



# 2018 Annual Report

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*The Yearly Chronicle of the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study*

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Mayor Bobbie Beshara

# Turning the Page by Chairwoman Beshara

2018 was my first year as chairwoman of the Policy Committee of the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS). As I turned the final page on my calendar for the year just completed, I was astounded at how much the agency achieved in a mere 12 months.

The year began with the approval by the Policy Committee of 37 new highway, bike and pedestrian projects throughout the Greater Akron area totaling nearly \$34 million in federal funds. These projects represent necessary investments in the region's infrastructure in the face of diminishing resources. The committee followed that action a few weeks later with the approval of Resolution 2018-07 urging a 15 cent increase in the federal gas tax to bolster the national Highway Trust Fund. This resolution was forwarded to policymakers in Washington, D.C., and Columbus and is the third of its kind approved by AMATS since 2010.

Among the agency's other significant achievements during the year was the completion of the *2015-2017 Traffic Crash Report*, a comprehensive three-year study of accidents in the Greater Akron area. The agency also partnered with several communities to host unique public outreach events throughout the region. AMATS also found time to complete a significant update of its *3P - Public Participation Plan*, which details how the agency will engage and empower the public throughout the regional planning process.

Did I mention that AMATS somehow seamlessly marked all of these accomplishments while managing a midsummer move of its operations to new offices in the Oliver Ocasek Building?

I am honored to chair the AMATS Policy Committee and to participate in the transportation planning process alongside my colleagues from the many townships, villages, cities, and counties across the Greater Akron area. I am constantly amazed that individuals with so many diverse community-driven agendas can come together and work so well on behalf of the entire region. I invite you to read the *AMATS 2018 Annual Report*. By the time that you turn this report's last page, you'll share in my amazement regarding this remarkable agency.

**Bobbie Beshara**  
**2018 AMATS Policy Committee Chairwoman**  
**Village of Richfield Mayor**







# Planning

2018 was a year in which AMATS sent policymakers in Washington, D.C. and Columbus a message about the need for action with regards to bolstering the national Highway Trust Fund.

It was also a year in which the public's role in transportation planning within the Greater Akron grew to new prominence. The agency made extensive use of public empowerment events and workshops throughout the course of the year. These events addressed such topics as improving the region's biking and pedestrian networks and upcoming changes related to the use of autonomous and connected vehicles (AV/CVs). The agency also saw continued success with its Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program.

## Resolution 2018-07

In May, the AMATS Policy Committee overwhelmingly approved Resolution 2018-07 urging an increase in the federal gas tax as a way to bolster the national Highway Trust Fund. The committee approved Resolution 2018-07 stating its support for a 15 cent increase in the gas tax indexed to inflation so that revenue generated for the fund can keep pace with rising costs.

Shortly after the resolution's adoption by the committee, AMATS Director Curtis Baker noted that the Highway Trust Fund's insolvency is a real threat in light of the fact that it is grappling with current and projected outlays of about \$55 billion a year in the coming years.

The current tax of 18.4 cents per gallon generates about \$35 billion for various road construction and other surface transportation projects across the nation. Another \$5 billion raised from the tax supports public transportation. The tax hasn't been increased since 1993 while construction and other costs have increased unabated. The Highway Trust Fund is projected to become insolvent by 2021, unless a new source of funding is found.

Resolution 2018-07 was relayed to Ohio's Congressional delegation for consideration in May. To date, only U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown has responded to the resolution and indicated that he is willing to consider various funding proposals. The resolution also urged state lawmakers in Columbus to consider raising additional revenue for roadway infrastructure.

Resolution 2018-07 is available for viewing by clicking [here](#).



## Bike-N-Brainstorms

The AMATS Bike-N-Brainstorm Program capped off a successful 2018 by hosting a record number of four events, which drew more than 90 participants from across the Greater Akron area. Bike-N-Brainstorms (B-N-Bs) are the agency's unique public empowerment events in which participants play a direct role in transportation planning. Participants meet for a bike ride along a designated route in a community. At the end of the ride, cyclists share their thoughts on how to make a community more bike and pedestrian friendly.

AMATS hosted events in Akron, Ravenna, Green and Tallmadge during the months of June, July, August and September. Mayors Gerard Neugebauer of Green and David Kline of Tallmadge led the rides and discussions for their respective communities.

### SCENES FROM THE B-N-Bs!

Below, from left to right: Riders gather at the Lawton Street Community Center for the Akron B-N-B on Copley Road in June; second, participants exit the Ravenna City Park and enter Oakwood Street in July; third, Green's B-N-B winds through Shriver Street in August; and at right, Mayor Kline, standing at left, leads a discussion group following September's Tallmadge B-N-B.



## Jane's Walk

AMATS brought Jane's Walk back to the Greater Akron area for a fifth successful year in 2018 by hosting 17 walking tours in May. Jane's Walk events are part of a global walking initiative that was launched by friends of urban planning pioneer, Jane Jacobs.

The events offer participants a chance to explore local neighborhoods and encourage dialogue between neighbors and community planners. Because AMATS promotes connectivity principles in transportation planning, the agency relies on these events as a planning resource. Feedback from 2018's events is being used to prepare the region's upcoming *Pedestrian Plan*.

Downtown Akron, Kenmore Boulevard and Summit Lake Park, inset, shown above, were among the walking route locales. Tours highlighted unique artistic, engineering and historical aspects along routes. To find out more, please view our YouTube feature, *Making Tracks with Jane's Walk*, by clicking [here](#).







## Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program

For the AMATS Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program, 2018 was a year of solid accomplishment for two of its past grant recipients - the cities of Green and Twinsburg. 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.

Green and Twinsburg landed grants in 2016. Working with AMATS, both communities neared completion of their respective studies as 2018 ended.

**Green** - AMATS, Green, and the study consultant, Environmental Design Group (EDG), made tremendous strides in the development of the upcoming *Green Master Connectivity Plan*. When completed, the plan will provide a framework for Green in identifying and prioritizing where and how bicycle and pedestrian connections should be pursued as development and transportation projects occur in the southern Summit County community.

Recognizing that active public participation fosters quality planning, Green frequently published updates on its website - [cityofgreen.org](http://cityofgreen.org) - and various social media regarding the plan's progress.

Green hosted three unique public engagement events as part of its efforts to receive community feedback. The first event was a January public meeting at the Green Central Park Community Hall, which included three stations, each containing a separate element for discussion. These elements included destination locations, facility types, and connectivity routes. Voting and written comments were encouraged to solicit input and aid in ranking these elements for possible inclusion in the draft plan. A formal presentation at this meeting introduced concepts of bicycle-user groups and facility types.

Seeking to build on the momentum of this first event, Green again utilized stations during Green Mayor Gerard Neugebauer's 2018 State of the City Address and the Green Schools Celebration of Education event, which were in January and February respectively. Vote tallies and commentary received at these meeting stations were used to rank connectivity routes. This information allowed stakeholders to identify the top five destinations for potential bicycle and pedestrian networks. Boettler Park, the Green Schools Campus, Central Park, Nimisila Reservoir, and the Massillon Road Corridor were selected as the city's top five destinations.

The study project team, which included representatives from AMATS, met six times over the year to provide crucial technical advice on the draft plan's development. The final *Green Master Connectivity Plan* is expected to be completed in 2019.

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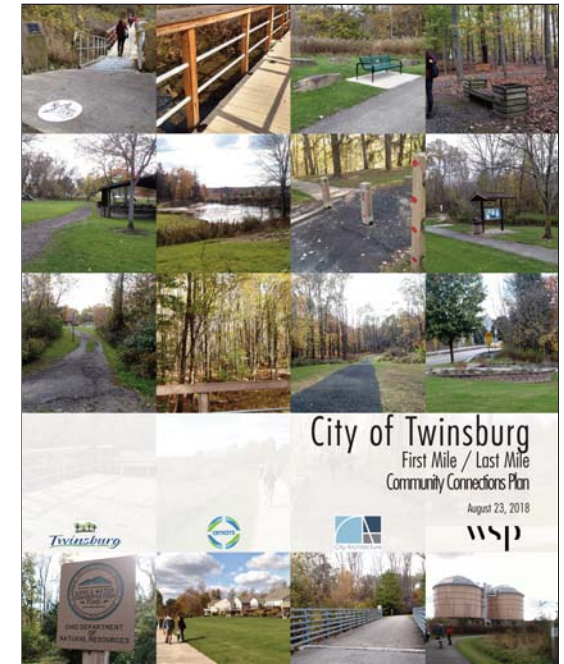
**Twinsburg** - Twinsburg released the final draft of its *First Mile/Last Mile Community Connections Plan* in August. Prepared by City Architecture, the plan identifies alternatives for critical connections between existing trails and how to link these connections with important destinations within the northern Summit County community and its central area.

AMATS was actively involved in the plan's development throughout the year. Agency officials - together with city and consultant representatives - met with the Twinsburg Planning Commission in February and the Twinsburg Board of Education in June to address concerns regarding the plan's preparation, scope and related issues.

The agency was also a key player in a month-long, communitywide survey regarding the plan's proposed bicycle and pedestrian trail networks. Survey participants were asked to weigh in on key points such as where better connections are needed, the types of amenities that would make new and existing paths more usable, and a potential name with which to market the system.

The top five destinations identified by survey respondents as potential network connections were Liberty Park, the Twinsburg Town Square, the Twinsburg Fitness Center, the Twinsburg Public Library, and Glen Chamberlin Park. Survey information provided by residents will help guide future community infrastructure investment decisions.

The Twinsburg City Council approved the final *First Mile/Last Mile Community Connections Plan* in January 2019.



### FIRST MILE / LAST MILE

Twinsburg's *First Mile / Last Mile Community Connections Plan*, shown above, was completed in 2018. To view the plan, click [here](#).



### GETTING READY

DriveOhio Workshop attendees were a mix of Greater Akron area leaders, planners, engineers, emergency service providers and transit operators.

## DriveOhio Workshop

AMATS, together with its sister agency, the Stark County Area Transportation Study (SCATS), co-hosted a DriveOhio Workshop in October at the Central Park Community Hall in Green. DriveOhio is an initiative of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to bring together government, industry and research partners to enhance the state's infrastructure for autonomous and connected vehicles (AV/CVs) and the development of smart mobility technologies.

The workshop was the sixth in a series across the state organized by DriveOhio consultant, AECOM. ODOT and DriveOhio are using the workshops to gather insights as to what AV/CV projects are being considered across regions and what safety, traffic or quality of life issues could AV/CV technology help address in communities. To find out more, please view our YouTube feature, *An 'Auto' Auto Workshop*, by clicking [here](#).



# Engineering

The agency's engineering accomplishments benefitted the Greater Akron area throughout the course of 2018. In January, the AMATS Policy Committee selected 37 projects to receive nearly \$34 million in federal funds. In December, the agency released the *2015-2017 Traffic Crash Report*, a vital resource used by communities in identifying needed safety improvements.

## New Projects

Thirty-seven highway, bike and pedestrian projects throughout the Greater Akron area were selected by the AMATS Policy Committee to receive nearly \$34 million in federal funds during the committee's first meeting in 2018. An extensive signal improvement project in Aurora, major reconstruction of Barberton's Wooster Road West, and new sidewalks along Darrow Road (state Route 91) in Stow were among the projects selected by the committee.

Many of these projects maintain the region's current system rather than pursue costly expansions. Seven projects to reconstruct and improve Greater Akron area roadways will receive over \$18 million from the federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program. Two Barberton projects, the Wooster Road West Reconstruction and the Wooster Road/State Street intersection, will receive more than \$5.5 million and \$1.9 million in STBG funds respectively. The committee also approved \$3.6 million for Cuyahoga Falls' Portage Trail Extension Widening and more than \$3.5 million for a citywide signal improvement project in Aurora.

Twenty-five projects will receive more than \$13.1 million in federal funding from the AMATS Resurfacing Program. Eight of these resurfacing projects are sponsored by the Summit County Engineer's office including the two-part Cleveland-Massillon Road project in Copley Township, which will receive a total of \$1.4 million. Other sponsors that secured funding for more than one project include Akron and Barberton with three projects each totaling \$2.1 million and nearly \$1.2 million respectively and New Franklin with two projects totaling nearly \$1.2 million.

The area's trail and sidewalk networks will continue to grow as five projects totaling nearly \$2.6 million, will receive funding from the federal Transportation Alternatives Set Aside (TASA) Program. The Cuyahoga Valley National Park's Pedestrian Bridge and Trail and the Summit Metro Parks' Freedom Trail Phase 4 will each receive \$700,000 for construction. A project to construct new sidewalks along a portion of Darrow Road in Stow will also receive more than \$590,000 in TASA funds.

Tables detailing projects that will receive STBG, Resurfacing and TASA funds are available by clicking [here](#).





## 2015-2017 Traffic Crash Report

In December, AMATS released its *2015-2017 Traffic Crash Report*. This report shows that, while the number of crashes and crash-related fatalities in the Greater Akron area continued to increase, the number of serious crash-related injuries continued to decrease during the three-year period.

The report is based on the agency's analysis of nearly 59,000 motor vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian-related crash records for the area's roadway sections and intersections provided by ODOT. The report finds that, although there may be a few dips in year-to-year totals, the overall trend for area crashes has been upward since 2009 when total crashes hit their nadir of 16,454 and peaked at 18,802 in 2015.

Similarly, crash-related fatalities have been on the upswing since 2014 when the area saw a record low of 40 deaths before hitting a high of 60 deaths a mere three years later in 2017. The report also shows that - while crashes and fatalities are increasing - the number of crashes resulting in serious injuries is slowly decreasing from its high of 693 in 2010 to a low of 450 in 2017. (The years 2012 and 2013 also recorded more than 600 such crashes with 675 and 624 respectively.)

According to the report, the number of area crashes remained nearly the same from 18,802 in 2015 to 18,787 in 2017 - a decline of 15 crashes. Crash-related injuries also decreased slightly during the same period - from 6,419 to 6,200. Sadly, despite the improving crash totals, the report found that Greater Akron area fatalities increased every year from 49 in 2015, to 54 in 2016, and 60 in 2017. The report is available by clicking [here](#).



## Traffic Count 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.

### Motor Vehicle Counts

In 2018, the agency conducted 364 counts at various area roadway segments.

### Bike and Pedestrian Counts

Bicycle and pedestrian counting is an important aspect of bicycle planning. It helps target the location for future bicycle facilities in areas where land use and development promote frequent use. The data also helps determine trends in bicycling and walking by measuring the benefits of these investments. 2018 marked the second year that AMATS utilized its *MioVision* camera to identify bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Tracking bicycle and pedestrian counts by camera allows for improved documentation and more efficient data collection by storing the videos for reference and access at any time.

In 2018, AMATS completed bicycle and pedestrian counts in 12 locations. Eleven of the locations were in the Akron area and one was located in Barberton near the Magic Mile trail section (a leg of the Towpath Trail near Robinson Avenue). The locations were prioritized based on demographics and land use in urban settings, proximity to retail, business and university areas. Locations were also chosen where bike lanes already exist in order to develop exposure rates.

During the year, Akron launched *Great Streets Akron*, an initiative to empower, connect, and develop various neighborhood business district corridors through community engagement and targeted resources. As part of this initiative, AMATS partnered with Akron in tracking bicycle and pedestrian counts with its MioVision camera at the following *Great Streets* locations:

- **West Hill** – W. Market Street/Valley Street
- **North Hill** – N. Main Street/Cuyahoga Falls Avenue
- **Maple Valley** – Hawkins Avenue/Copley Road
- **Middlebury** – Market Street/Arlington Street
- **Ellet** – Canton Road/Albrecht Avenue
- **Firestone Park** – Aster Avenue/Reed Street
- **Wallhaven** – Hawkins Avenue/Exchange/W. Market Street
- **Kenmore** – Kenmore Boulevard/14th Street
- **Goodyear Heights** – Goodyear Boulevard near Newton Street

The highest volumes of bicycle and pedestrian activity during the initiative were at the Firestone Park *Great Streets* location at Aster Avenue and Reed Street where the agency recorded 20 bicycle counts and 910 pedestrian counts during the year. The Kenmore *Great Streets* location had the highest bicycle counts while the Firestone Park *Great Streets* location had the highest pedestrian counts. The next highest volume bicycle counts were at the Ellet *Great Streets* location with 38 bicyclists counted.

Pedestrian counts at Exchange and Main Street were the second highest of AMATS count locations with 614 pedestrian counts recorded. Totals for bicycle and pedestrian counts at Exchange and Main Street in downtown Akron were down about 12 percent from 2014 for the same location and times. Totals at Market Street and Portage Path were down 50 percent for bicyclists from 2014 and totals for pedestrians were the same compared to 2014.





# Public Outreach

## 3P - Public Participation Plan Update

AMATS completed an update of its *Public Participation Plan* or "3P" in December. The 3P identifies the strategies that the agency uses to engage and empower the public throughout the regional transportation planning process. The latest 3P recognizes the changing face of the Greater Akron area.

The new 3P is the result of an extensive update process that the agency began in July. The item was also available for review and comment by the public during a 45-day period that concluded in November. The Draft 3P was also presented to the AMATS Citizens Involvement Committee as a discussion item during the committee's December meeting.

What makes this latest update standout from previous versions is its inclusion of a Language Assistance Plan for Limited English Proficient Populations (LEP). While AMATS freely offers language and translator assistance for those populations for whom English is not their primary language and for those with special needs, the new 3P is the first to include a detailed policy recognizing the need for such assistance in the region.

The formal inclusion of an LEP is an acknowledgement by the agency that the Greater Akron area's Asian, Hispanic and various immigrant populations are growing. AMATS also recognizes that language can be a barrier to some when they attempt to access services and exercise their rights. The LEP brings the agency more fully into alignment with federal laws that seek to eliminate such barriers.

The new 3P is available on the agency website by clicking [here](#).







### CHANGE ON THE HORIZON

Rich Granger of DriveOhio was the featured speaker at the 2018 AMATS Annual Meeting.

## Annual Meeting

"Change" was the theme of October's 2018 AMATS Annual Meeting. The day's featured speaker, Rich Granger of DriveOhio, shown at left, told meeting attendees that changes are coming in transportation that will be just as revolutionary as the automobile was more than 100 years ago.

DriveOhio is an Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) initiative to promote smart mobility solutions throughout the state with a focus on autonomous and connected vehicle systems. A fully autonomous vehicle (AV) can drive itself without any human involvement and is equipped with systems to sense its environment and make decisions on what it detects. Connected vehicles (CVs) are equipped with Wi-Fi and radio systems that enable communication and data sharing with other connected vehicles and the surrounding transportation infrastructure.

Granger said that AVs, CVs and their support infrastructure will have ramifications that will reverberate across society. In anticipation of these changes, DriveOhio is focused on using AV/CV technology to deliver benefits in four key quality-of-life pillars: safety, reliability, mobility, and workforce.

DriveOhio is also analyzing issues such as how to prepare and transition people whose livelihoods will be impacted as these new technologies come online. Granger's team is tasked with identifying strategies to bring smart mobility industry jobs to Ohio while ensuring that Ohioans have equitable access to mobility for education and work. He added that six smart mobility projects are underway across the state and 10 more are in the early development stage, including Greater Akron area projects.

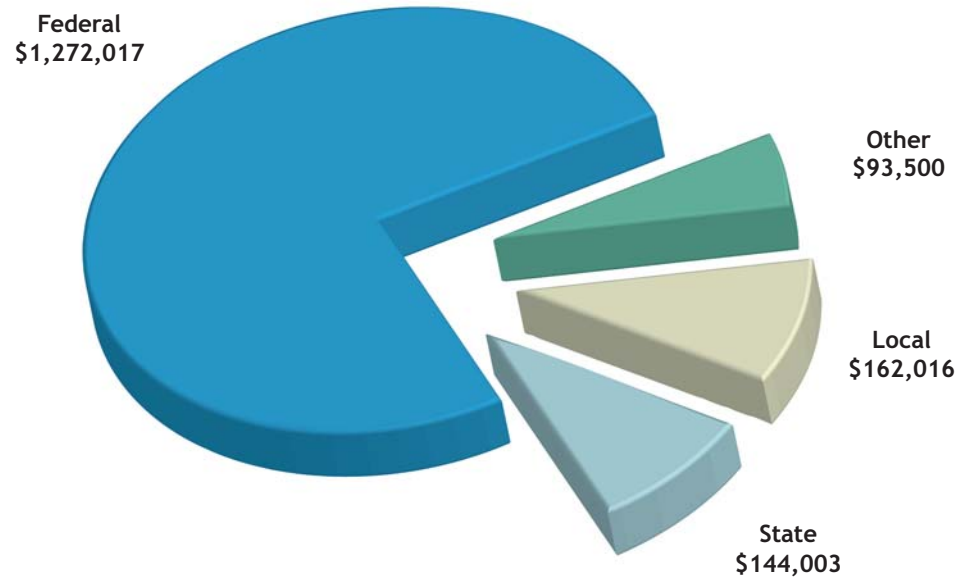
The impacts of technological breakthroughs aren't limited to the smart mobility field. The meeting's panel discussion topic was devoted to how the area's transit providers are utilizing new technologies in their daily operations. The panel, shown below, was moderated by AMATS Director Curtis Baker, at far left, and included from left to right, SARTA Executive Director/CEO Kirt Conrad, METRO Director of Planning and Development Valerie Shea, and PARTA General Manager Claudia Amrhein.

To view a feature re-capping the 2018 AMATS Annual Meeting, please click [here](#).

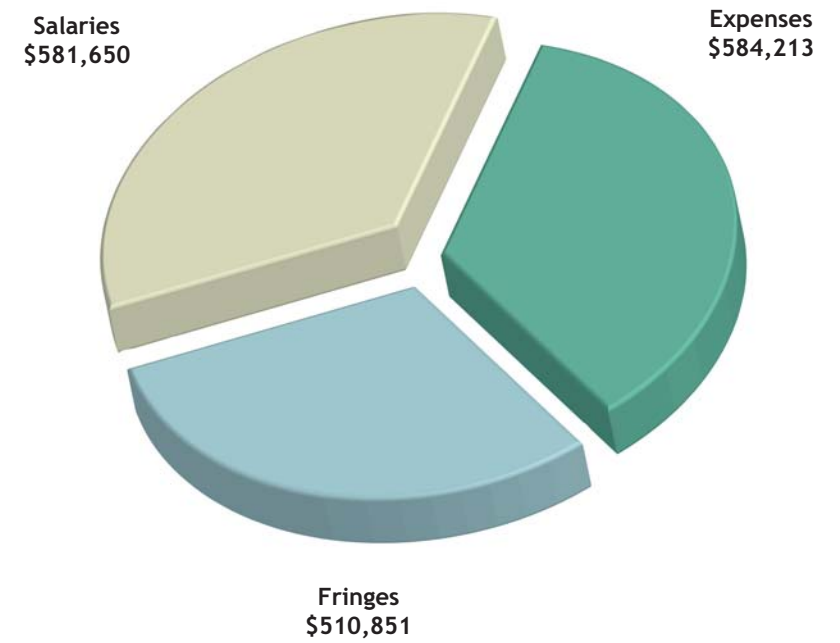


# AMATS Financial Data for Fiscal Year 2018

## Revenues by Type



## Expenditures by Type



## 2018 Policy Committee Members

### Chairman -

Mayor Bobbie Beshara

### Vice Chairwoman -

Mayor Linda S. Clark

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**AKRON** - Mayor Dan Horrigan

**AURORA** - Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin

**BARBERTON** - Mayor William B. Judge, Jr.

**BOSTON HEIGHTS** - Mayor Bill Goncy

**CLINTON** - Mayor Al Knack

**CUYAHOGA FALLS** - Mayor Don Walters

**DOYLESTOWN** - Mayor Terry L. Lindeman

**FAIRLAWN** - Mayor William J. Roth

**GARRETTSVILLE** - Mayor Rick Patrick

**GREEN** - Mayor Gerard Neugebauer

**HIRAM** - Mayor Lou Bertrand

**HUDSON** - City Manager Jane Howington

**KENT** – City Manager David Ruller

**LAKEMORE** – Mayor Rick Justice

**MACEDONIA** - Mayor Nick Molnar

**MANTUA** - Mayor Linda S. Clark

**METRO** – Dawn Distler

**MOGADORE** - Mayor Michael A. Rick

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**NORTHFIELD** – Mayor Jesse J. Nehez

**NORTON** - Mayor Mike Zita

**ODOT** - John Picuri

**PARTA** – Rick Bissler

**PENINSULA** - Mayor Douglas G. Mayer

**PORTAGE COUNTY** -

Commissioner Sabrina Christian-Bennett

**PORTAGE COUNTY** –

Commissioner Mike Kerrigan

**PORTAGE COUNTY** -

Commissioner Vicki Kline

**PORTAGE COUNTY** -

Engineer Michael Marozzi

**RAVENNA** - Mayor Frank Seman

**REMINDEVILLE** - Mayor Sam K. Alonso

**RICHFIELD** - Mayor Bobbie Beshara

**SILVER LAKE** - Mayor Bernie Hovey

**STOW** - Mayor Jim Costello

**STREETSBORO** - Mayor Glenn Broska

**SUGAR BUSH KNOLLS** -

Mayor John Guidubaldi

**SUMMIT COUNTY** -

Engineer Alan Brubaker

**SUMMIT COUNTY** -

Executive Ilene Shapiro

**SUMMIT COUNTY** - Connie Krauss

**SUMMIT COUNTY** - Carissa Signore

**TALLMADGE** - Mayor David G. Kline

**TWINSBURG** - Mayor Ted Yates

**WAYNE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS** -

Dominic Oliverio

**WINDHAM** - Mayor Deborah Blewitt

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Please visit our web site at: [www.amatsplanning.org](http://www.amatsplanning.org)

This report was prepared by the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Ohio Department of Transportation, and the Village, City and County governments of Portage and Summit Counties and a portion of Wayne County.

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