AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

AMATS

2024 TRANSIT PLAN

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September 2024

Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
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Akron, Ohio 44308

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Cooperative transportation planning by the Village, City and County governments of Portage and Summit Counties and the Chippewa and Milton Township areas of Wayne County; in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Ohio Department of Transportation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 | INTRODUCTION

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) is the metropolitan planning organization responsible for ensuring comprehensive transportation planning for Summit and Portage counties and parts of Wayne County. This responsibility includes coordination with various agencies in Northeast Ohio, including two transit providers, METRO RTA in Summit County and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) in Portage County. This plan examines the current transit coverage of the AMATS region through a brief overview of the demographics of the region and an examination of the service that the two major transit authorities provide. The plan also provides a brief goals and strategy matrix, which highlights methods that can help sustain and grow the impact of transit.

In planning for all 723,549 potential users in the AMATS region, transit provides a necessary tool to ensure mobility access for disabled, elderly, and low-income residents. Providing a strong and efficient transit system is essential for a dynamic region preparing for the future. METRO RTA and PARTA both provide traditional fixed-route service, operating a combined 39 routes throughout Summit and Portage counties and express routes to Cleveland.

Both transit agencies also provide demand response services to seniors, individuals with disabilities and workforce trips with smaller buses and vans that operate as complementary service to fixed-route service.

At a minimum, transit provides basic mobility to those without access to vehicles. Transit riders use services to get to work, to get to a doctor, to run errands, to visit family and friends, etc. Some transit users may even choose to ride a bus instead of taking a car, saving wear and tear on their vehicle and avoiding parking fees. Additionally, transit reduces emissions and congestion in metropolitan areas, which is a benefit for all users of the roadways. Both transit authorities deploy Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses on their fixed routes, with PARTA recently acquiring Renewable Natural Gas (RNG). RNG reduces lifecycle carbon emissions for transportation fleets by up to 300%, making it the only fuel capable of achieving negative carbon-intensity and in the case of METRO RTA, electric powered buses, which have much cleaner emissions for the environment than diesel or gasoline powered vehicles.

Lastly, transit can provide a basis for development, spurring economic development along a bus route by potentially improving access to adding jobs to an area. In some cases, transit-oriented development (T.O.D) can be implemented, which is defined as a type of urban development that is designed and constructed with transit access in mind. It usually includes mixed-use development and easy access to transit in a defined area. One of the goals of the area transit plan is for municipalities and transit authorities to work together to develop these areas of mixed use which could include T.O.D. projects. These projects help community revitalization efforts by creating opportunities for people to access transit, employment, social services, housing and grocery options within a centralized area or along a transit route. This type of development takes a community effort and needs full support from municipalities and transit providers, to have a positive impact on the well-being of the public and the local economy.

2.1 | Demographics of the AMATS Area

The data described below is analyzed at a Block Group (BG) level of geography. The analysis includes the population characteristics described in the table below. This data is conducted using 2020 Census information and 2022 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) data for the region.

Table 2-1 | Demographic Topic Descriptions

Total Population	Current population and future population projections
Age	Number and percentage of elderly (65+) population
Race	Number and percentage of racial minority groups
Disability	Number and percentage of people with disabilities
Income	Number and percentage of both individuals and households with incomes below the federal poverty level
Carless Households	Number and percentage of households that do not own a vehicle

2.1.1 | General Population Trends

The AMATS region includes all of Summit and Portage counties and a northeastern portion of Wayne County. The region, like any other metropolitan area, encompasses a diverse array of communities with varying density, land uses, and numerous other physical and human geographical traits. A crucial component of this plan is to examine these demographic characteristics to understand the population's needs and identify any transportation gaps.

The region's population trend mirrors that of current Midwestern "rust belt" cities with an industrial history, showing a declining population in a large centralized downtown city. Surrounding cities either shrink or remain stable and most growth occurs within the suburban areas further from the city center.

As of 2020, the City of Akron is Ohio's fifth largest city, containing a population of 190,469. The city's population peaked in 1960 at 290,351, subsequently declining in population as deindustrialization and suburbanization negatively affected most midwestern population centers. Although Akron has lost about one-third of its population since its peak, surrounding Summit County has grown modestly during this same period: 513,569 to 540,428 (1960 to 2020). However, Summit County is modestly down from its peak population (1970) of 553,371.

Table 2-2 | AMATS Total Population

	TOTAL POPULATION
Summit	540,428
Portage	161,791
Wayne / Medina (AMATS Portion)	19,734
Total Region	***723,549***

2022 ACS 5-Year Community Survey Data

Portage County grew much more rapidly during the last half of the twentieth century and, in fact, may have hit its population peak in 2020. For comparison, Portage County had a population of 91,798 in 1960 compared to a 2020 population of 161,791. Although still growing, the 2020 Census indicates that this growth appears to have leveled-off; the county only grew 0.2% between 2010 and 2020.

The accompanying maps following pages illustrate how the present-day regional population based on demographic information gathered through 2022 ACS Census data is distributed throughout the entire AMATS planning area.

2.1.2 | Age

Elderly populations are defined as being aged 65 and older. Within the AMATS planning area, many of the areas of high elderly populations are outside of the high-density urban core—cities like Akron, Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, and Kent—though higher elderly populations can be found throughout the region, even within portions of those cities. Some of the larger percentages of elderly populations are in large suburban condominium or senior-specific apartment developments. This population is expected to increase in the following years as the Baby Boomer generation reaches retirement age, many of which will need some sort of transportation assistance as driving personal vehicles becomes more difficult or impossible for many. Below is a chart that depicts the number of individuals who are 65 and older and the percentage of the senior population within each county of the AMATS region.

Map 2-1 | AMATS Elderly Population

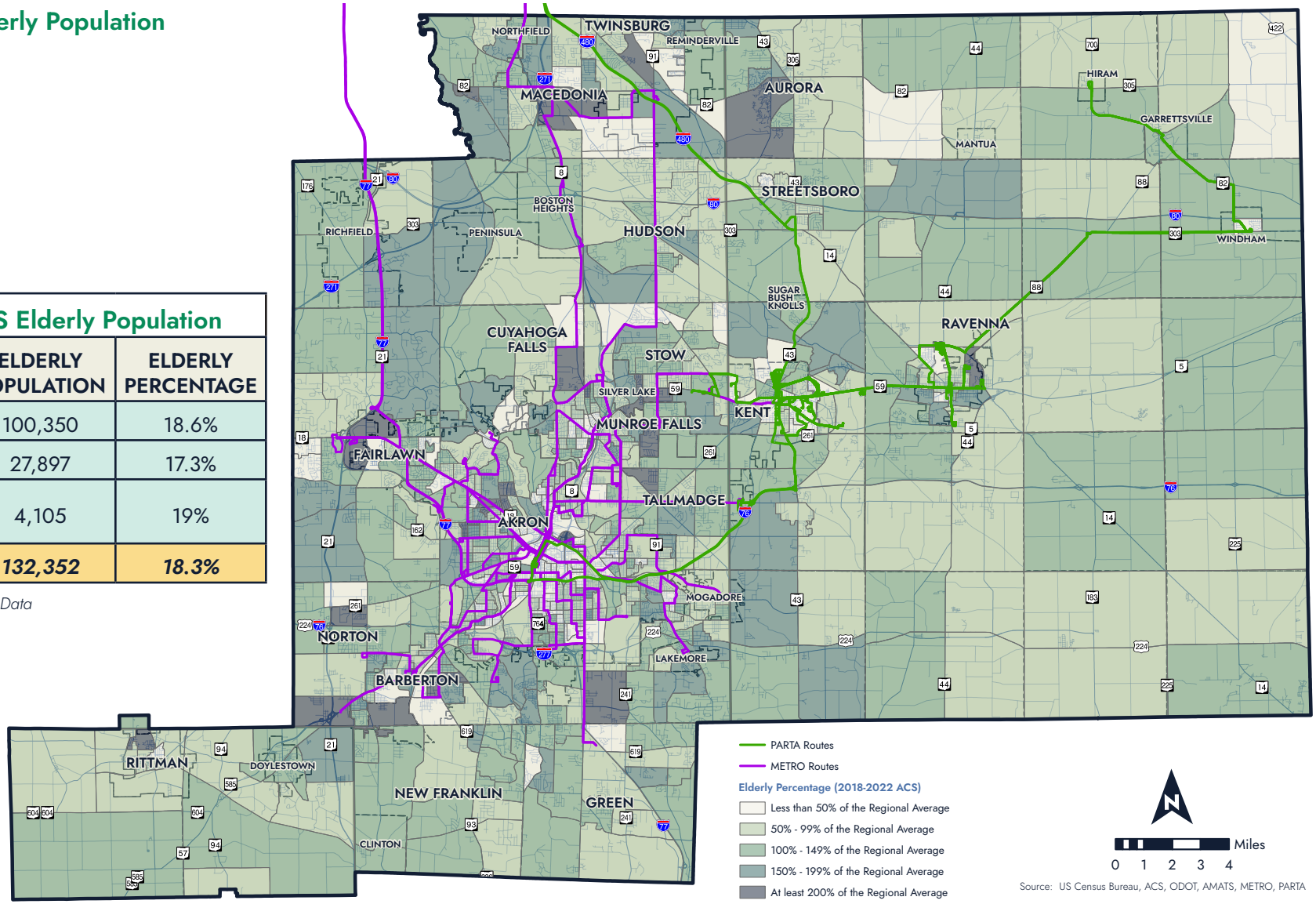


Table 2-3 | AMATS Elderly Population

	ELDERLY POPULATION	ELDERLY PERCENTAGE
Summit	100,350	18.6%
Portage	27,897	17.3%
Wayne / Medina (AMATS Portion)	4,105	19%
Total Region	***132,352***	***18.3%***

2022 ACS 5-Year Community Survey Data

2.1.3 | Disability

Disabled populations are adults—over the age of 17—who have hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, or independent living difficulties. The disabled population is more geographically scattered than the other groups analyzed. Some of the areas with the highest percentage of disabled population are within the cities of Akron and Barberton, although both have many areas of below-average disabled populations, often in adjoining BGs. Other areas of above-average disabled populations can be found throughout all portions of the planning area.

Map 2-2 | AMATS Disability Population

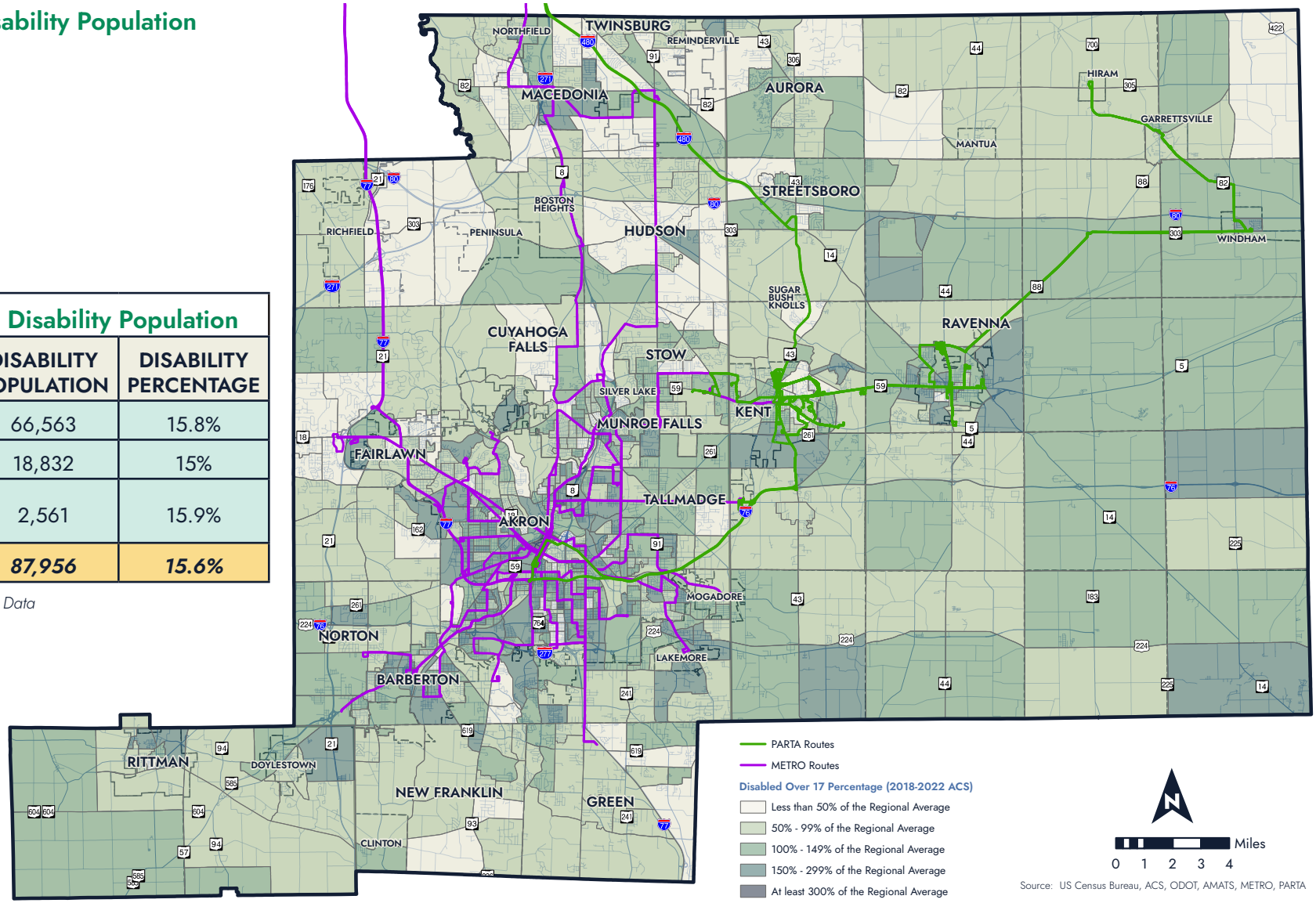


Table 2-4 | AMATS Disability Population

	DISABILITY POPULATION	DISABILITY PERCENTAGE
Summit	66,563	15.8%
Portage	18,832	15%
Wayne / Medina (AMATS Portion)	2,561	15.9%
Total Region	***87,956***	***15.6%***

2022 ACS 5-Year Community Survey Data

2.1.4 | Race

Minorities are defined as non-white populations. Within the Greater Akron area, black populations are by far the most common minority group, though several other minority populations exist throughout the area. The highest concentrations of minority populations are in the Akron, particularly in West Akron and, to a slightly lesser extent, in the Middlebury, East Akron, and North Hill sections of the city. There is also a high minority population in the Twinsburg Heights section of Twinsburg Township. Other notable concentrations of minority populations can be found in portions of the cities of Barberton, Kent, Ravenna, Streetsboro and Twinsburg, and Copley and Twinsburg townships. Summit County has far more racial diversity than the balance of the planning region. Below is a chart that depicts the number of minority individuals and a percentage of the minority population within each county of the AMATS region.

Map 2-3 | AMATS Minority Population

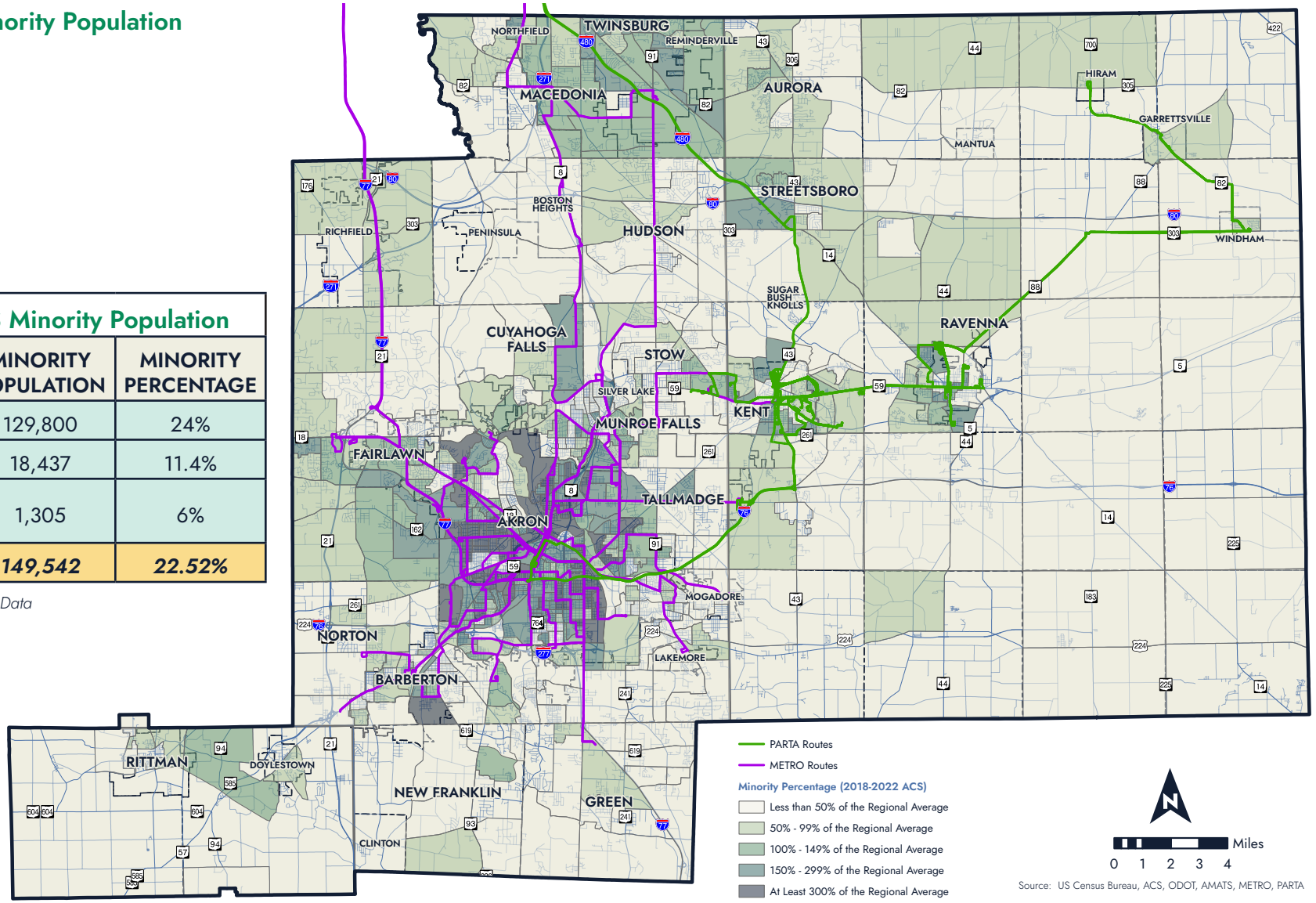


Table 2-5 | AMATS Minority Population

	MINORITY POPULATION	MINORITY PERCENTAGE
Summit	129,800	24%
Portage	18,437	11.4%
Wayne / Medina (AMATS Portion)	1,305	6%
Total Region	***149,542***	***22.52%***

2022 ACS 5-Year Community Survey Data

2.1.5 | Income

Low-Income is defined as the population receiving less annual income than the regional average. For this Plan, individual income averages are presented below in the table and map. In the AMATS region, many of the lowest-income areas are within the City of Akron. Significant low-income populations are spread throughout the city, generally closer its center. Additionally, some sections of the cities of Kent, Ravenna, Barberton, Green, and Cuyahoga Falls, and the Village of Windham, have significant low-income populations. There are also block groups throughout the region with above-average low-income populations, particularly in rural areas. Below is a chart that depicts the low-income totals below 150% of poverty for individuals and a percentage of the low-income population within each county of the AMATS region.

Map 2-4 | AMATS Low Income Population

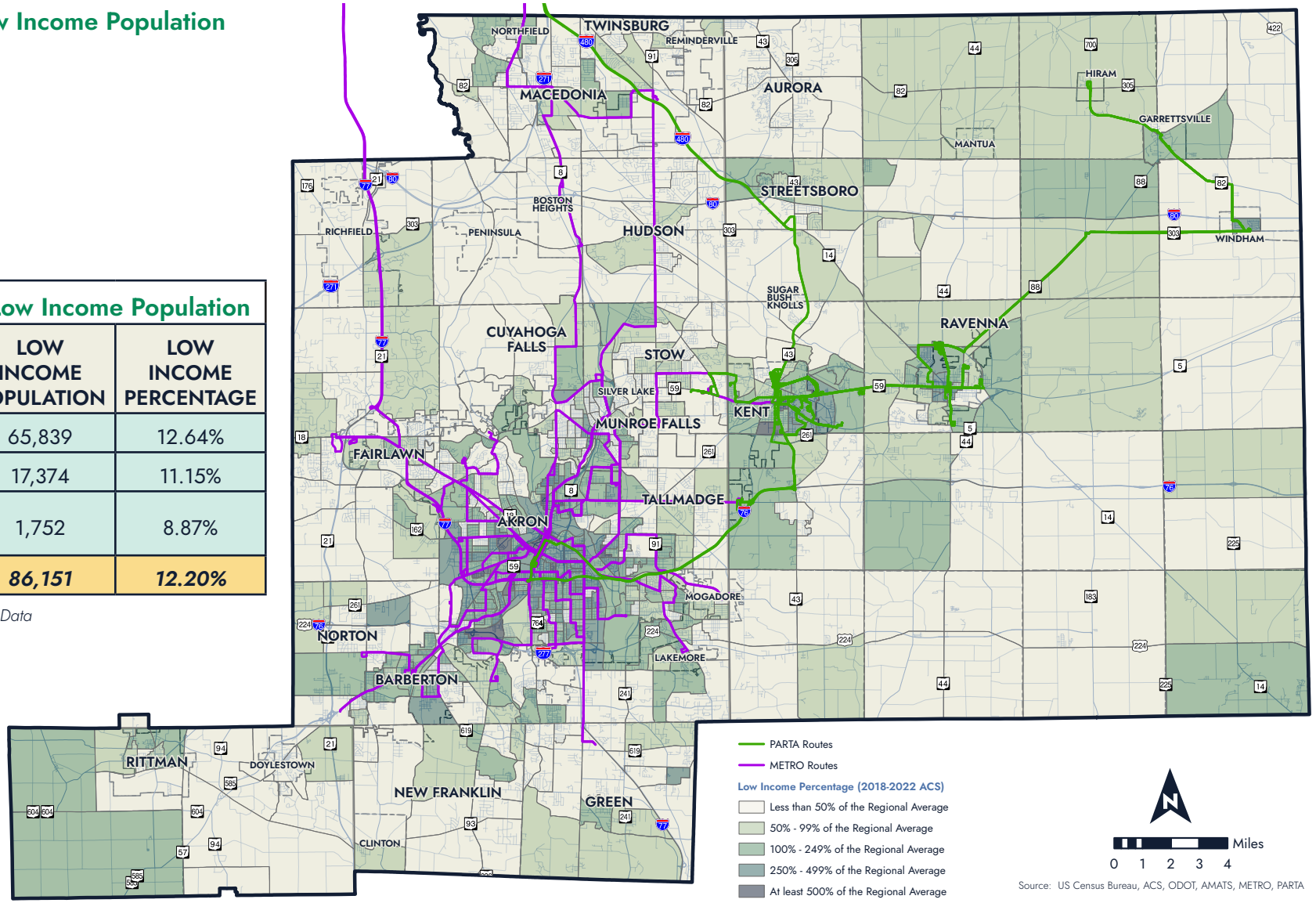


Table 2-6 | AMATS Low Income Population

	LOW INCOME POPULATION	LOW INCOME PERCENTAGE
Summit	65,839	12.64%
Portage	17,374	11.15%
Wayne / Medina (AMATS Portion)	1,752	8.87%
Total Region	***86,151***	***12.20%***

2022 ACS 5-Year Community Survey Data

2.1.6 | Carless Households

This data is collected at the household level rather than the individual level and represents the percentage of households within each block group without a car. It's important to note that the reasons for this vary, including age, disabilities, lack of affordability, and personal choice. Some individuals may choose alternative transportation options, but still have access to a personal vehicle, while for many others, they're an essential part of life. The number of households without access to a personal vehicle can be used as a tool for predicting the number of people that rely on transit or other modes of transportation, other than a personal vehicle. A strong concentration of the region's carless households can be found within the city of Akron. There is a correlation with many of the lower income block groups within the city and carless households. Other areas of carless households can be found within the AMATS planning region. Most of these tend to be in more walkable communities, block groups where large senior housing facilities exist, or, as in Northeastern Portage County, where Amish populations exist. Below is a chart that depicts the number of carless households and the percentage of the carless household population within each county of the AMATS region.

Map 2-5 | AMATS Low Carless Households

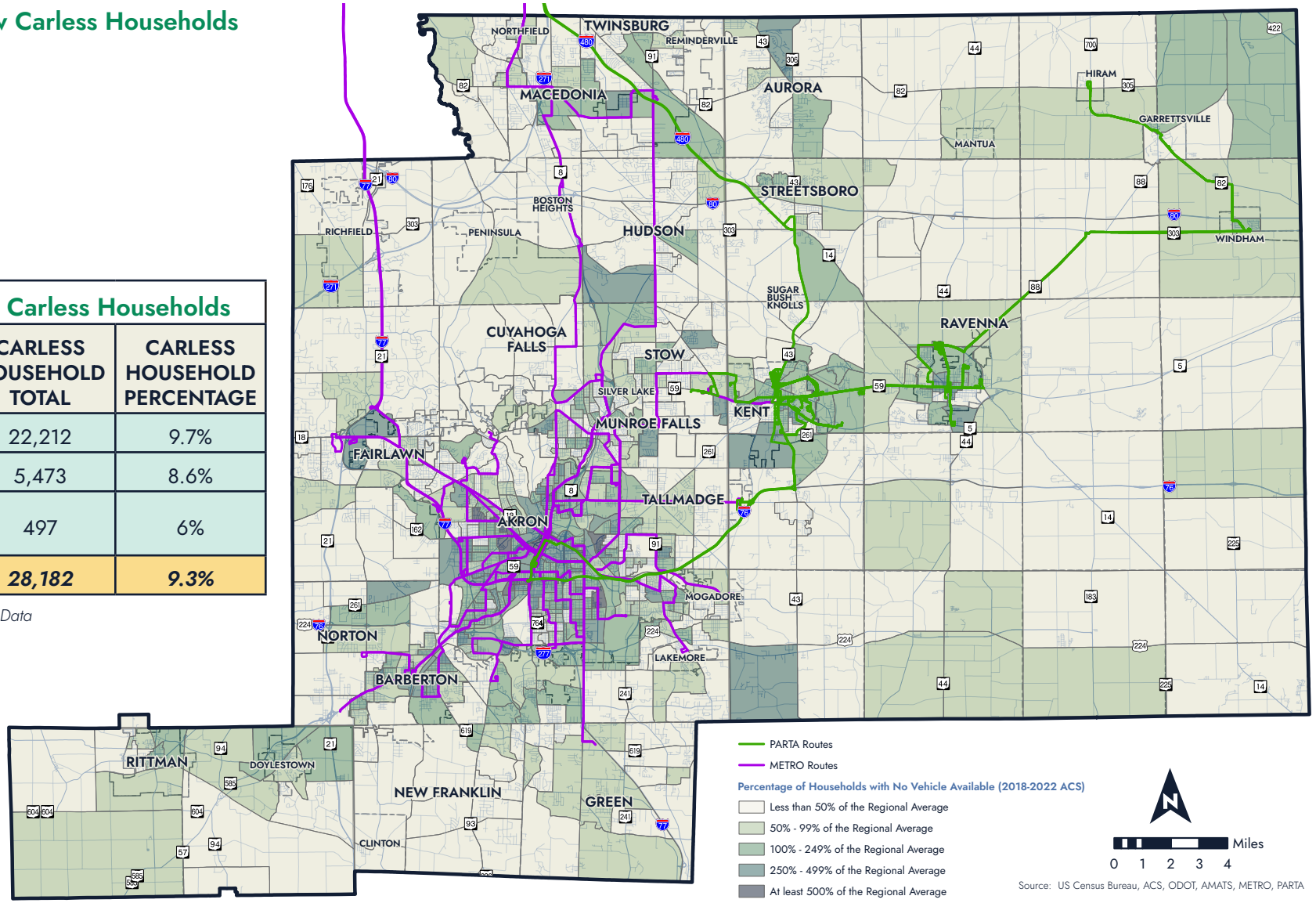


Table 2-7 | AMATS Carless Households

	CARLESS HOUSEHOLD TOTAL	CARLESS HOUSEHOLD PERCENTAGE
Summit	22,212	9.7%
Portage	5,473	8.6%
Wayne / Medina (AMATS Portion)	497	6%
Total Region	***28,182***	***9.3%***

2022 ACS 5-Year Community Survey Data

Prior to 2020, the number of households without access to a vehicle slightly resembled the amount of average weekday transit ridership of 22,603 (Avg. of 2018 and 2019). However, the number of households without access to vehicles did not see the decrease that transit ridership faced starting in April 2020, of which ridership has still not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

2.2 | Current Transit System Overview

This section will offer an overview of the transit coverage throughout the region and then present the status of both public transit agencies separately, in terms of ridership, assets and major facilities.

The AMATS area consists of Summit and Portage Counties and a portion of Wayne County. The two major transit systems within the region are: METRO Regional Transit Authority (METRO), which operates primarily in Summit County with regional connections to Brimfield located in Portage County and an express route into downtown Cleveland, and Portage Area Regional Transit Authority (PARTA), which operates primarily in Portage County, with an express route that serves downtown Akron and Cleveland. Both transit agencies offer fixed route and demand response services.

For the AMATS-coverage portions of Wayne County, Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) operates WCT (Wayne County Transit) in partnership with Community Action Wayne/Medina. WCT provides countywide service Monday through Saturday from 6am to midnight and is a reservation-based service. No fixed route is offered.

Ridership / Travel Patterns: "Frequency VS. Coverage"

When transit systems' operators and planners are thinking about route planning because it is not feasible to be in every place running on 10-minute schedules, the balance between frequency and coverage is an overall underlying consideration in route planning. A frequent ridership model emphasizes service along densely populated routes, linking individuals to major employment hubs and operating extended hours. While effective in serving specific routes, ridership models typically prioritize maximizing trip volume while minimizing operational costs per passenger.

A coverage model measures the proximity of residents to transit lines within a certain radius, irrespective of service frequency or hours of operation. Successful coverage models ensure widespread accessibility to transit but may incur higher operating expenses per passenger trip. Success metrics for coverage models focus on geographic reach rather than trip volume.

No transit system exclusively adheres to either ridership or coverage principles. Transit providers aim to incorporate both values, offering a high number of trips while still catering to less densely populated areas. Special efforts are directed towards reaching communities with higher concentrations of vulnerable populations and desired destinations.

Transit Coverage:

One factor to examine when evaluating the success of a system, is overall transit coverage served by fixed route services. The following table was produced using data from the American Community Survey 2022 5-year estimates.

Out of the entire AMATS region's population that have access to transit within their community, 222,647 people (35% of the population) have access to fixed-route transit within a quarter mile. It should be mentioned that the quarter mile standard is only part of the picture. A comprehensive multi-modal network includes bus shelters, park and ride lots, bike paths and sidewalks. This integrated approach makes access to transit stops seamless and traveling longer distances to stops more feasible.

The previous table shows all the communities with access to fixed-route transit within the AMATS region. Older, established cities with a higher density of development have better transit coverage. Cities such as Akron, Kent, Ravenna, Barberton, and Cuyahoga Falls offer some of the highest levels of transit access in the area. Some smaller suburban communities (Such as Windham, Tallmadge and Mogadore), also offer excellent coverage. As expected, there are low levels of transit access in rural communities.

2.2.3 | National Ridership Trends:

Figure 1 depicts monthly ridership trends for the US Public Transit revenue miles, which is a measure of ridership activity, and offers a comparison to the ridership experienced locally.
NTD National Trends and Summaries 2021

Table 2-8 | Total Population Transit Coverage by Community

(Includes Only Communities with Access to Fixed-Route Transit Service

COMMUNITY NAME	TOTAL POPULATION	POPULATION W/IN 1/4 MILE OF TRANSIT**	% TRANSIT COVERAGE*
Akron	190,273	115,664	60.8%
Barberton	25,167	11,603	46.1%
Bath Twp	9,982	1,226	12.3%
Boston Heights	1,242	335	27.0%
Boston Twp	1,449	53	3.7%
Brimfield Twp	11,302	1,412	12.5%
Charlestown Twp	1,871	5	0.3%
Copley Twp	18,310	943	5.1%
Coventry Twp	10,270	1,807	17.6%
Cuyahoga Falls	50,916	15,622	30.7%
Fairlawn	7,697	2,698	35.1%
Franklin Twp	6,280	1,297	20.7%
Freedom Twp	2,657	326	12.3%
Garrettsville	2,591	1,060	40.9%
Green	27,333	543	2.0%
Hiram	1,264	678	53.6%
Hiram Twp	2,091	102	4.9%
Hudson	23,005	3,157	13.7%
Kent	27,336	17,852	65.3%
Lakemore	2,935	514	17.5%
Macedonia	12,126	3,609	29.8%
Mogadore (Portage Co.)	1,048	478	45.6%
Mogadore (Summit Co.)	2,790	1,044	37.4%
Munroe Falls	5,034	1,270	25.2%
Nelson Twp	3,113	2	0.1%
Northfield	3,546	1,875	52.9%
Northfield Center Twp	5,599	1,351	24.1%
Norton	11,643	715	6.1%
Ravenna	11,323	7,519	66.4%
Ravenna Twp	9,012	1,568	17.4%
Richfield	3,719	714	19.2%
Richfield Twp	2,696	160	5.9%
Rootstown Twp	8,587	0	0.0%
Sagamore Hills Twp	10,842	328	3.0%
Shalersville Twp	5,269	12	0.2%
Silver Lake	2,621	8	0.3%
Springfield Twp	14,181	1,227	8.7%
Stow	34,459	9,949	28.9%
Streetsboro	17,378	2,176	12.5%
Suffield Twp	6,003	6	0.1%
Sugar Bush Knolls	348	92	26.4%
Tallmadge (Portage)	349	129	36.9%
Tallmadge (Summit)	18,062	4,666	25.8%
Twinsburg	19,291	4,756	24.7%
Twinsburg Twp	3,823	1,027	26.9%
Windham	1,777	857	48.2%
Windham Twp	1,797	209	11.7%
Total	**640,407**	**222,647**	**34.8%**

Source: American Community Survey - 2022 5-Year Estimates

** % Transit Coverage = Political Unit Area w/in 1/4-Mile of Fixed-Route Transit in SqMi / Political Unit Area in SqMi*

*** Estimated Total Population w/in 1/4-Mile of Fixed-Route Transit in SqMi = Estimated Total Population * % Transit Coverage*

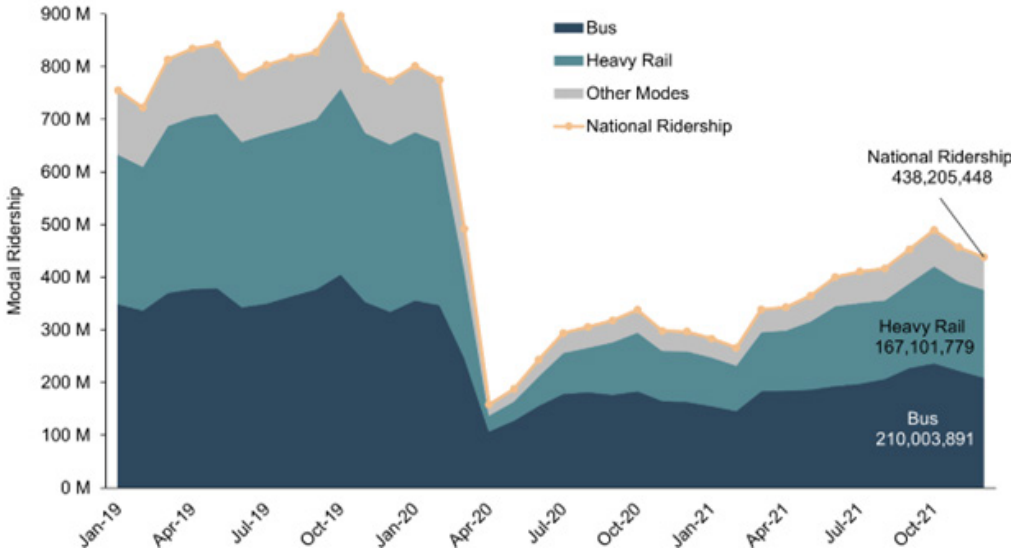


Figure 1. National Monthly Ridership for Heavy Rail vs. Bus (2020–2021)

National ridership experienced a massive decrease in ridership across all modes starting in March 2020, which mirrors the experience of local agencies. Larger transit systems have reached or exceeded pre-COVID levels, but some larger, mid-size and smaller urban transit agencies have yet to fully recover ridership levels compared to pre-COVID levels.

2.2.1 | METRO RTA

METRO RTA operates fixed route service from the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center located just south of downtown Akron, which consists of 24 fixed routes with the following key features: 1) five high-frequency 15 minute corridors and eight 30 minute routes, 2) streamlined service with increased route directness and more consistent weekend service, and 3) additional regional connections to Brimfield and Cuyahoga County and an express route to downtown Cleveland. METRO RTA System Map (page 10)

METRO RTA's demand response services operate multiple programs including METRO ADA and Select.

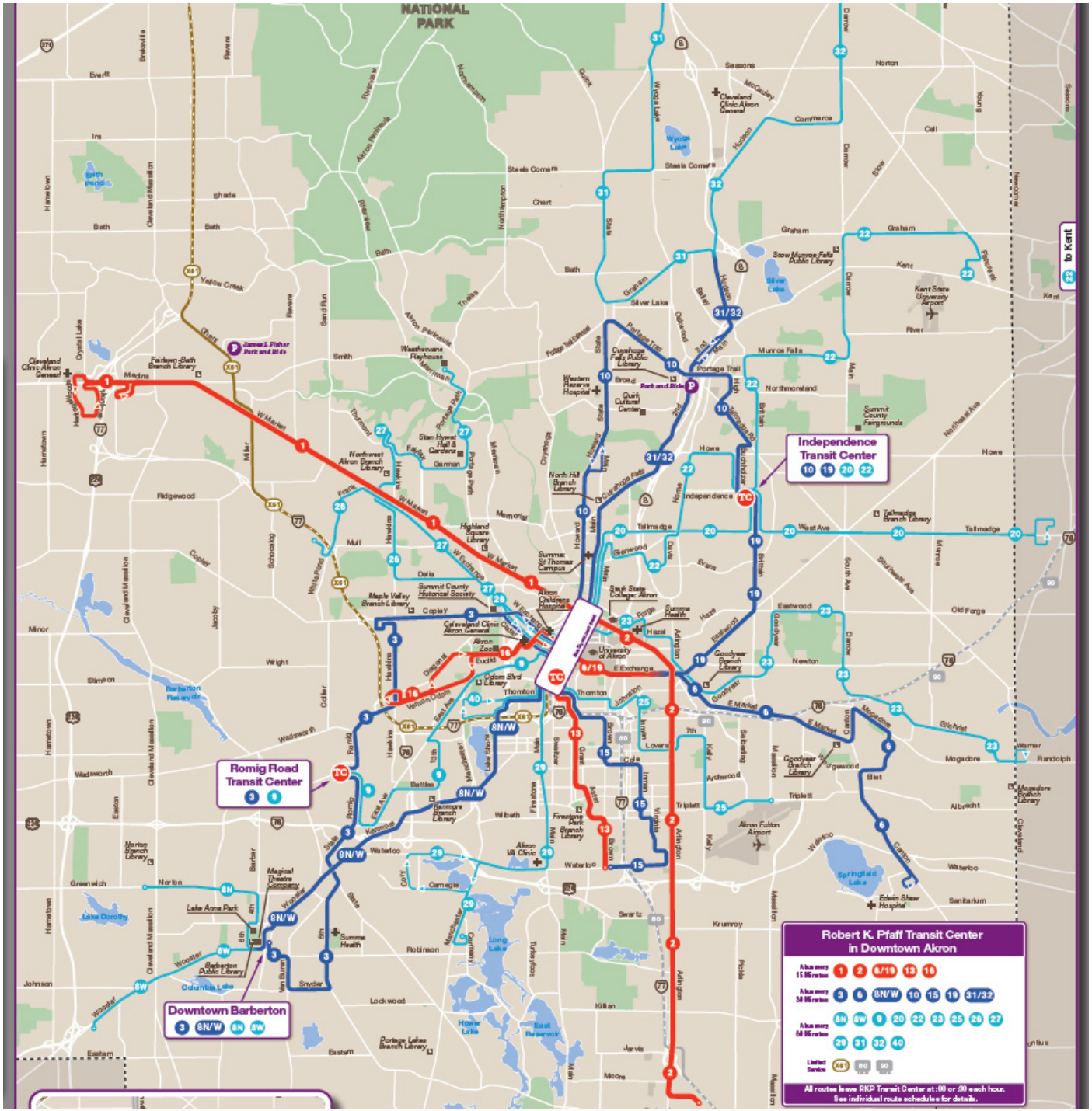
METRO ADA:

Complementary Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) service for eligible persons with disabilities. Service is available at the same times as METRO fixed-route service, with the pick-up location and destination no further than 3/4 of a mile from a fixed route. METRO ADA Services

METRO Select:

METRO Select involves a variety of services based on qualifying factors. These services are METRO SCAT and METRO Call-A-Bus. METRO SCAT Service for seniors and persons with disabilities who live outside the ADA zone and qualify for service. Trips also include coordination and provision of transportation services for Medicaid eligible residents Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) trips to Medicaid eligible medical facilities, as

Map 2-6 | METRO RTA System Map



well as Title III trips for eligible Direction Home (Akron-Canton Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities) participants. METRO Call-A-Bus is a zone-based workforce development program for making suburban connections that are difficult for fixed route to serve adequately. Areas include Green, Macedonia, Twinsburg, the townships of Sagamore Hills, the villages of Northfield and Northfield Center, Reminderville. The following is a link for more information METRO Select Services.

METRO RTA Capital Assets:

METRO RTA has an active fleet of 222 vehicles comprised of 131 Large Fixed Route CNG and Electric buses and 91 demand response CNG/electric/gas/diesel fuel vehicles. METRO RTA's fleet is varied and includes 60-foot articulated, 40-foot CNG, electric, and 40-foot hybrid buses. Smaller vehicles including less than 30-foot gasoline and electric buses and transit vans for demand response services. All METRO RTA's fixed route buses are equipped with bike racks and all revenue vehicles are handicap accessible.

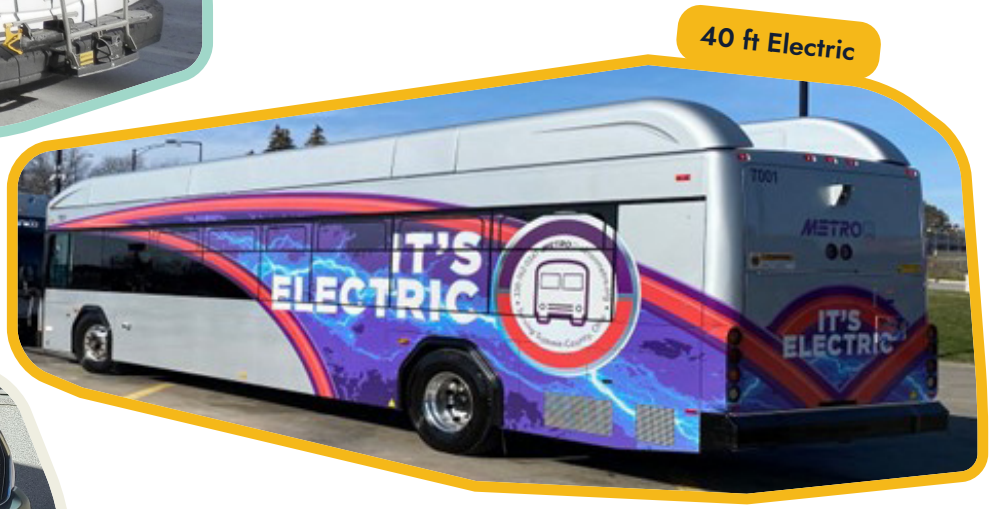
Gallery of METRO RTA Fleet

40 ft CNG

Transit Van

60 ft Articulator

40 ft Electric



<30 ft Light Transit Vehicle

Gallery of METRO RTA Facilities

Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center:
631 South Broadway, Akron. Main Transit Center for all METRO fixed Route buses and connections with PARTA, SARTA and Greyhound services.

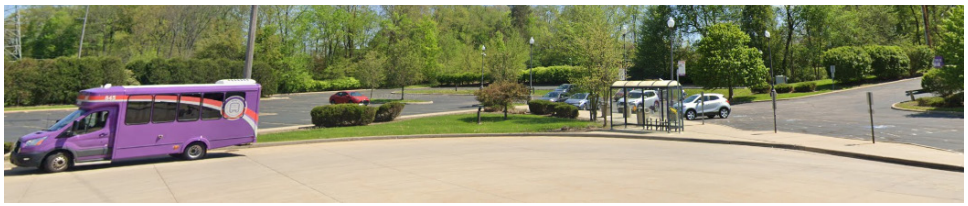
METRO RTA Maintenance and Operations Building:
416 Kenmore Boulevard, Akron. New facility being constructed on current site of administration and maintenance facility.

METRO RTA-Trillium Public CNG Station:
Kenmore Blvd, Akron: Next door to Operations and Maintenance Facility.

Romig Road Transit Center:
Located in Amazon Fulfilment Center: 2450 Romig Rd. Akron,. Currently serves Routes # 3 and #9.

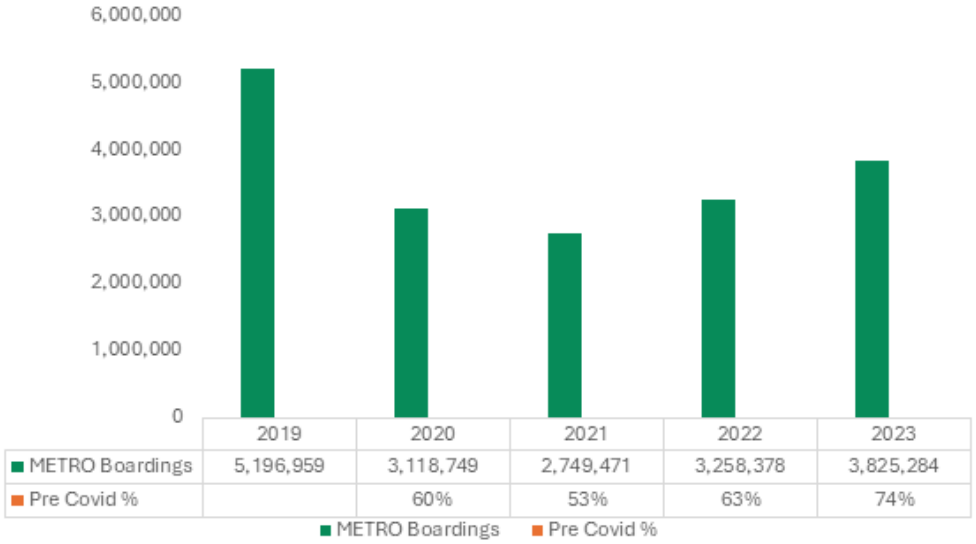
Independence Transit Center:
Located on Independence Ave. Across from the old Chapel Hill Mall. Serves Routes #10, #19, #20 and #22.

James L. Fisher Park and Ride @ Ghent Rd:
499 Ghent Road, Akron, 44333. Serves the #X61 Express to Cleveland Route.



METRO RTA & ODOT Park and Ride Lot:
State Rt. 303 and Chittenden Road. Serves the #31 and a place for car-pool Rt. 8 travel.

Chart 2-1 | METRO Boardings



METRO Fixed-Route Ridership Performance:

METRO RTA updated their fixed-route system in 2023 and reduced the number of fixed routes from 33 to 24, mainly to account for new travel patterns and to increase efficiency. The chart above shows overall yearly boardings reported by METRO RTA and depicts ridership exhibiting a significant decrease beginning in 2020 and reaching its lowest point in 2021 at 53% of pre-COVID ridership performance. Overall ridership is still showing a steady recovery and as of 2023 overall ridership was at 74% of pre-covid boardings, which mirrors similar trends of mid-size transit agencies nation-wide.

METRO RTA's top six highest ridership routes are: #1 West Market, #2 Arlington, #3 Copley Road/Hawkins, #8 Kenmore/Barberton, #10 Howard and Portage and # 6 East Market. These routes in 2019 accounted for 41% of the overall ridership totals and now, as of 2023, make up 54% of the overall ridership for METRO RTA's fixed-route system. These six routes all experienced the same reduction in performance in 2020 and dropped to their lowest point in 2021 at 66% of pre COVID level ridership. However, as of 2023 these 6 routes combined, have recovered to 97% of pre-COVID ridership levels, with the #1, #2 and #3 all out preforming 2019 levels of ridership as shown on the following pages.

Table 9-2 | METRO Ridership by Route

ROUTE	2019 RIDERSHIP	2020 RIDERSHIP	2021 RIDERSHIP	2022 RIDERSHIP	2023 RIDERSHIP	
					JAN 1 - JUN 3	JUN 4 - DEC 31
1 - West Market	516,884	363,961	377,744	415,112	530,829	
2 - Arlington	525,027	377,472	343,498	389,253	538,347	
3 - Copley Road / Hawkins	292,850	198,923	172,821	214,692	300,580	
4 - Delia / North Hawkins*	128,506	65,075	58,278	73,948	31,384	-
5 - Joy Park / Gilchrist*	102,219	61,588	56,086	66,615	30,693	-
6 - East Market / Lakemore	275,289	179,177	173,554	221,562	205,227	
7 - Cuyahoga Falls Ave*	168,104	100,320	92,393	112,930	49,939	-
8 - Kenmore / Barberton	270,102	181,463	162,753	194,173	250,958	
9 - Vernon Odom Blvd / East Ave	182,652	101,741	94,640	103,123	106,106	
10 - Howard / Portage Trail	247,043	167,066	170,863	212,415	239,221	
11 - South Akron*	34,692	20,690	17,401	20,106	11,492	-
12 - Tallmadge Hill*	188,999	97,979	73,138	89,433	37,986	-
13 - Grant / Firestone Park	197,913	117,798	104,425	135,439	171,658	
14 - Euclid / Barberton Express*	311,338	210,735	200,370	241,394	108,830	-
15 - Brown / Inman**	-	-	-	-	-	78,762
16 - Euclid / V. Odom**	-	-	-	-	-	95,022
17 - Brown / Inman*	214,962	108,255	81,304	102,422	49,714	-

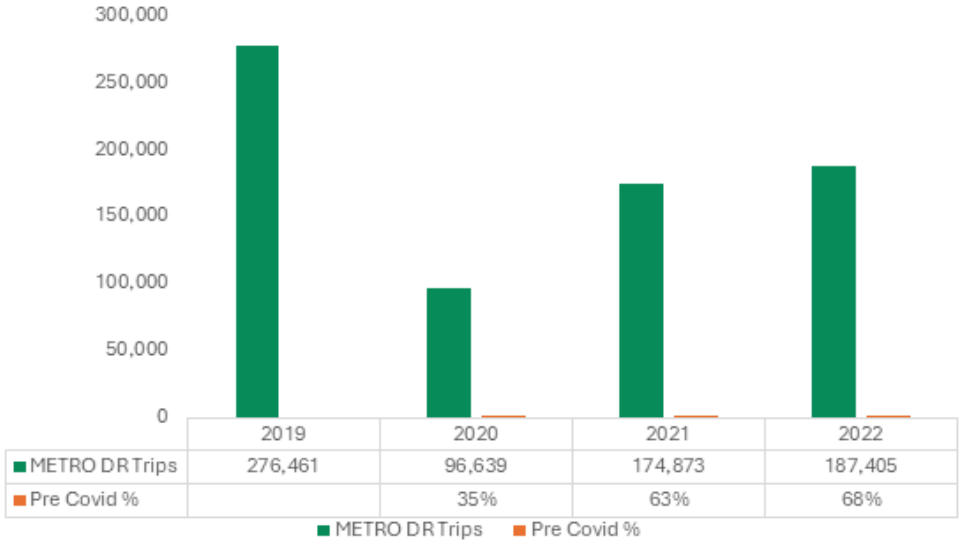
** Old Route that was eliminated during RelmagineMETRO* *** New Route that was created during RelmagineMETRO*

Table 9-2 | METRO Ridership by Route

ROUTE	2019 RIDERSHIP	2020 RIDERSHIP	2021 RIDERSHIP	2022 RIDERSHIP	2023 RIDERSHIP	
					JAN 1 - JUN 3	JUN 4 - DEC 31
18 - Thornton / Manchester*	190,800	107,915	93,069	114,435	51,825	-
19 - Eastland	188,109	112,336	99,312	110,977	137,141	
20 - Tallmadge / Brimfield	-	-	-	-	-	60,807
21 - South Main*	32,727	21,832	19,526	20,961	11,548	-
22 - Howe / Stow-Kent	-	-	-	-	-	76,000
23 - Goodyear Heights	-	-	-	-	-	60,180
24 - Lakeshore*	63,298	33,397	28,001	31,459	15,152	-
25 - Kelly / Triplett	-	-	-	-	-	36,648
26 - W Exchange / Delia	75,494	40,949	35,044	45,037	65,444	
27 - W Exchange / Merriman	-	-	-	-	-	50,238
28 - Merriman Valley*	53,653	27,952	29,869	42,189	19,465	-
29 - S Main / Manchester	-	-	-	-	-	62,374
30 - Goodyear / Darrow*	133,776	73,244	58,808	69,633	30,365	-
31 - Cuyahoga Falls / Macedonia	-	-	-	-	-	65,112
32 - Hudson / Twinsburg	-	-	-	-	-	66,113
33 - State / Wyoga Lake*	65,447	44,689	30,549	35,105	15,720	-
34 - Cascade Village / Uhler*	171,084	92,597	75,349	85,937	38,212	-
40 - Manchester / Thornton	-	-	-	-	-	25,479
50 - Montrose Circulator*	25,966	9,891	-	-	-	-
51 - Stow Circulator*	23,836	8,774	-	-	-	-
53 - Portage / Graham*	30,464	8,414	-	-	-	-
54 - Dash*	193,404	44,693	-	-	21,497	-
55 - UAkron**	-	-	-	-	-	10,471
59 - Chapel Hill Circulator*	20,613	5,657	-	-	-	-
60 - North Coast Express: Cuyahoga Falls / Twinsburg	10,859	2,298	-	-	-	-
61 - North Coast Express	62,376	23,437	15,662	19,856	22,714	
101 - Richfield / Bath*	16,067	9,925	7,559	6,654	2,840	-
102 - Northfield*	48,043	24,947	19,471	21,861	8,541	-
103 - Stow / Hudson*	45,444	25,279	20,074	19,169	6,931	-
104 - Twinsburg / Creekside*	37,907	23,754	15,133	15,815	6,805	-
105 - Green / Springfield*	31,896	17,816	17,293	21,085	9,497	-
Zone Bus	19,116	6,710	5,484	5,588	9,261	
300 - Grocery**	-	-	-	-	-	2,166
Total	**5,196,959**	**3,118,749**	**2,749,471**	**3,258,378**	**3,825,284**	

** Old Route that was eliminated during RelmagineMETRO* *** New Route that was created during RelmagineMETRO*

Chart 2-2 | METRO Demand Response Trips



METRO Demand Response:

METRO RTA's demand response program consists of 91 small Light Transit Vehicles or Transit Vans that transport people throughout Summit County seven days a week. Below is a table that depicts demand response ridership based on National Transit Database reported unlinked passenger trips by year. METRO RTA's demand response program number of trips vastly decreased in 2020 and accounted for 35% of pre COVID levels. The next two years 2021 and 2022 saw trips increase to 63% and 68% of pre COVID levels.

2.2.2 | PARTA

PARTA provides fixed routes and demand response services within Portage County. PARTA operates a fleet of 62 revenue vehicles, all of which are accessible for individuals with disabilities. PARTA administrative offices and maintenance garage are located at 2000 Summit Road in Kent, Ohio. PARTA's fixed route service operates two divisions—county and Kent State University campus routes. County service offers 10 fixed routes with the highest frequency route operating every 30 minutes. County routes operate Monday through Saturday with express service to Akron and Cleveland operating Monday through Friday. PARTA also has a contract with Kent State University to operate campus service. Campus service consists of five fixed routes with frequencies ranging between 9 and 15 minutes, Monday through Friday, and reduced service on Saturday and Sunday. PARTA offers complementary ADA paratransit service for individuals with disabilities whose pick-up location and destinations are no more than ¾ of a mile from a fixed route.

PARTA's ADA demand-response service is available at the same times as PARTA's fixed route service, with the pick-up location and destination no further than 3/4 of a mile from a fixed route. PARTA's door-to door, dial-a-ride service (DART) operates Monday through Friday, 5 a.m. – 11 p.m. and Saturday, 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. Demand response service covers all of Portage County; however, some townships are limited to certain days of the week. For those who qualify, PARTA provides Title III trips for Direction Home (Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities) participants; and free transportation to medical appointments is available through the NET program. PARTA's ADA fare is $2, reduced fare for the elderly and disabled is $3, and the public fare is $6 per one-way trip. More information and eligibility requirements can be found on PARTA's website.

PARTA Capital Assets:

PARTA's fixed-route buses comprised of 32 large buses and three small buses/light transit vehicles (LTVs). Additionally, PARTA has 23 Light Transit Vehicles (LTVs) and five vans/small transit vehicles (STVs) that provide demand response service. All PARTA large, fixed-route buses are equipped with bike racks and all revenue vehicles are handicap accessible.

PARTA deploys an overall active revenue fleet of 62 vehicles. Of the total fleet, 31 large-40 foot buses (16 CNG and 15 Diesel and three small buses/-LTVs are used for PARTA's fixed route service. Additionally, PARTA has 23 (LTVs) and 5 vans (STVs) that provide demand response service all of which are gasoline-fueled vehicles. All of PARTA's large, fixed route buses are equipped with bike racks and all revenue vehicles are handicap accessible.

40 ft Large Fixed-Route Bus

<30 ft Light Transit Vehicle

Transit Van

40 ft Trolley Bus

Gallery of PARTA's Facilities

Kent Central Gateway:
Located at the corner of E. Erie and DePeyster Streets (201 E. Erie Street), Kent.

PARTA's Kent Central Gateway, a multi-modal transportation facility in the heart of downtown Kent, offers a central point of operations for transportation in Portage County, in addition to a secondary hub at University Hospitals in Ravenna.

CNG Fueling Station:
2000 Summit Road, Kent.

Administration and Maintenance Building, Storage Facility and Wash Bay:
2000 Summit Road, Kent.

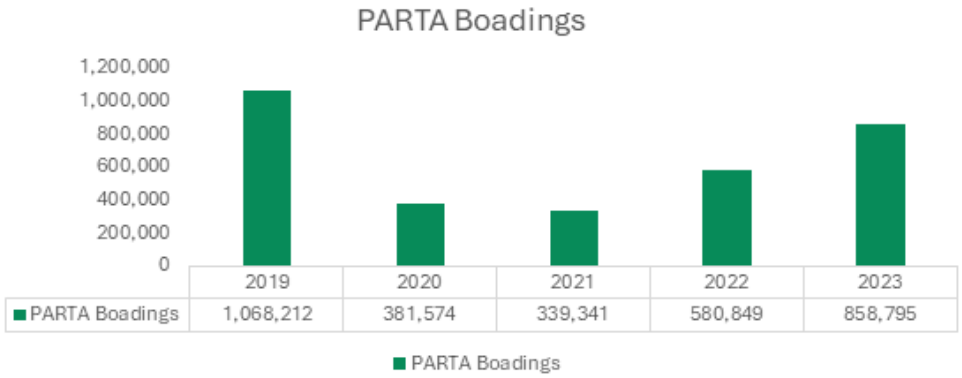
PARTA Ridership Performance:

PARTA's routes run on coordinated timing for easier transfers and reduced wait times. PARTA consistently monitors routes to identify gaps in services and make changes as necessary. In addition, PARTA offers a "Dial-A-Ride" demand-response county-wide bus service to everyone, regardless of qualification.

PARTA currently offers 15 fixed routes, consisting of eight county routes, two express routes to Akron and Cleveland and five campus routes that service Kent State University. When looking at the performance of PARTA's fixed routes one metric is to examine boardings by route. "Boardings" are the number of times a passenger boards a bus. A passenger making a round-trip would count as two boardings.

PARTA's number of boardings reached a total of 1,068,212 in 2019 with their campus routes-#58 Summit East (373,546) and #51 Campus Loop (139,641) experienced the highest number of boardings and #35 Interurban East (158,885) and #30 Interurban West (69,824) was the highest number of boardings for county fixed routes.

Chart 2-3 | PARTA Boardings



PARTA's ridership dipped to their lowest point in 2021 with 339,341 boardings, which accounted for 32% of 2019 pre-COVID ridership. Ridership showed an increase to 54% in 2022 and reached 80% of pre-COVID levels by 2023. This loss and recovery of ridership mirrored the same trend of other local agencies and national trends.

PARTA's highest four performing routes in terms of ridership (boardings) as of 2023 are routes; #58 Summit East (288,338), #51 Campus Loop (165,657), #35 Interurban East (138,096) and #30 Interurban West (68,328). These four routes make up 77% of total ridership (boardings) for PARTA. Summit East and Interurban East have recovered to 77% and 87% of pre-COVID levels. Interurban West is at 98% and Campus Loop is performing at 119% of pre-COVID levels. If these ridership numbers continue at this pace, PARTA's ridership is predicted to meet or exceed pre-COVID levels within the next year.

PARTA Demand Response:

PARTA's demand response program consists of 23 small LTV's or Transit Vans that transport people throughout Portage County six days a week. Chart 2-4 on page 19 depicts demand response ridership based on the FTA's National Transit Database reported unlinked passenger trips by year.

PARTA's number of trips decreased by 46% from 2019 to 2020 as the pandemic affected transit operations and services of the entire region and the entire country. PARTA has yet to recover demand response trip numbers to pre-pandemic levels.

Table 9-3 | PARTA Ridership by Route

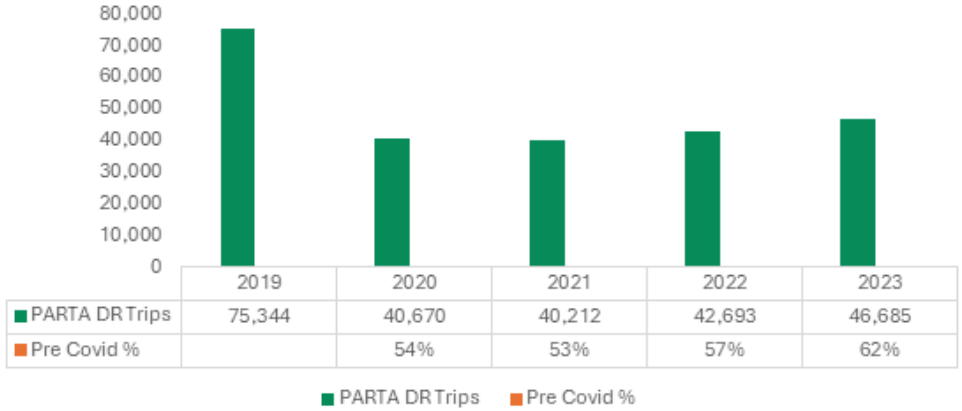
WEEKDAY ROUTE	2019 RIDERSHIP	2023 RIDERSHIP
30 - Interurban West	69,824	68,328
35 - Interurban East	158,885	138,096
40 - Suburban North	32,842	20,338
45 - Suburban South	39,639	19,260
46 - Downtowner	N/A	637
60 - Black Squirrel	12,760	N/A
70 - Windham / Garrettsville	10,255	5,095
80 - Raven West	4,273	9,613
85 - Raven East	11,577	Combined w/ 80

WEEKEND ROUTE	2019 RIDERSHIP	2023 RIDERSHIP
30 - Interurban, Sat	14,424	8,867
35 - Interurban East, Sat	Combined w/ 30	Combined w/ 30
40 - Suburban, Sat	4,687	3,087
45 - Suburban South, Sat	Combined w/ 40	Combined w/ 40
46 - Downtowner, Sat	N/A	285

EXPRESS ROUTE	2019 RIDERSHIP	2023 RIDERSHIP
90 - Akron Express	18,880	14,589
100 - Cleveland Express	5,381	2,743

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY	2019 RIDERSHIP	2023 RIDERSHIP
51 - Campus Loop	139,641	165,657
53 - Reverse Loop	62,608	Suspended
55 - Allerton	71,566	56,245
57 - Stadium Loop	11,381	33,725
58 - Summit East	373,546	288,338
59 - Night Shuttle	26,043	23,892

Chart 2-4 | PARTA Demand Response Trips



2.3 | Challenges

2.3.1 | Aging of America

The Summit County Area on Aging statistics show that the senior population will reach a peak between 2025 and 2030 perhaps going beyond that. That means more individuals will be looking for affordable demand response public transportation service to help age in place and promote more active lifestyles for the aging demographic. The recent Summit County Area on Aging 2022 Adult Needs Assessment identifies a growing need for more robust medical transportation services. The assessment states that a third of residents do not have access to affordable, reliable and consistent public transportation. Increased collaboration between the medical community and the public and private transportation providers of the region is needed to improve service for an aging population.

2.3.2 | Increased Cost of Transit Service

For all transit authorities costs of goods and services are on the rise and the need to maintain a state of good repair has become more difficult. The Federal Transit Authority (FTA) has defined and helps assist transit agencies maintain bus and rail systems in a State of Good Repair (SGR) and is one of FTA's highest priorities. The FTA recommends Transit Asset Management (TAM) practices to preserve and expand transit investments. Having well maintained, reliable transit infrastructure will help ensure safe, dependable and accessible services.

2.3.3 | Understanding and Adjusting to the Workforce Needs of the Area

Transit Authorities need to understand the recent local workforce trends in the area in order to best maximize service. However, this is not a transit-only concern. Local regional economic development strategies need to consider existing transit service when attracting new employers, especially employers with a higher transit-dependent workforce. Companies are looking to relocate to areas with cheaper rent and cost of living for their employees and another cost savings benefit is being located on an existing transit line providing employees the choice or ability to use public transit service. These decisions and conversations about land use are complex and certain opportunities may not exist for some businesses to locate along a transit line however, communication between these two interests need to align in order for overall cohesive land use planning that benefits all transportation users.

2.3.4 | Specific Investment in TOD/BRT and Need for Increased Local Funding for Operational Funding to Support These Programs

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) refers to the planning and development of transit-oriented communities that integrate housing, businesses, and amenities around transit stations, promoting walkability and ensuring easy access to transit stations on foot through well-designed pedestrian pathways. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is an advanced, high-quality

transit system that delivers safe, fast, and comfortable service. Improvements typically found within BRT routes include fewer stops, traffic signal priority, off-board fare collection, and elevated platforms which create a better trip experience compared to typical bus service.

PARTA and Kent have partnered on TOD projects in the past with the Kent Central Gateway project being located downtown Kent in an area of growing mixed-use development. Also, the Reimagining the Gateway, E. Main Street project is a Kent, Kent State University, ODOT, AMATS, and PARTA collaboration to make the most heavily used PARTA transit corridor safer, walkable and more accessible for all users.

METRO RTA is exploring TOD and BRT projects for the near future METRO RTA BRT Information Page and has recently conducted a BRT feasibility study that will hope to narrow down one or multiple corridors that could support a BRT project along one of their existing fixed-routes.

TOD and BRT involves not only large amounts of federal and state grant funding but a considerable amount of local funding investment by transit authorities and local municipalities. Transit systems may be hesitant to increase their share of local sales tax which accounts for much of their local operating budgets, so collaboration and investment between local communities is essential for these large types of investments. The areas of specific investment need to be considered a joint effort between communities and the local transit authority. As local budgets become tighter, and as inflation and costs rise, investments for these types of large-scale projects can be difficult for communities and transit agencies to justify.

2.3.5 | METRO RTA/PARTA Specific Areas That Are Currently Not Served by Transit

In general, it is difficult for mid-size transit systems to be everywhere for everyone. Therefore, it becomes inevitable that some suburban and rural areas may not be served by fixed-route service. Public transportation, by nature, is designed to provide the widest, most efficient service to as many riders as possible. While METRO RTA and PARTA strive for continuous improvement in meeting the needs of all riders, it is not currently economically or logistically feasible to offer fixed-route line service throughout all neighborhoods within each of their counties.

The existing, built environment also impacts where fixed route transit service can operate. In general, areas that are pedestrian friendly tend to be more transit friendly. Transportation infrastructure built primarily for vehicle travel may lack pedestrian amenities and present barriers to individuals getting to a bus stop and safely waiting for, boarding, and alighting a transit bus. A lack of curb cuts, lighting, sidewalks, crosswalks, shared-use paths, and adequate space for buses to stop and maneuver are a few of the challenges to offering fixed route service in some areas of Portage County and in communities across the country. Areas that are not pedestrian friendly with inaccessible infrastructure present a particular difficulty and safety concern for individuals with disabilities.

Local municipalities who are currently underserved or not served need to voice their concerns to their respective transit authority about potential transit coverage. Transit authorities have the challenge of examining the cost and effectiveness of serving a particular area and must create a cost benefit analysis for each community or be willing to discuss feasibility of what that service might look like. This is the challenge that all transit authorities face as current demand for transit does not yet support that level of investment for a 24/7 expansion of service. Finally, even in areas where fixed route coverage exists, there are additional gaps created when the sidewalk infrastructure does not fully and safely connect destinations and bus stops.

2.4 | Public Outreach and Stakeholders

This plan involved discussions with the two major local transit authority METRO RTA and PARTA on the different issues facing transit as well as some of their future goals and strategies. AMATS provided its member organizations and the public with a comment period for the month of August beginning with the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) meetings on August 1, 2024. After the final comments were received, AMATS staff integrated any changes brought on by specific relevant comments into the plan and to asked for approval of the full final transit plan during the September TAC and Policy meetings.

METRO RTA and PARTA work with a number of local public and private organizations in order to provide the current levels of service that both respective agencies provide. Last year, AMATS along with METRO RTA and PARTA, developed a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. METRO RTA and PARTA assisted in gathering a list of stakeholders that either work with or provide transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and/or people with low incomes. A full list of participants can be found in appendix A of the Coordinated Plan. Various agencies were identified, including agencies representing:

a. Public transit
b. Senior center or other organization serving older adults

c. Local County and/or city government
d. Department of Developmental Disabilities (local/regional) office and programs
e. Department of Health and Human Services office (local/regional)
f. Department of Job and Family Services office
g. Private transportation providers

Stakeholders were invited to participate in the Planning Committee. METRO RTA and PARTA also invited some of their loyal transit riders to ensure that citizen concerns and ideas were represented within the group for the coordinated plan that was published in 2023.

3 | PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance and asset measures are widely used in the transit industry today, with most transit agencies reporting basic information about their service to the FTA's National Transit Database (NTD). After data reporting was required by Congress in 1974, the FTA's National Transit Database (NTD) was set up to be the repository of data about the financial, operating and asset conditions of American transit systems. The NTD records the financial, operating, and asset condition of transit systems helping to keep track of the industry and provide public information and statistics. The NTD is designed to support local, state and regional planning efforts and help governments and other decision-makers make multi-year comparisons and perform trend analyses. It contains a wealth of information such as agency funding sources, inventories of vehicles and maintenance facilities, safety event reports, measures of transit service provided and consumed, and data on transit employees.

FTA uses NTD data to apportion funding to urbanized and rural areas in the United States. Transit agencies report data on a few key metrics including Vehicle Revenue Miles (VRM), Vehicle Revenue Hours (VRH), Passenger Miles Traveled (PMT), Unlinked Passenger Trips (UPT), and Operating Expenses (OE). The NTD has an agency profile page NTD Agency Profile Page where the public can view NTD yearly reports of transit authorities to learn more about their production. Operating Expenses per vehicle per revenue mile is an example of some of the information when viewing these agency profiles.

3.1 | Transit Asset Management

Transit Asset Management (TAM) is the strategic and systematic practice of procuring, operating, inspecting, maintaining, rehabilitating, and replacing transit capital assets to manage their performance, risks, and costs over their life cycles to provide safe, cost effective, and reliable public transportation. TAM uses transit asset condition to guide how to manage capital assets and prioritize funding to improve or maintain a state of good repair. Federal regulations require the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to develop a rule to establish a strategic and systematic process of operating, maintaining and improving public transportation capital assets effectively through their entire life cycle.

FTA's national Transit Asset Management system rule defines the term "state of good repair," and requires grantees to develop a TAM plan, which establishes performance measures, annual reporting requirement. In July 2016, FTA published a final rule for TAM. The rule requires FTA grantees to develop asset management plans for their public transportation assets, including vehicles, facilities, equipment, and other infrastructure.

A state of good repair (SGR) is a threshold that identifies the desired performance condition of a capital asset, such as a bus, transfer facility, or office building. An asset is in a state of good repair when it is able to operate at a full level of performance. This means:

- The asset is able to perform its designed function.
- Does not pose a known or unacceptable safety risk (condition); and
- Its life cycle investments have been met or recovered (Useful Benchmark- ULB)

SGR performance targets are based on realistic expectations derived from the most recent available data (condition and ULB), FTA performance measure criteria, and the financial resources from all sources that the area reasonably expects to be available during the TAM plan horizon period for capital planning purposes. Each agency works with the Federal Transit Administration to set individual targets for their respective systems.

3.1.1 | Local TAM Targets

PARTA TAM Goals and Targets

In 2022 PARTA updated its Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan and updated the Useful Life vehicle and facility assets. PARTA's goal is that all assets are in a state of good repair and all vehicles are within their useful lives. To accomplish this goal, PARTA aims to maintain their fleet with 100 percent of their vehicles in at least fair or good condition.

Current PARTA TAM Targets for Vehicles

As of 2023, 100 percent of the 27 gasoline fueled small LTV cutaway and 100 percent of the 5-van fleet met or exceeded the projected TAM targets. None of these revenue vehicles have met or exceeded the ULB.

PARTA's large bus fleet consists of 17 diesel, 10 CNG and 6 CNG fueled trolley buses. The projected target for PARTA's large bus fleet is also 100% within their ULB. However, the actual number of buses past their useful life in 2023 was 16.67%. The COVID-19 pandemic caused supply chain delays and bus manufacturing delays that resulted in a slow-down in vehicle replacements. As a result, both receiving new vehicles and disposing of old vehicles have been slower than expected. This resulted in not meeting the performance target for FY2023.

PARTA maintains the goal of 0% of its revenue vehicles past their useful life or ULB benchmark. PARTA is continuously procuring vehicles to replace buses that have reached their ULB targets and to meet the goals of PARTA's TAM plan and replacement schedule. The maintenance department follows a rigorous and complete maintenance program for all assets.

Current PARTA TAM Targets for Facilities

PARTA currently has 5 facilities including an administration building, maintenance building, wash bay facility, CNG fueling station and bus storage facility which are all located at 2000 Summit Rd. Kent, Ohio. PARTA's 6th facility, The Kent Central Gateway, which is a multimodal transfer center with parking is located at 201 E. Erie St. Kent, Ohio. All facilities are in new or good condition based on a recent facility condition assessment.

Table 3-1 | METRO SOGR Policy Targets

FTA CATEGORY	SUB-GROUP	LIMIT	MEASUREMENT
Revenue Fleet (ULB)	Overall Revenue Vehicles	< 15% over ULB	varies 4-15 years
	Bus 60'	< 10% over ULB	< 12 Years
	Bus 40'	< 15% over ULB	< 12 Years
	Bus 45' Commuter	< 5% over ULB	< 15 Years
	Bus 35'	< 15% over ULB	< 12 Years
	Paratransit	< 15% over ULB	< 5 Years
Facilities (SOGR)	Facility	< 10% under 3.0 SOGR	SOGR
	Facility Assets	< 10% under 3.0 SOGR	SOGR
Infrastructure	Track, Signals	< 10% under 1.0 SOGR	SOGR
Equipment	Heavy Equipment	< 25% over ULB	SOGR
	Non-Revenue Vehicles	< 25% over ULB	< 8 Years

METRO RTA TAM Targets

METRO RTA has set targets for SGR and determined that their overall revenue vehicles should be less than 15% over their Useful Life Benchmark (ULB), on average. METRO RTA also reviews its Bus Improvement Plan (BIP) annually to ensure the buses are within the ULB of 12 years. This helps to keep their fleet reliable and reduce maintenance costs.

Current METRO RTA TAM Targets for Vehicles

METRO currently as of 2023 is meeting all vehicle goals. Only showing 6% of their 131 large bus fleet bus fleet has met or exceed their ULB. METRO's large bus fleet consist of 127 CNG buses and four electric buses. Of the smaller LTV cutaway and vans, METRO as of 2023 has zero vehicles that are beyond their useful life benchmark.

All of METRO RTA's parking facilities meet condition rating goals. However, 16% of their administrative and maintenance facilities are rated below 3 on the condition scale, see Table 3-2.

METRO RTA's administration, maintenance, storage facilities, wash bay and CNG station are located at the Kenmore location. Only the maintenance and administration building at this location are in need of upgrades. The RKP Transit Center located in downtown Akron and the Independence and Romig Road Transit centers are in new or good condition. METRO is already in the process of improving their overall facility conditions rating by constructing a new maintenance facility at the 416 Kenmore Blvd location. More information on the project can be found on their website.

Table 3-2 | Facility Ratings Chart

RATING	OPEN DEFECTS		OVERDUE PMs	NOTES FROM DATA MIGRATION SPREADSHEETS
	FROM	TO		
5	0	10	0	5 = No unfunded or deferred maintenance activities.
4	10	20	1	4 = Some temporary deferment of PM and CM; no activity skipped completely.
3	20	30	2	3 = More frequent deferment and extended of PM and CM; some activity skipped altogehter.
2	30	50	3	2 = PM and CM activity frequenly delayed or skipped until major problems surface.
1	50		4	1 = Significant backlog of PM and CM work due to history of deferred and skiped activities.

3.2 | Transit Safety

The **Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans** (PTASP) regulation (49 CFR Part 673) requires operators of public transportation systems that receive federal funds under the FTA Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307), and rail transit agencies subject to the FTA State Safety Oversight (SSO) program, to develop an Agency Safety Plan (ASP) that includes the processes and procedures to implement a Safety Management System (SMS). SMS is a comprehensive, collaborative, and systematic approach to managing safety.

The PTASP requirement is in part to ensure that all agencies are examining and defining their safety roles, responsibilities and protocols on a more regular basis. It also requires agencies to examine new potential threats to their system and develop and adapt to industry best practices methods for safety and dangerous situations. The plan highlights different risk mitigation, safety assurance and provides an overall comprehensive Safety Management systems (SMS) framework to guide agencies approach to safety.

Some key performance indicators (KPIs) that are examined through the PTASP may not all have specific data that can be measured such as how secure a certain facility is, but a full safety risk assessment can be conducted by:

- Collecting Information;
- Assessing Severity;
- Assessing Likelihood;
- Determining the Safety Risk Index; and
- Documenting Results.

However, some KPI's yield specific data that can be analyzed and compared such as safety performance targets (SPT's) and they are examined by each transit agency and reported to the NTD on a yearly basis:

- Fatalities: Total number of fatalities reported to NTD and rate per total vehicle revenue miles (VRM)
- Injuries: Total number of injuries reported to NTD and rate per total VRM by mode.
- Safety Events: Total number of safety events reported to NTD and r ate per total VRM by mode.
- System Reliability: Mean distance between major mechanical failures by mode.

METRO RTA for example, utilizes KPIs and Safety Performance Targets (SPTs) within the organization to 1) monitor company health, 2) measure progress, 3) analyze patterns over time, 4) solve problems or tackle opportunities and 5) make adjustments to stay on track. This information is intended to answer two primary questions that aid METRO RTA in the assessment of its performance and help determine where or if changes in policy or procedure is required: Why did performance change? What actions are being taken to improve performance?

PARTA utilizes KPIs to make informed decisions and instill positive change. Safety is a core business value; employees are trained in safety principles and open communication of safety issues is promoted. Performance is tracked and results are measured for improvement.

Both METRO RTA and PARTA are dedicated to safety and continuous improvement. Each agency uses KPIs to mitigate risks and develop physical, administrative, and behavioral defense strategies.

4 | VISION, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

4.1 | Vision

The area's two regional public transit providers—METRO and PARTA —each have visions that guide their mission and operations. While each agency's overall vision might be different because of size/scale of the agency, the populations they serve, and geography, there is significant common ground between what each agency wants to accomplish.

Taking into account these differences and similarities, the AMATS *2024 Transit Plan*'s general, overarching vision for the region is as follows:

- Provide safe and equitable transit service for the region. Improve the accessibility of life-sustaining trips with access to employment, food and medical facilities.
- Healthy smart collaboration with community partners to provide innovative service approaches to the needs of the area.
- Continue to remain financially stable and to pursue all relevant State and Federal funding opportunities.

4.2 | Goals and Strategies

The matrix on the following pages provides numerous strategies that support the AMATS 2024 Transit Plan's vision.

Goals are listed and defined in the pink-shaded sections of the matrix. Each goal falls into one or more categories:

- Collaboration Goals
- Funding Goals
- Service Goals

Strategies corresponding to each goal are listed below each goal. Strategies are what can be done to accomplish each of the broader goals. Each goal has between one and four strategies listed.

Implementation lists the agencies responsible for putting the strategies into action. Lead agencies would be those primarily responsible for the effort, while supporting agencies include those who would likely participate in the effort.

Additional Notes is a catch-all, general summary category that might describe how and why a strategy gets implemented, why it is important, and other general nuance about past work or specific areas of focus.

Transit Plan Goals and Strategies Matrix

= Collaboration Goal = Funding Goal = Service Goal

Strategy	Implementation		Additional Notes
	Lead	Support	
Goal # 1: Invest in programs supporting transit goals *Transit agencies provide a level of service that supports the needs of the area and to invest in opportunities that promote a safe, sustainable and equitable transit system.*			
Pursue available Local, State and Federal funding programs that support transit operations and projects.	METRO, PARTA	AMATS	More information on specific programs can be found in the *Implementation* section of this chapter.
Goal # 2: Invest in sustainable fleet and operations *Transit agencies make sound decisions and create a visible opportunity to lead by example.*			
Pursue and ensure a sustainable fleet and maintain a state of good repair to preserve the investment in transit and maintain sustainability of thier service.	METRO, PARTA		Invest in updating fleet and meeting FTA Transit Asset Management Targets as well as investing in preventative maintenance practices ("fix it first" philosophy) to maintain a state of good repair for all vehicles.
Goal # 3: Integrate transit into regional transportation projects *Creating a robust public transportation network becomes a primary consideration of many roadway improvement projects.*			
Work with local communities to discuss integration in roadway projects with a transit add on component like a bus shelter or enhanced waiting environments.	METRO, PARTA, AMATS	Community Officials, AMATS	Transit authorities and local officials can have a shared understanding of projects before plans are made, allowing them to maximize potential for transit improvements when necessary.
Goal # 4: Ensure that transit is an intergral component of land use planning efforts *Sound land-use decisions and future development can impove the public transportation network, and quality transit services can allow development to occur more responsibly.*			
Partner with economic development agencies and local officials when conversations about business attrraction and expansion occur.	Community Officials, Econ. Dev. Agencies, METRO, PARTA		It is important to locate jobs–especially when employees us transit–in areas where service exists or can be provided. Having transit agencies involved in regional employment conversations helps inform the planning process.
Communicate the benefits of increasing the transit footprint and the positive effect this can have on the region and quality of life for transit users.	METRO, PARTA	Community Officials, AMATS	Building partneships between transit agencies and community officials will help to build trust and a stronger public transit network.
Continue to explore the feasibility of and pursue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in the City of Akron and surrounding municipalities.	METRO	Akron , C. Falls, Barberton, Fair-lawn, Green, Springfield, AMATS	Once METRO and its partners decide on final alternatives (several potential routes have been studied in-depth), partners can negotiate how local shares of BRT development will be paid. Partners can then pursue FTA's Small Starts funding.
Explore opportunities for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)	METRO, possibly PARTA	Private developers, Community officials, CDCs/NDCs	METRO is exploring TOD near their RKP Transit Center, south of downtown Akron. Other possible locations include Akron's Middlebury Neighborhood and the Arlington Rd. corridor. Downtown Kent has seen significant TOD over the past 15 years.
Goal # 5: Optimize transit service *Transit agencies adapt to the inevitable and continuous changes occuring in communities.*			
Study current service and conduct service optimization every 5-10 years to adjust to new travel patterns.	METRO, PARTA	AMATS	METRO recently completed (2023) the Reimagine METRO redesign; PARTA intends to take a comprehensive look at route optimization in 2025. AMATS can assist as needed by analyzing demographic and employment data.
Examine potential coverage to peripheral locations.	METRO, PARTA		Demand for expansion into exurban communities exists, but can be difficult to justify because of total ridership and mileage.
Continue to invest in new technologies that improve the ridership expereince and efficiency of operations.	METRO, PARTA		Various technologies, such as scheduling software for service or personell, can assist transit agencies by making operations more efficient. PARTA recently invested in ITS improvements.
Goal # 6: Increase sidewalk access to bus stops and shelters *The transportation system safely accomodates all people, regardless of their mode of transport.*			
Apply for funding opportunities to create or improve infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists, ensuring safe access to and from transit stops.	Local Communities	AMATS, METRO, PARTA	Quality pedestrian access from homes, places of employment, medical facilities, and stores to transit stops is essential for safety, but it also allows transit to become a more viable mode of transportation for more people.

4.3 | Implementation

Each of this plan's goals and many of the strategies require funding to implement. Transit agencies have access to myriad federal, state, and local funding sources.

4.3.1 | Federal Grant Programs

Federal funding programs are generally used for capital expenses. Transit agencies can often utilize multiple federal funding sources for one project, administered at the state level by the Ohio Department of Transportation.

The primary source of federal funding for capital and maintenance projects is the Federal Transit Authority's (FTA) **Section 5307 Program**. These funds are typically used to purchase new buses, equipment, and for preventative maintenance and planning.

To better serve elderly persons and persons with disabilities, the transit agencies are also eligible for FTA's Section **5310 Enhanced Mobility for the Elderly and Disabled Program** funds. Also known as the Specialized Transportation Program, these funds may be used for capital or operating expenses.

FTA's **Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Program** can also fund capital projects. These funds are also used for new buses or for capital facilities.

Within the Section 5339 Funding Program is a discretionary source dedicated to funding zero and low-emission buses in order to reduce air pollution. This is known as the **Low or No Emissions Grant Program**.

Funding for implementing or expanding Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is available through FTA's **Small Starts Program**.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) **Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)** is the most versatile funding option that can be used for a variety of projects including highways, transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program (CMAQ) can be used for projects that improve air quality, such as CNG buses, traffic signal improvements, and park and ride lots.

Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) can be used for projects designed to reduce transportation emissions, defined as carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from on-road highway sources. Projects eligible for CRP funds include roundabouts, operational projects that improve traffic flow, clean fuel bus purchases, and bicycle and pedestrian projects.

4.3.2 | State Grant Programs

The **Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2)** is a competitive grant program that was established to provide additional capital funding to Ohio's public transit operators for projects emphasizing system preservation. METRO RTA and PARTA have each received OTP2 funds almost every year since 2012. The OTP2 funds have come from ODOT-attributable federal funds (CMAQ or STBG), and now come from state general revenue funds (GRF). Although the OTP2 program now uses state general revenue funds (instead of CMAQ or STBG as it did in the past), the amount of funding is insufficient for the needs of the transit agencies. According to the Ohio Statewide Transit Needs Study from 2015, "The use of GRF (general revenue funds) in Ohio to fund public transit has been in steady decline" since 2000.

The **Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant (DERG)** Program is offered by ODOT annually in coordination with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) to public and private sector diesel fleets (motor vehicle, marine, locomotive, and highway construction equipment). METRO and PARTA have each been awarded DERG funds regularly on an annual basis for a number of years.

The **Urban Transit Program (UTP)** is a statewide source of funding catered to transit service in Ohio's urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or greater (therefore both METRO and PARTA receive funding). UTP is a flexible funding source available for a wide variety of activities that support the provision of public transportation.

4.3.3 | General Revenue Ohio State Funding

Until recently, besides the small amount of OTP2, and urban and rural funding programs the State of Ohio had no stable or dedicated funding for transit service. The overall transit agencies rely on federal funds for their capital, maintenance, and planning expenses, but these aren't always sufficient. The small amount of local funding transit agencies receive from sales tax may not cover their operations. Additionally, smaller transit agencies may not be able to use federal funds because they are unable to come up with the required local match. As the state of Ohio demonstrated in 2019 with the gas tax increase, there is a need for increased and dedicated funding at the state level. State general revenue funds for transit have been declining since their peak in 2000 and dwindled down to $6.5 million in in State Fiscal year 2018-2019 for urban and rural transit agencies.

AMATS Policy Committee discussed the state funding to support transit in 2019 and approved a motion for the AMATS staff to provide a letter of support that requested that the governor support a $70 million investment beginning with the 2020-21 budget. This amount was substantially smaller than the recommendation that came out of the Ohio Statewide Transit Needs Study in 2015. That study, produced by ODOT, recommended the state invest $120 million a year in transit, rising to $185 million in 2025, in order to cover 10% of the costs to preserve Ohio's transit system and provide the stable and reliable funding source that is so greatly needed.

The past two budget cycles (FY2022-FY2023 and FY2024-2025) show a substantially larger investment of $74,029,272 ($37,014,636 per year) for Ohio transit systems than in previous cycles. This increased investment allows transit agencies the flexibility to use state General Revenue funding as local match to federal funding. The 2023 Ohio Legislative Service Commission Report details on page 3 provide the breakdown for public transit funding.

4.3.4 | Local Funding

Local sources of funding are essential to providing the daily operations transit riders depend upon. The transit agencies' operating expenses are primarily funded through two local sources.

Dedicated sales tax revenue is by far the largest source of local revenue. For METRO RTA, this amounts to a .50% sales tax while PARTA benefits from a .25% sales tax. These sales tax funds can be used for operations as well as a match for federal funds.

Another local source of funding is the **fare box revenue**, which are the funds received from riders. This revenue makes up a small part of the operating budget, and can vary by month and by route, making it difficult to plan ahead using this source. The transit agency's operating expenses are funded mainly through these two local sources.

2024 TRANSIT PLAN

AMATS

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