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On the Cusp

2019 was my last year as chair of the Policy Committee of the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS). During the course of the year, I began to realize that the Greater Akron area – like the rest of the world – is on the cusp of a new era for transportation: the 2020s. In this new era, the dynamics and pace of transportation planning will change rapidly due to the impact of new technologies such as autonomous vehicles (AVs) and electric vehicles (EVs). Yet, even as we enter this new era, old challenges are likely to remain: the need for transportation funding, quality of life issues, and meeting public needs.

I am proud to report that in 2019 our agency prepared for these new challenges and addressed old ones as we took the region's first steps into this new era.

The month of December saw a flurry of activity by AMATS. In its final meeting of the year, the agency awarded nearly \$32 million in project funds from the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality, Surface Transportation Block Grant, Transportation Alternatives Set Aside and Resurfacing programs for 32 projects throughout the region.

During that same meeting, the committee approved the 2019 Active Transportation Plan (ATP) and the Traffic Crashes and Safety Performance Measures 2016-2018. The ATP presents the various strategies and recommendations that the Greater Akron area will pursue to improve the region's bicycling and pedestrian networks over the next 26 years. The crash report identifies high-crash locations throughout the region and is used by the agency to pinpoint potential safety improvement projects. The report includes new safety performance measures detailing the strategies that AMATS will follow to achieve federal standards regarding reductions in fatal and serious injuries on all public roads.

December's meeting closed out a productive year for the agency. In March, the AMATS Policy Committee expressed its support to Gov. Mike DeWine and the Ohio General Assembly for a politically risky increase in the state gas tax to fund Ohio's transportation needs. Shortly thereafter, the committee went a step further to urge policymakers to approve a dedicated source of state funding for public transit across Ohio. I am pleased to report that both actions were ultimately approved by our leaders in Columbus. In April, Gov. DeWine signed a two-year budget that provides new revenue for infrastructure improvements and a significant increase in transit funding.

In May, AMATS approved a new *Highway Preservation Needs Report* identifying the maintenance needs of the region's transportation systems from now through 2045. This report estimates that the Greater Akron area will need nearly \$4 billion just to

In addition, the agency's Connecting Communities Program had another successful year. The program funds community transportation plans that promote alternative transportation options to connect people and places. In September, the city of Kent – a 2016 program grant recipient – completed its *SR 261 Corridor Planning Study*. The purpose of this study is to increase connectivity and improve livability in the state Route 261 corridor. Additionally, the agency hosted several Bike-N-Brainstorm events throughout the region. AMATS also broke new ground in public outreach with its *Fast Track* and *Transportation Talk* program podcasts.

The 2019 Annual Report presents the agency's many accomplishments during a single 12-month span. I am sure that you will find this item to be an interesting read. I know that I found the events documented herein to be interesting when I witnessed them firsthand.

Bobbie Beshara 2019 AMATS Policy Committee Chairwoman Village of Richfield Mayor



Planning

2019 was an active year for AMATS in terms of anticipating the Greater Akron area's transportation needs. In the spring, the agency entered the public debate concerning taxation policies and infrastructure funding. In the fall, the agency approved a new *Highway Preservation Needs Report* and crafted a new 2019 Active Transportation Plan. Throughout these developments, the AMATS Connecting Communities Program continued to build on its success to promote connectivity among the region's bicycle, pedestrian and roadway networks.

Letters Endorsing Increased State Funding

In March, the AMATS Policy Committee expressed its support for Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's transportation proposals, which included a politically risky call for an increase in state motor fuel fees as part of Ohio's two-year transportation budget. The committee relayed its support for the governor's proposals in the form of letters to the Greater Akron area's delegation in the Ohio General Assembly, the state legislative leadership, Ohio Department of Transportation Director Dr. Jack Marchbanks, and Gov. DeWine. The letters reminded state policy makers that the committee was on record with Resolution 2018-17, which urged Ohio's leaders to consider measures to raise additional revenue for the state's roadway infrastructure.

Several weeks later, the committee followed that action with a call for the state to provide dedicated sources of funding for public transit systems across Ohio. AMATS' support for public transit was likewise relayed to the area's legislative delegation and top state officials.



In April – after two months of negotiations - Gov. DeWine and the state legislature agreed to a new two-year budget that included Ohio's first motor fuel user fee increases since 2005 and doubled public transportation funding from the state to \$70 million. The final budget increased gas fees by 10.5 cents per gallon and diesel fuel fees by 19 cents per gallon. The new fees are expected to raise an estimated \$865 million a year for new transportation projects with municipalities getting 45 percent of the proceeds of gas fees.

Highway Preservation Needs Report

AMATS completed the region's *Highway Preservation Needs Report* in May. The report projects the federal funds in 2019 dollars that the Greater Akron area will need to maintain its existing highway system between now and 2045. The report estimates that the area will need approximately \$3.78 billion over the next 26 years just to preserve its more than 3,422 lane miles of federal-aid roadways and its 947 bridges.

While not listing specific maintenance projects, the report describes the region's existing highway system and outlines highway resurfacing and replacement needs and bridge maintenance and replacement needs. AMATS projects that the region's total resurfacing needs will be approximately \$1.25 billion. The total cost of the area's pavement resurfacing and replacement needs combined will be over \$1.41 billion. The total preservation cost of AMATS area bridges will be approximately \$2.37 billion.

The *Highway Preservation Needs Report* will be a major component of the agency's upcoming long-range regional transportation plan – *Transportation Outlook 2045*. The report is available by clicking <u>here</u>.



2019 Active Transportation Plan

In December, the AMATS Policy Committee approved the 2019 Active Transportation *Plan (ATP)*, which presents the various strategies and recommendations that the Greater Akron area will pursue to improve the region's bicycling and pedestrian networks over the next 26 years.

The plan is the successor to the agency's 2016 Bike Plan and 2015 Pedestrian Plan. The ATP represents a more holistic planning approach by the agency with regards to the region's bicycle and pedestrian networks. The plan builds upon the foundations of the agency's previous reports while clarifying the strategies and defining the goals that AMATS will pursue to promote accessibility, efficiency and safety throughout the area's networks.

AMATS determined through various public outreach initiatives that many residents consider biking and walking to be desirable vibrant modes of travel, but not necessarily convenient or safe ones. The plan presents the agency's vision of a region in which



biking and walking are not only integral parts of daily life, but vital components of a first-class, multi-modal transportation system.

The ATP will be a key component of the agency's upcoming *Transportation Outlook 2045*, the long-range transportation plan for the region's highway, public transit and alternative transportation networks. The plan is available by clicking <u>here</u>.

Bike-N-Brainstorms

AMATS through its Switching Gears Program hosted three of its popular Bike-N-Brainstorm events in 2019. Cyclists gathered in Hudson on June 1 and in Akron on June 15 and Sept. 6 to become active participants in regional transportation planning. Bike-N-Brainstorms are public meetings that include a bike ride and brainstorming session. During sessions, participants share their insights on how to improve biking and pedestrian access in a community.



Bike-N-Brainstorm

During the Hudson Bike-N-Brainstorm participants rode along a 7-mile loop during

which city officials described areas where Hudson is developing paved, multi-purpose trails along city roads. Akron's June Bike-N-Brainstorm took cyclists on a more than 5-mile loop through Akron's west side and included a portion of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. The "Kenmore Bike-N-Sip" took place on Kenmore Boulevard in September. Sponsored by AMATS, the city of Akron, and the Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance, the ride was part of the final summertime "Kenmore First Friday" event hosted by the alliance. Participants experienced the Kenmore Business

District's new cycling and pedestrian amenities while sharing their thoughts on future improvements.

For more about the agency's Bike-N-Brainstorms, please visit <u>Switching-Gears.org</u>.



Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program

2019 was a year of solid accomplishment for the AMATS Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program. The program helps communities strike a balance between their land use decisions and transportation investments by providing financial grants

for the development of plans and studies that promote vibrant, livable communities.

In September, the city of Kent together with the GPD Group and NBBJ, completed the *SR 261 Corridor Planning Study*. Funded by the Connecting Communities Program, the study identified several transportation issues within the state Route 261 corridor including problems caused by underdeveloped high-volume, highspeed facilities, disconnected bike facilities, and poor pedestrian facilities. The study identified strategies to increase connectivity and improve livability within the corridor.

The study is available by clicking <u>here</u>.





Howe Avenue Tour

Cuyahoga Falls Engineer Tony Demasi, second from left, led the AMATS Staff on a walking tour of the Howe Avenue improvement project area in June. Phases 2 and 3 of the project were completed in October. AMATS programmed more than \$5.5 million in Surface Transportation Block Grant funds for the more than \$7 million project.



Jane's Walk Kent

Jason Prufer, at far right in top photo, led 30 participants on a Jane's Walk tour through Kent on May 4. Prufer is the author of *Small Town, Big Music: The Outsized Influence of Kent, Ohio, on the History of Rock and Roll.* His book explores Kent's rich rock music heritage and spotlights such acts as DEVO, Joe Walsh, Patrick Carney, and Chrissie Hynde.

Prufer led his Jane's Walk group to significant locations in Kent's musical legacy. Jane's Walk events are part of a global walking initiative that was launched by friends of urban planning pioneer - Jane Jacobs. AMATS was one of the coordinators of the Kent tour as part of its efforts to promote connectivity principles in transportation planning throughout the Greater Akron area. Public feedback from Jane's Walk events are one of the agency's key planning tools.



TIGER Walk

The Downtown Akron Partnership (DAP) hosted a walk for the AMATS staff in late April. Led by DAP Director of Business Relations Kimberly Beckett, pointing below, the walk gave the staff a look at how Akron is using its \$8 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant to transform its downtown.





Playing Host

The AMATS Staff hosted a StreetLight Orientation in mid-March for Greater Akron area planners. The StreetLight Data app is a database that collects cell phone usage. This database is available for public entities to use through a contract with the Ohio Department of Transportation. AMATS and other governmental planning entities are increasingly using this information for transportation planning.

Engineering

The end of 2019 marked the close of a successful year for the agency's engineering initiatives.

In December, following an extensive application and review process, the AMATS Policy Committee selected 32 projects to receive nearly \$32 million in federal funds. During that same month, the committee approved the *Traffic Crashes and Safety Performance Measures 2016-2018*.

New Projects

Thirty-two highway, public transit, bike and pedestrian projects throughout the Greater Akron area were selected by the AMATS Policy Committee to receive \$32 million in federal funds during the committee's December meeting. These projects were selected to receive funding from the statewide Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Program and the federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), Transportation Alternative Set Aside (TASA) and Resurfacing funding programs, which are administered by the agency in the Greater Akron area.

The CMAQ Program provides funds to state and local governments for transportation projects designed to improve air quality so that areas may meet federal standards. The statewide CMAQ Program Committee selected eight AMATS-area projects to receive over \$12.6 million in program funds. A complete streets improvement project on East Main Street (state Route 59) in Kent, an intersection improvement project at Ravenna and Shepard roads in Macedonia and Twinsburg and bus purchases for METRO in Summit County and PARTA in Portage County are among the projects selected to receive CMAQ funds.

Project	Location	CMAQ Requested	Proposed FY	Improvement	
E Main St (SR 59)	Kent	\$6,000,000	2025	Complete Streets	
Ravenna Rd & Shepard Rd	Macedonia & Twinsburg	\$1,369,288	2025	Intersection Improvements	
PARTA	Portage County	\$779,253	2024	Purchase 2 New Clean Diesel Buses	
METRO	Summit County	\$1,260,000	2024	Purchase 3 New CNG Buses	
W Portage Trail	Cuyahoga Falls	\$267,202	2025	Two-Way Left Turn Lane	
Highland Rd & Valley View Rd	Macedonia	\$1,808,811	2025	Intersection Improvements	
Valley View Rd & Olde Eight Rd	Summit County	\$260,000	2024	Intersection Improvements	
N Main St	Akron	\$900,000	2025	Road Diet	

AMATS-Area CMAQ Projects

The Policy Committee selected 24 projects totaling \$19.4 million to receive funds from the STBG, TASA and Resurfacing programs. Three projects totaling \$9.7 million were recommended to receive STBG funds. These projects include the aforementioned East Main Street project in Kent, a road diet project on North Main Street in Akron, and a METRO-sponsored Romig Road Bus Rapid Transit Study.

STBG F	unding F	Program [Project	Summary
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Project [Sponsor]	Location & Termini	Description	Funding Requested
N Main St [Akron]	North of All American Bridge to North City Corp Line	Pavement Reconstruction w/ Road Diet, Protected Bike Lanes, Sidewalks, Mid-Block Crossing, Transit Facilities, On-Street Parking Possible Roundabout at the North Corp Limit Possible Sidewalk Connection to High Level Bridge Hiking Trail	\$6,000,000
E Main St (SR 59) [Kent]	Willow/Main/SR 59 to Horning/Main	Create a Boulevard, Replace 2 Signals w/ Roundabouts, Transit Upgrades, Pedestrian Improvements (Median and North Side Sidewalk)	\$3,600,000
Romig Rd BRT Study [METRO]	East Akron to Barberton	Study of BRT Connecting East Side of Akron and Barberton	\$80,000

The committee selected three projects to receive more than \$1.9 million in TASA funds. Segment B of the Rubber City Heritage Trail East Side in Akron and the Stow-Silver Lake-Cuyahoga Falls Bike Connector in Stow will receive \$700,000 in TASA funds. A project sponsored by the Summit County Engineer's office to construct sidewalks along Cleveland-Massillon Road in Bath Township will receive \$520,000.

TASA Funding Program Project Summary

Project [Sponsor]	Location & Termini	Description	Funding Requested
Rubber City Heritage Trail [Akron]	3rd Ave to Exchange St	Multi-Use Recreational Trail linking Akron Neighborhoods of East End, Kenmore, Downtown Akron, Ellet, and the University of Akron via an Abandoned Rail Line	\$700,000
Stow / Silver Lake / Cuyahoga Falls Bike Connector [Stow]	METRO RTA Track ROW from Millboro Rd in Silver Lake to Spring- dale Rd in Stow	Relocate Bike Route Off-Road, Reconstruct Existing Railway into a 10'Asphalt / Concrete Path with 2'Turf Shoulders, Will Connect to Existing Pedestrian Bridge near Millboro Rd	\$700,000
Cleveland-Massillon Rd Sidewalk [Summit County]	West Side of Cleve- land-Massillon Rd in Bath Township	Construct 7-8' Sidewalk	\$520,000

The committee selected 18 projects to receive nearly \$7.8 million in Resurfacing funds. Among the more significant projects were Phase 1 of the Tallmadge Road project in Portage County and Phase 2 of the West Steels Corners Road project in Cuyahoga Falls, which were each selected to receive \$700,000.

Project [Sponsor]	Location & Termini	Funding Requested
Norton Ave [Norton]	Cleveland-Massillon Rd to Norton Corp Line	\$390,008
W Steels Corners Rd Phase 2 [Cuyahoga Falls]	Akron-Peninsula Rd to Northampton Rd	\$700,000
Riddle St [Ravenna]	Meridian St to Liberty St	\$200,000
Snyder Ave [Barberton]	2nd St SW to 5th St SE	\$611,976
S Main St [Rittman]	South Corp Line to Front St	\$336,588
Gilchrist Rd Phase 1 [Mogadore]	Akron Corp Line to Mogadore Rd	\$356,264
Ravenna Rd [Twinsburg]	E Idlewood Dr to Glenwood Dr	\$432,000
Swartz Rd [Summit County]	S Main St to 0.1 Mi East of Glenmount Ave	\$500,000
Munroe Falls Ave [Munroe Falls]	West Corp Line to Main St (SR 91)	\$261,190
Tallmadge Rd Phase 1 [Portage County]	SR 44 to SR 14	\$700,000
Wooster Rd W [Barberton]	31st St SW to Hudson Run Rd	\$231,808
Terex Rd [Hudson]	Londonairy Blvd to Barlow Rd (West)	\$506,000
Ravenna Rd Part 2 [Summit County]	Old Mill Rd to Portage County Line	\$600,000
E Ohio Ave [Rittman]	Main St to E Sunset Dr	\$459,662
Johnson Rd [Norton]	Hametown Rd to Norton Corp Line	\$443,869
Hopocan Ave [Barberton]	Hillsdale Ave to 8th St NW	\$281,696
S Chestnut St [Ravenna]	Lake Ave to Main St	\$192,000
New Milford Rd [Portage County]	Talmadge Rd to SR 5/44 Bypass	\$590,882

Resurfacing	Funding	Program	Project	Summary

Traffic Crashes and Safety Performance Measures 2016-2018

In December, AMATS completed its *Traffic Crashes and Safety Performance Measures* 2016-2018. This three-year report details the number of traffic crashes within the Greater Akron area and is divided into three sections concerning: roadway and intersection crashes; bicycle and pedestrian crashes; and a performance-oriented section.

The report's findings are based on the agency's analysis of 55,860 motor vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian-related crash records for the area's roadway sections and intersections

provided by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). High-crash locations identified in the report may be used by communities as a starting point when seeking federal Highway Safety Program funds through ODOT for safety improvement projects.

For this report, the agency identified 179 high-crash roadway sections and 311 highcrash intersections in the region. The report shows that the overall number of total area crashes decreased by 90 from 18,787 in 2017 to 18,697 in 2018 - a drop of .5 percent. Crashes that resulted in an injury also decreased during the report's threeyear period - from 4,466 in 2016 to 4,261 in 2018. Crashes that resulted in serious injuries also marked a record low total in 2018 with 290. This final total capped off an ongoing three-year trend of declining serious injury crashes with 499 recorded in 2016 and 450 recorded in 2017. The report's three-year span of declining serious injury crashes is part of a larger overall decline for such crashes, which peaked with 693 in 2010 before showing a slight increase to 675 in 2012.

Along with these promising crash totals, Greater Akron area fatalities decreased sharply from a 10-year peak of 60 in 2017 to a record low of 35 in 2018. Unfortunately, totals for bicycle and pedestrian-related crashes are not as promising. The report found that out of the 248 bicycle-related crashes that occurred between 2016 and 2018, 187 or 75 percent resulted in an injury and three in a fatality. Out of 477 pedestrian-related crashes during the period, 394 or 83 percent resulted in an injury and 17 in a fatality. This report includes safety performance measures and targets for the Greater Akron area. Recent federal legislation requires the agency and ODOT to demonstrate fatal and serious injury reductions on all public roads. The required performance measures for safety are:

- Number of fatalities
- Fatality rate
- Number of serious injuries
- Serious injury rate
- Number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries

In this report, AMATS endorsed the statewide goals set forth by ODOT rather than adopt separate targets and goals for the region. In 2019, following an extensive review in consultation with the state's metropolitan planning organizations including AMATS, the department opted to pursue a 2 percent annual reduction target across all five safety categories in place of its previous 1 percent reduction target. AMATS used a five-year average to calculate the Greater Akron area's initial safety targets based on totals starting in 2015. These averages will be the benchmark to which all future calculations for the region will be compared. All future values will be calculated using five years of data.

The table below shows the calculation of the AMATS rolling averages for the five safety performance measures. The 2015 averages are the benchmark values that the 2018 values are compared to. In three out of the five safety performance measures, AMATS far exceeded the previous ODOT goal of reducing each category by 1 percent.

Performance Measure	2015 Five-Year Average	2018 Five-Year Average	Percent Change
Number of Fatalities	46	47	3
Fatality Rate	0.60	0.62	3
Number of Serious Injuries	590	470	-20
Serious Injury Rate	7.79	6.20	-20
Number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries	57.4	50.8	-11

To learn more about this report's findings, the *Traffic Crashes and Safety Performance Measures 2016–2018* is available by clicking <u>here</u>.



Photo courtesy of the Akron Police Department

Engineering Activities

Traffic Counting Program

Traffic count data is a key component of transportation planning. AMATS collects data regarding traffic volumes on Greater Akron area roadways and intersections for use in various regional analyses and evaluations of new projects.

Traffic Counts

In 2019, the agency conducted 364 counts at various area roadway segments.

Bike and Pedestrian Counts

Bicycle and pedestrian counting is an increasingly important aspect of regional transportation planning. This count data helps target the location for future bicycle and pedestrian facilities in areas where land use and development are likely to promote frequent use. The data also helps determine trends in biking and walking by measuring the benefits of these investments.

In June, AMATS completed bike and pedestrian counts over a two-day period in the Merriman Road-Liberty Commons Crossing area of Akron. The agency counted 167 cyclists and 128 pedestrians traveling in the area during the period.



Outreach

Fast Track and Transportation Talk



In 2019, AMATS launched two new podcast programs: *Fast Track* and *Transportation Talk*. Followers of AMATS now have two new social media options to stay informed about transportation happenings in the Greater Akron area in addition to the agency's Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages.

In March, the agency began producing *Fast Track* podcast summaries of its various committee agendas. Hosted by AMATS Director Curtis Baker, *Fast Track* podcasts describe upcoming agenda items in three minutes or less. The public can now listen to Baker's summaries in addition to downloading pdfs of meeting materials. *Fast Track* is part of the agency's push to promote public awareness while providing transparency regarding its activities.

In November, *Transportation Talk* made its debut. Also hosted by Baker, *Transportation Talk* is a podcast series that presents interviews with important figures in local, regional and state transportation planning. The series also presents features on transportation-related issues impacting the Greater Akron area. The series' inaugural podcast was an interview between Baker and METRO Planning Director Valerie Shea.

Visitors to the agency's web site – <u>amatsplanning.org</u> – can listen to and download *Fast Track* and *Transportation Talk* podcasts.

2019 AMATS Annual Meeting

October's 2019 AMATS Annual Meeting drew more than 180 attendees to the ballroom of the Sheraton Suites Akron Cuyahoga Falls. The day's featured speakers were Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Director Dr. Jack Marchbanks and Akron-Canton Airport President and Chief Executive Officer Renato Camacho.

During his presentation, Dr. Marchbanks announced that the state's new two-year transportation budget will provide much-needed infrastructure funding for the department and local governments across the state, including the Greater Akron area. Under the transportation budget signed by Gov. Mike DeWine in April, ODOT will receive an additional \$450 million annually and local governments across the state will receive \$370 million annually. AMATS-area communities alone will see an expected increase from slightly less than \$21.3 million to more than \$34.7 million in state fiscal year 2021.

Dr. Marchbanks added that other funding challenges – such as a potential rescission of about \$7.6 billion under the federal Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015 – are looming. Marchbanks explained that rescissions allow the federal government to reduce the amount of funding appropriations provided to states by Congress as a method to obtain budgetary savings.

The director noted that Ohio alone was initially facing the potential loss of \$243 million in federal funds under rescission next year, but due in large part to the efforts of state officials, that total has been reduced to \$86 million in the most recent continuing resolution of the FAST Act.

Camacho described the Akron-Canton Airport's recent growth and its importance as a regional economic powerhouse. Based in the city of Green, the airport generated an economic impact of more than \$1 billion and served 930,000 customers in 2018 alone.

The airport is working with ODOT to craft an air service development program similar to those in 19 other states and a gate modernization and expansion project is well underway. Improved amenities, new carriers, additional routes and – hopefully – more passengers, are all part of the airport's five-year strategic plan, Camacho said.

To view videos regarding the meeting's opening remarks, Dr. Marchbanks' and Camacho's presentations, please visit our YouTube channel – <u>AMATSPlanning</u>.





Dr. Jack Marchbanks

Ohio Department of Transportation

Director



Renato Camacho

Akron-Canton Airport

President / Chief Executive Officer



Financial Data for Fiscal Year 2019

Revenues by Type

Expenditures by Type



Policy Committee and Staff

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AURORA Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin

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WAYNE COUNTY COMMISIONERS Dominic Oliverio

WINDHAM Mayor Deborah Blewitt

Darryl Kleinhenz City Planner

Louisa Kreider City Planner

Kerry Prater Public Information Coordinator





The AMATS 2019 Annual Report is published by: Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study 161 S High St | Suite 201 Akron, Ohio 44308-1423 Editorial comments are welcome.

Director: Curtis Baker

E-Mail: amats@akronohio.gov

Editor / Writer: Kerry Prater

Please visit our website at: www.amatsplanning.org

Layout / Design: Seth Bush

Phone: 330-375-2436 | Fax: 330-375-2275

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The contents of this report reflect the views of AMATS, which is responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official view and policies of the Ohio and/or U.S. Department of Transportation. This report does not constitute a standard, specification or regulation.