

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

2024 Planning Grant

APPLICATION

Due February 9, 2024



Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
1 Cascade Plaza | Suite 1300
Akron, Ohio 44308

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

2024 Planning Grant

PURPOSE

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study developed Connecting Communities - A Guide to Integrating Land Use and Transportation to better understand the relationship between land use and transportation to encourage transportation projects which support vibrant, healthy and inclusive places. The purpose of the Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program is to further the principles of Connecting Communities through funding to develop transportation plans that will lead to projects eligible for AMATS funds.

Connecting Communities Planning Grant applications should further the following Connecting Communities principles:

- Increase alternative transportation options to connect people and places
- Promote Complete Street principles to create vibrant and safe places for all users
- Leverage transportation projects to develop places which support alternative transportation and complete streets through land use and design

The full Connecting Communities - A Guide to Integrating Land Use and Transportation document is available on the AMATS website, as well as, past recipients' reports at <https://amatsplanning.org/planning/initiatives/connecting-communities/>.

Previously, AMATS funded six rounds of transportation plans through the planning grant program for a total of more than \$500,000, leveraging an additional \$74,800 in matching funds in the fourth round. Earlier planning grant recipients were awarded larger amounts to complete more comprehensive studies. While there is still a need to fund these larger studies, it has also become apparent that there is a need to fund studies of smaller areas with specific infrastructure problems. Targeted projects focus on a specific issue with the goal of finding an implementable solution. While more comprehensive transportation plans are sometimes necessary, targeted plans more often give results in a timely and cost-effective manner.

With \$80,000 available, AMATS hopes to fund two \$40,000 projects through the Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program. Local communities, as well as Regional Transit Authorities and county park districts within the AMATS area are eligible to apply. Applications may have more than one sponsor. Applications for no more than two grants may be submitted per sponsor. A selection committee, the Connecting Communities Planning Grant Task Force, will be charged with reviewing sponsors' applications and making recommendations to the Policy Committee. Grant awards will be determined by the Policy Committee on March 28, 2024. For more information or questions contact Heather Davis Reidl at hreidl@akronohio.gov or 330-375-2436 ext. 4434.

Please provide an electronic copy of the application by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, February 9, 2024 to:

hreidl@akronohio.gov

Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
RE: Planning Grant
1 Cascade Plaza, Suite 1300
Akron, OH 44308

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CONNECTING COMMUNITIES PRINCIPLES

ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

Alternative transportation refers to any type of non-motorized transportation. *Connecting Communities - A Guide to Integrating Land Use and Transportation* focuses on pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation alternatives which improve safety, enhance mobility and encourage transportation choices.

Pedestrian infrastructure promotes livable communities by increasing pedestrian safety, providing an alternative to driving, and encouraging community interaction and exercise. Pedestrian areas should be targeted where the land use is most conducive, such as higher density, mixed-use areas. Investments in pedestrian infrastructure include sidewalks, crosswalks, curb ramps, signs, street lighting, and benches.

Bicycling facilities play an important role in the transportation system. They provide recreational opportunities and an alternative to automobile transportation. Bike facilities, including trails, bike lanes, wide shoulders, bike racks, pavement markings, and signs, provide a safe environment for people to bike and encourage biking for commuting, enjoyment, and exercise.

Public transportation is a critical part of the transportation system. It provides access to employment, schools, shopping, and residential neighborhoods. It also provides alternate modes of transportation and helps reduce congestion and pollution. Increasing transit usage and transit as a viable option is an important element of creating a balanced transportation network.

COMPLETE STREETS

Complete streets are designed and operated to ensure safe access for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists of all ages and abilities. Complete streets utilize the road and right-of-way to create a safe and comfortable environment for all, encouraging walking and bicycling for commuting and recreation. Complete streets look different depending on the area and type of street. A complete street in an urban area may have sidewalks and bike lanes, while a rural complete street may have wide shoulders and share-the-road signs. Elements of a complete street will vary depending on the neighborhood type and area, but may include sidewalks, bike lanes or wide shoulders, median islands, crosswalks, bus lanes and bicycle and pedestrian signals.

LAND USE AND DESIGN

The purpose of Connecting Communities was to better understand the relationship between land use and transportation to encourage transportation projects which support vibrant, healthy and inclusive places. Places where people of all ages, abilities and income have viable transportation choices to get to schools, jobs, shopping and recreation. Land use patterns, urban design and density are vital aspects in effective alternative transportation and complete streets projects. While they vary in the community context, common elements include buildings up to the street, mixed-use development, walkable neighborhoods, public spaces and placemaking.

- *Connecting Communities - A Guide to Integrating Land Use and Transportation*

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ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE

To be eligible for a Connecting Communities Planning Grant, a project must:

- Be intended for transportation planning
- Be site specific
- Result in transportation and land use improvements that are consistent with the Connecting Communities Initiative

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- Preliminary Engineering
- Final Design
- Preparation of environmental documentation
- Right-of-way acquisition
- Preparation of bid documents
- Construction

AMATS Connecting Communities Planning Grant 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2020, and 2023 grant recipients can be viewed here: <http://amatsplanning.org/planning/initiatives/connecting-communities/>

PROCESS

Once the planning grants have been awarded, AMATS staff will meet with the community for a kick-off meeting and to prepare a Request for Proposals to hire a consultant. AMATS will then work with the chosen consultant to execute a contract to perform the requested work. While the contract process is ongoing, AMATS staff will continue to work with the recipient to better identify the existing conditions and the desired outcomes of the study. Once the contract is signed by all parties, the consultant will then take the lead with the study, determining a schedule and pace to complete the project while working as a team with both the community and the AMATS staff.

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APPLICATION

Local commitment, in the form of specific legislation, is required of sponsors and co-sponsors seeking planning grant funds at the application deadline. This ensures that Councils and Boards recognize that the project is being submitted for federal funding. Legislation must include the following: project name, description and cost. All projects are required to include legislation. Sample legislation is provided at [AMATS Connecting Communities – AMATS \(amatsplanning.org\)](https://amatsplanning.org). Failure to submit legislation by the established due date may result in cancellation of project application.

I. Applicant/Sponsor (Implementing Governmental Agency Only).

Community/Agency
Community Project Manager
Phone Number
Email Address
Mailing Address

2. Project Co-Sponsor (If applicable. Please indicate which agency and project manager will be the lead.)

Community/Agency
Community Project Manager
Phone Number
Email Address
Mailing Address

3. Planning Study Summary

List the planning study title and briefly describe the project. (150 words max.)

4. Study Area & Map

Please describe in detail the study area, including physical boundaries and limits. Include a map of the proposed project planning area, with limits of the study area clearly visible.

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Please answer the remaining questions. Answers should be **no longer than 1 page per question** and attached to this application. Please include any supporting documentation such as pedestrian counts, crash reports, or identification on AMATS reports or other community plans.

5. Purpose & Need (25 points)

What are the transportation issues facing the area?

How will this project address these needs to improve the community?

List any current projects that demonstrate prior commitment to addressing these issues.

6. Outcomes (15 points)

The program is designed to provide communities with funding to develop transportation plans that will lead to projects eligible for AMATS funds.

- What are the expected outcomes?
- What does success look like?

7. Connecting Communities Principles (30 points)

How does this project further the goals of Connecting Communities outlined below?

- Increase alternative transportation options to connect people and places
- Promote Complete Street principles to create vibrant and safe places for all users
- Leverage transportation projects/funding to develop places which support alternative transportation and complete streets through land use and design

8. Level of Use (10 points)

As a result of the project, what is the anticipated level of use/positive impact you expect to have? Please describe and include any data which supports how many people will be served by the project.

Scoring Breakdown:

Project Purpose & Need	25 points
Project Outcomes	15 points
Connecting Communities Principles	30 points
Level of Use	10 points
*First Award	5 points
Total	85 points

*An additional 5 points will be awarded to sponsors that have not previously received a planning grant.