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THE GREATER AKRON AREA'S TRANSPORTATION JOURNAL

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*Above Photo courtesy of YRC
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Catching a bus! Introducing our new 2020 Transit Plan

The new AMATS *2020 Transit Plan* charts a new route for transit service in the Greater Akron area. AMATS Mobility Planner Heather Davis Reidl says that the plan builds on the momentum of recent accomplishments by the agency and the region's transit providers, METRO of Summit County and PARTA of Portage County.

"The *2020 Transit Plan* represents a more ambitious effort by AMATS to promote the region's transit network. We're not looking at transit as a separate piece of our area's transportation system that serves select populations with unique needs. In this plan, transit is more integrated with our highway, bike and pedestrian networks," Reidl explains.

The transit plan will be a key component of the agency's next update of the regional long-range transportation plan, which will examine the current and future needs of the Greater Akron area's system of transportation networks. The long-range plan will include policy and project recommendations to meet identified needs. The agency took a fresh approach in developing the new plan and in assessing the area's transit systems, according to Reidl. In previous reports, the agency analyzed the Level of Service (LOS) of METRO and PARTA bus routes, which represented the convenience of a transit line to potential passengers. The agency would accordingly assign letter grades of "A" for high frequency of bus service through "F" for less frequency and longer passenger wait times.

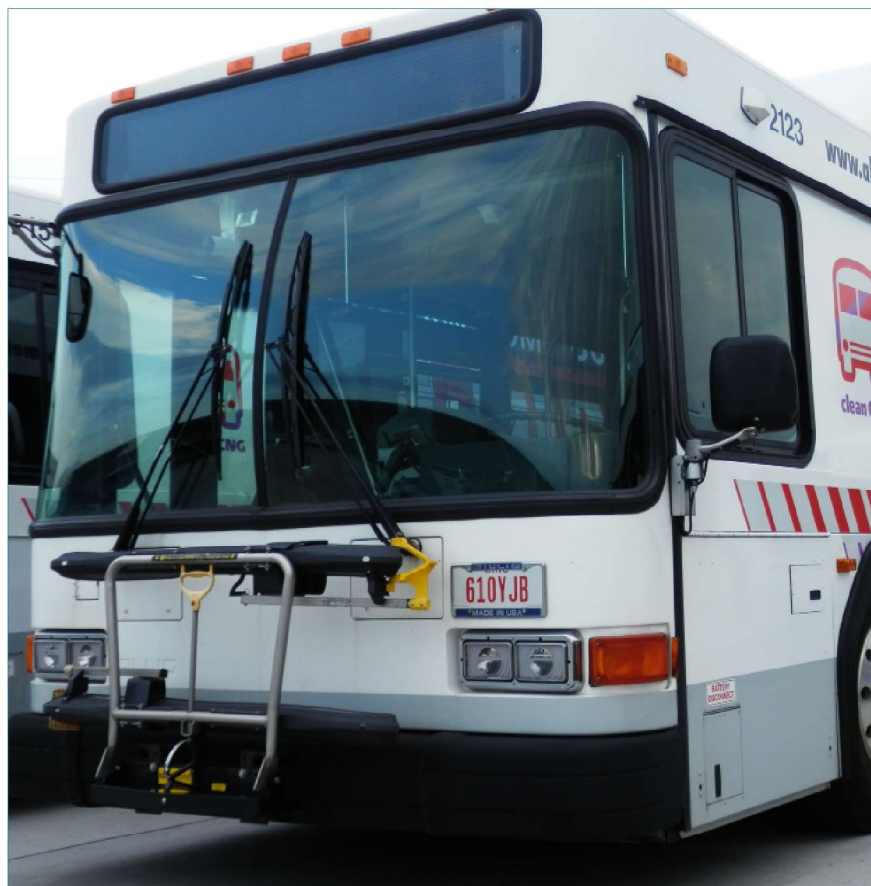
The agency decided that a fresh approach was needed to gauge the quality of service provided by the area's operators. Reidl explains that AMATS determined that a Headway Performance Analysis offered the best strategy for this new approach. "Headway" is the amount of time between transit vehicle arrivals at a stop. For example, a suburban route that has a bus once an hour has a 60 minute headway. The agency's analysis is based on three headway performance measures: Superior Performance (SP), Acceptable Performance (AP) and Potential Service Improvement (PSI). "SP" is defined as frequent transit service to the point that passengers don't need schedules to expect service. "AP" entails the maximum desirable wait time for passengers and is generally an unattractive service for riders with other transportation options. "PSI" represents an extended wait time for passengers and is an unattractive option to all would-be riders.

Together, METRO and PARTA provide an impressive level of service for roughly 700,000 transit users throughout the Greater Akron area and operate a combined 53 routes – 36 for METRO and 17 for PARTA - along with providing demand response and express bus services. Both transit agencies provide mobility access for disabled, elderly, minority and low-income residents. The *2020 Transit Plan* notes that excellent transit coverage is provided in Akron, Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Franklin Township, Kent, Ravenna, Silver Lake and Windham. METRO's Downtown Akron Shuttle (DASH) service and PARTA's Route #58 - Summit East/Front Campus attained the highest rating of SP in the plan. Both transit agencies offer a total of 15 routes rated at AP throughout the area with eight provided by METRO and seven provided by PARTA.

The plan adds that, while both agencies have improved their service offerings and embraced the



REIDL



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use of new technologies such as Compressed Natural Gas systems and phone apps such as EZfare and SPOT PARTA, there are opportunities for both transit authorities to improve their services with regards to frequency, locations and infrastructure. A number of the agencies' routes are classified as PSI, which means that passengers are waiting a minimum of 30 minutes for the bus to pick them up and many wait even longer.

In Summit County, Stow and Twinsburg have large populations of elderly, low income, minority and people with disabilities, and yet have poor transit coverage. The communities of Green and Tallmadge also showed gaps in their transit coverage.

In Portage County, Streetsboro has significant populations of low income, minority and people with disabilities. The plan finds that there is limited transit coverage for low income riders and poor coverage for minority and disabled populations within this community. The plan also finds that Kent, while having strong transit coverage, could improve service for persons with disabilities as only 44 percent of this population is covered by transit.

In its recommendations, the plan states that these communities would benefit from improved coordination with METRO and PARTA regarding travel patterns and what amenities would better serve the needs of their respective residents. While admitting that traditional bus service may not offer the best solutions for these communities, the plan urges that the ultimate goal between parties should be finding the most efficient solutions that meet the needs of residents.

The plan further recommends that both transit agencies improve access to their routes and services and consider increasing service frequency to certain busy routes, especially those that include shorter trips. The plan notes that both agencies have express routes that should be reviewed for potential improvements to benefit other riders beyond daily commuters. "Adding a midday trip to Cleveland for both METRO and PARTA would be helpful for many who might not be commuting for work, but instead traveling north for a doctor appointment for example," Reidl continues, "This could make such services more attractive and result in an increase in ridership."

Bus shelters and sidewalks present additional opportunities to improve transit access, according to the plan. There are a total of 2,625 bus stops in the Greater Akron area, with 2,259 belonging to METRO and 366 belonging to PARTA. The plan suggests that shelters be installed at frequently used stops as shelters provide a more welcoming environment for transit users and improve the public's perception of transit.

The plan notes that new shelters could be part of a larger effort by the region to foster a strong multimodal network that includes bike paths, crosswalks and sidewalks as key elements. Many of the Greater Akron area's existing walking networks consist of community sidewalks that are along busy roadways that also serve as transit routes. The plan states that communities and project sponsors should make pedestrian improvements a priority on those routes and streets with high traffic volumes and speeds. Area communities should also work closely with METRO and PARTA when developing new sidewalk networks and when planning improvements to existing ones.

Other plan recommendations to boost transit ridership are improved amenities at transit stops based on considerations such as the number of passenger boardings and their proximity to key destinations such as community and medical facilities. The plan notes that, such amenities do not necessarily have to be bus shelters, but include such cost-effective options as Simme-Seats, which provide limited seating options for passengers at a fraction of the cost of a fully enclosed shelter. The complete *2020 Transit Plan* is available for viewing by clicking [here](#).

Hauling Freight! New 2020 Freight Plan promotes area commerce

Because freight transportation is a key piece of Northeast Ohio's economy, AMATS has compiled a new *2020 Freight Plan* that identifies the elements of the Greater Akron area's transportation system that are critical to the movement of bulk goods. The plan also recommends potential improvements to promote freight-related commerce and delivery throughout the region.



AMATS Planner Darryl Kleinhenz says that the *2020 Freight Plan* will be a key component of the agency's upcoming long-range regional transportation plan, which will examine the current and future needs of the Greater Akron area's transportation system of highways, public transit and bike and pedestrian networks. The long-range plan will include policy and project recommendations to meet identified needs.



KLEINHENZ

Examples of transportation projects that are freight-related or critical to goods movement include bridge replacements, road widenings, rail-access improvements, grade separations for highway and rail, and connections for new commercial infrastructure. Kleinhenz explains that the latest iteration of the agency's freight plan is taking on added significance given its economic ramifications.

"The movement of freight is vital to our region's economy, specifically to its agriculture, retail and manufacturing sectors," Kleinhenz continues, "Goods arriving late can have negative impacts on production times, inventory management and costs, which is obviously bad for business."

Kleinhenz adds that the agency largely considered freight shipped by truck and train during development of the plan. He says that a unique aspect of this freight plan is the inclusion of "job hubs," which are recognized locations where products are manufactured and goods are being delivered.

"Fourteen job hubs were studied as part of this report to determine where freight may encounter traffic issues. The plan offers recommendations to address issues within these hubs' 'freight corridors'," Kleinhenz explains. Downtown Akron and Akron's East, Firestone Park and Gilchrist Road areas, the Akron-Canton Airport, Aurora/Streetsboro, Barberton, Brimfield Township, the Chapel Hill area, Cuyahoga Falls, Hudson/Stow, Green, Richfield, and Twinsburg are home to the plan's job hubs and freight corridors.

The *2020 Freight Plan* is also the first such report to be developed under new state and federal performance measures. Performance management focuses attention on national transportation goals, increases the accountability of federal fund programming, and improves project decision-making through performance-based planning. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and AMATS have established performance goals for the Greater Akron area and will jointly assess the region's performance over time. These performance measures address such issues as safety, infrastructure condition, traffic congestion, system reliability, vehicle emissions and freight movement.

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The plan's recommendations state that improvements to the Greater Akron area's highway system represent the region's highest priority with regards to freight transport needs. Freight movement is heavily concentrated on the region's freeways and major state routes. The number of trucks on these roads range from 50 to 15,000 trucks per day, with Interstate 76 through Portage and Summit counties being the busiest freeway for trucks.

The plan's recommendations include three general strategies to guide the region's freight planning process and sets of specific approaches to meet identified highway, rail and railroad-highway grade separation needs. The plan's ongoing strategies include: developing and maintaining databases and analysis tools for decision-making; interacting with AMATS members and freight stakeholders to better understand the freight system; and incorporating freight into the regional transportation planning process.

Specific recommendations to meet identified highway needs include the addition of a truck lane to northbound Interstate 77 in the Bath Township/Richfield area and improvements to the I-77/state Route 21/state Route 18 Interchange. Rail needs recommendations include improvements to the CSX Lambert (Southwest Akron) Line extending to the Warwick section near Clinton and improvements to the Norfolk-Southern Cleveland to Pennsylvania Line extending through Macedonia, Hudson and Ravenna.

The region made significant progress on the previous set of recommendations that were included in the *2012 Freight Plan*, according to Kleinhenz. Since that plan's approval, ODOT has completed improvements to ramps in Akron's Kenmore Leg area of I-76 and Interstate 277. The \$113 million South Main/Broadway Interchange project and various improvements on I-76, including multi-million dollar upgrades to the Central Interchange, are also well underway.

The complete *2020 Freight Plan* is available for viewing by clicking [here](#).

Photo courtesy of YRC Worldwide Inc.



Project Updates

The following table lists significant projects that were awarded between April 23, 2020 and Sept. 21, 2020.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	AMOUNT
S. Van Buren Avenue/W. Waterloo Road - Resurfacings of S. Van Buren Avenue, between Snyder Avenue and Robinson Avenue, and W. Waterloo Road, between Wooster Road (state Route 619) and Cordelia Avenue (Barberton East Corporate Limit) in Barberton. Project includes ADA ramp upgrades.	9/30/2020	\$539,903
Moore Road Sidewalks - Construction of new sidewalks on Moore Road, from Arlington Road to Charleston Drive, in Green.	10/31/2020	\$511,558
S. Main Street - Resurfacing of S. Main Street, from Mount Pleasant Road to West Caston Road, in New Franklin.	11/1/2020	\$785,859
Cleveland Massillon Road/Ridgewood Road Intersection - Improvements at the Cleveland Massillon Road/Ridgewood Road intersection. Project will add eastbound left-turn lane and southbound right-turn lane, pedestrian signal upgrades, and drainage improvements.	12/1/2020	\$396,697
US 224/state Route 241 Intersection - Improvements at the US 224/state Route 241 intersection in Akron. Project includes signal reconstruction and restricting turning movements at nearby drives.	12/1/2020	\$525,649
State Route 91 - Resurfacing of state Route 91, from Ohio Turnpike Bridge to Middleton Road, in Hudson. Project includes turn lane additions at Valley View Road, Herrick Park Drive, and Hines Hill Road.	2/1/2021	\$5,765,571
State Route 18 - Resurfacing portions of state Route 18, from Revere Road to Westgate Circle and from Maplewood Road to Main Street, in Akron. AMATS will fund curb ramps and full depth pavement repairs.	8/30/2021	\$1,931,111
Main Street Corridor Phase 2 - Construction of a complete streets corridor project on South Main Street, between Mill Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (state Route 59), in Akron. Project includes roadway and sidewalk replacement, traffic signal upgrades, cycle track additions and landscaping.	10/25/2021	\$14,331,313
Cleveland-Massillon Road - Traffic improvements at Cleveland Massillon Road, Interstate 77 northbound ramp and Rothrock Road in Fairlawn. Project includes construction of a roundabout at Cleveland Massillon and Rothrock roads. Project will restrict I-77 northbound exit ramp to right-turn only while widening Cleveland Massillon Road from roundabout north to Commercial Drive. Project includes reconstruction of a signal at the Rosemont Boulevard/Elgin Drive intersection and the construction of a shared-use path.	6/30/2022	\$8,180,955

HITTING THE TRAILS:

AMATS and three Greater Akron area mayors got rolling with the *Move With The Mayor* initiative in late July. The initiative is part of a nationwide effort to promote heart health by encouraging people to stay active during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The mayors of Akron, Cuyahoga Falls and Tallmadge urge everyone to enjoy the area's many bike and hike trails.

The mayors used GoPro cameras to record their rides on the area's Towpath and Freedom trails. The mayors narrated their journeys, which were later posted online as virtual rides.

At top right, Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan gives viewers a mayor's-eye perspective of his route, which took him on a 25-mile trip on the Freedom Trail from Kent to downtown Akron.

Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Walters, shown second from top, travels down the Towpath Trail from the Botzum Trailhead to the Northside Station. Tallmadge Mayor David Kline, bottom at right, treks down a portion of the Freedom Trail from Tallmadge City Hall to Akron's Brittain Road.

AMATS Planner Darryl Kleinhenz, in front at bottom left, not only organized the virtual rides for the agency and mayors, but also worked the GoPro camera for Mayor Kline. To view a video about the *Move With The Mayor* initiative, please click [here](#).



Dates to Remember

Date	Time	Committee/Event	Location
October 9	8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Annual Meeting	CANCELLED
October 12	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Columbus Day
November 11	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Veterans Day
November 26-27	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Thanksgiving
December 10	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Virtual Meeting
December 10	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
December 17	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Virtual Meeting
December 25	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Christmas Day

The City of Akron is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities are able to fully participate in public programs, services, and activities. Anyone who is in need of an accommodation from any City department is invited to contact Donald Rice, Director of Human Resources, 166 South High Street, Room 103, Akron, Ohio 44308, (voice) 330-375-2780 as soon as possible. If you require TDD phone service call Ohio Relay at 800-750-0750 and they will assist in contacting the Department of Human Resources at (330) 375-2780.

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