and contributed greatly to the area's growth and its new industry: cheese.

Aurora has experienced significant population growth over the last 30 years. The city has grown from 8,177 residents in 1980 to 15,548 in 2010, an increase of more than 90 percent, according to the latest U.S. Census data available.

**Transportation Challenges** – State Routes 43 and 306 extend in a north-south direction through Aurora while state Route 82 extends in an east-west direction, bisecting the city. Other major roads providing access to the city are Pioneer Trail, Bissell Drive and Aurora Hudson, Eggleston, Mennonite and Treat roads. A Norfolk Southern rail line extends through the northeast portion of Aurora.

Aurora Public Service Director John Trew says that, with the three-year, more-than \$7 million widening of state Route 43 nearing completion, the city must focus on the challenge of integrating sidewalks and creating a pedestrian-friendly environment. "While we maintain and improve vehicular movements, we must maintain the community's pedestrian environment for local residents, a balance that all too often has been lost in the stringent engineering of projects. Planning and leveraging funds will be the key to our success," Trew says.

**Web site** - [www.auroraoh.com](http://www.auroraoh.com)



## Dates to Remember

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Committee</u>	<u>Location</u>
April 13	6:30 p.m.	Public Bike Meeting	Highland Square Branch Library
April 27	5:30 p.m.	Public Bike Meeting	Kent Free Library
May 12	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Stow Safety Building
May 12	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Silver Lake Village Hall
May 18	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Martin University Center
August 11	1:30 p.m.	TAC	The University of Akron
August 11	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Stow Safety Building
August 17	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Silver Lake Village Hall
			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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