

3P

Public Participation Plan

December 2024



AMATS 3P PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Approved December 12, 2024

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

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Introduction

This *Public Participation Plan* or "3P" seeks to encourage an open planning process that supports early and sustained public involvement, timely public notice, and full public access to information regarding key transportation decisions within the Greater Akron area.

The 3P ensures a continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated process among all area stakeholders while encouraging and providing opportunities for broad-based participation in the development and review of regional transportation plans, programs and policies. Through the 3P, AMATS strives to engage the public at the earliest stages of transportation planning, especially those populations who are traditionally underserved or economically depressed such as the elderly, limited-English proficiency, minority and low-income populations.

The 3P reflects the realities of a changing society. AMATS seeks to foster an environment where the public feels that its insights not only matter, but are encouraged and welcomed. The 3P is updated periodically to: reflect changes in local, state or federal legislation; adjust the plan to include new technologies; and to meet the needs of the community. The agency relies on the following guiding principles when updating the 3P:

- AMATS recognizes that every major public policy decision or implemented transportation project significantly affects someone.
- If the agency's decision-making process is open, objective and considers all viewpoints, then policies, programs and projects are usually much more willingly accepted and embraced by affected communities.
- By utilizing a variety of public outreach techniques in multiple formats to provide planning information, the agency will gain a wide audience and solicit input from a greater number of people.
- Coordination and collaboration among as many as transportation stakeholders as possible during the planning process produces the most effective and balanced transportation solutions.

Because the agency relies on these principles, the 3P allows the Greater Akron area to meet unforeseen changes creatively and forcefully.

Throughout the change occurring around us, there is an old transportation adage that still holds true: *The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.* Our agency actively pursues strategies to encourage the public to take their first steps in getting involved in their region's transportation planning process. AMATS provides many opportunities throughout this process for the public to participate and influence transportation policies.

There are several different ways to get involved with AMATS which are presented in 3P, most notably our Citizens Involvement Committee. Please note that the public is by no means limited to the strategies detailed in these pages. The agency actively seeks new opportunities to exchange ideas with the public and welcomes ideas and suggestions on how to do so.

What is AMATS?

"AMATS" stands for the **Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study**. We are responsible for transportation planning within the Greater Akron area comprised of Portage and Summit counties and a portion of Wayne County. From highways to bikeways, from buses to trails, our agency plays a role in the planning of the major transportation projects within the area and the funding that makes them possible.

A Policy Committee, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), a Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) and a staff are the official players that comprise AMATS with each suited to a particular role in the planning process. To learn more about each, read on.

AMATS Committees and Staff

Each Player Has a Role - Even You!

Transportation planning in the Greater Akron area is accomplished through a cast of players. Like any ensemble cast, each player performs a unique role, but their roles are intertwined. The Policy Committee, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) and agency staff are featured players in this cast, but - like any cast - they need feedback. The feedback that they need comes from you - the public - through your participation in the planning process.

As a member of the public, you are encouraged to participate in the planning process. AMATS strives to make the Greater Akron area's transportation planning process as transparent and accessible as possible. The agency regularly:

- Posts timely notices about meeting dates and locations and meeting materials in advance on our website - **amatsplanning.org**.
- Provides podcasts of past meetings on our agency website and through our podcast subscription service.
- Schedules committee meetings in locations that are accessible for all citizens, including the disabled and transit dependent.

You are welcome to attend any of our committee meetings, all of which are open to the public. Below are descriptions regarding our committees and staff and how you may participate in the regional planning process.

Policy Committee

Currently, there are 46 voting members of the Policy Committee representing every community in the Greater Akron area. It is this body that decides how the area's federal transportation dollars should be spent. The committee is composed of elected officials, county engineers, transit agencies and representatives from the Ohio Department of Transportation. Its members



meet regularly six times a year to make funding decisions, discuss priorities and policies, and collaborate on regional issues.

The Policy Committee provides opportunities for the public to address the committee with the following guidelines:

- Anyone interested in making comments before the Policy Committee may do so during the public comment period at the beginning of the agenda.
- Public comments are limited to three minutes per person, but may be allowed more time by the Policy Committee chairperson.
- Organizations wishing to address the Policy Committee should select one representative to speak during the public comment period.
- Speakers will be asked to fill out an *Audience Participation Form* before addressing the Policy Committee (p. 25).
- Citizens may contact the AMATS staff at **330-375-2436** or by email at **amats@akronohio.gov** in advance to request time to speak, or may do so in person before the meeting with any AMATS staff member.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC provides technical assistance to the Policy Committee throughout the planning process. The TAC is made up of planners and engineers representing communities, counties and transit providers across the Greater Akron area. The expertise of these members provides the Policy Committee with needed "nuts-and-bolts" insights regarding the area's projects.

Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC)

The CIC is the forum through which the public may weigh in directly on transportation-related matters. Through its open-meeting format, CIC members may freely discuss issues with AMATS staff members and other players in the region's planning process. The AMATS staff works closely with the CIC members to identify potential discussion topics and in the preparation of necessary meeting materials and the scheduling of guest speakers.

The committee meets at a minimum of six times a year and its membership is open to all who wish to participate. Regular meetings commence at **6:30 p.m.** and are usually held in the **Akron-Summit County Public Library** located at **60 South High Street** in downtown Akron, which is centrally located and transit accessible in the Greater Akron area. The CIC does host on-line "virtual" meetings and other on-line events such as Open Houses and Workshops as circumstances warrant. Additional committee meetings may be scheduled by the CIC members if they so desire.

AMATS promotes CIC meetings through regularly scheduled advertisements with the *Beacon Journal*. Additional newspaper advertisements are occasionally purchased if deemed necessary by the staff given the regional significance of and public interest in particular agenda items and topics. The agency also

promotes CIC meetings through email and social media campaigns to committee members, interested agencies and groups, and area media.

Staff

The AMATS staff assists all three committees and carries out the "day-to-day" administrative and technical work of the agency. The staff develops the area's long-range *Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP) (p. 19-20) and the four-year *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) (p. 21-22). The staff is a mix of engineers, planners and other professional disciplines.

While serving as a liaison between the public and the committees of AMATS, the staff ensures that public comment is considered throughout the region's planning process. The staff welcomes verbal and written comments and strives to respond to concerns in a timely manner. You may contact the staff at **330-375-2436** or by email at **amats@akronohio.gov**. You may contact individual staff members directly by referencing the *Staff Directory* on the AMATS web site at **amatsplanning.org**. Written correspondence should be addressed to:

AMATS
1 Cascade Plaza / Suite 1300
Akron, Ohio 44308-1136

It is the policy of AMATS that staff members will acknowledge receiving all electronic and written correspondence from members of the public regarding transportation issues of public interest and respond within a seven-day period of receiving such correspondence. These initial staff responses should be deemed by the public as acknowledgments by AMATS that their concerns have been received by the agency. These responses should not be misconstrued by the public as commitments by the agency or its personnel to address and respond to public concerns during the aforementioned seven-day period. Appropriate agency responses to public concerns may require more time than seven days as circumstances may warrant. AMATS personnel will maintain files documenting all such correspondence throughout the public engagement process as part of its maintenance of permanent records.

As part of its duties to maintain the programs of AMATS, the staff is granted the discretion by the AMATS Policy Committee to implement minor revisions or administrative modifications to the *Regional Transportation Plan* and the TIP, and various plan and TIP amendments, reports and studies as may be warranted. Such administrative modifications are largely grammatical and typographical corrections or revisions that do not require demonstration of fiscal constraint or an air quality conformity determination. For the sake of transparency, the staff will present all changes to the *Regional Transportation Plan* and TIP to the AMATS Policy Committee regardless as to whether they are minor revisions, administrative changes or amendments. (The criteria used by the staff in making such determinations are presented in *Appendix A - Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP) (p. 19-20) and *Appendix B - Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) (p.21-22) of the 3P.

If the staff determines that formal amendments to the *Regional Transportation Plan* or TIP are warranted, the staff will determine whether such changes constitute Minor or Major Amendments. Once such determinations are made by the staff, then the agency will pursue the appropriate public participation procedures specified in Appendices A and B of the 3P.

On the Web

Emerging technologies present AMATS with new opportunities to connect with the public. The Internet has created boundless opportunities for you and your friends to engage with our agency without the need to leave the comfort of your home.

Along with its two web sites - **amatsplanning.org** and **Switching-Gears.org** - AMATS uses web posting and social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to provide citizens with up-to-the-minute information. The agency also has expanded its practice of posting announcements, meeting information and news on community-oriented sites such as the Summit County Community Calendar, Zvents and other appropriate venues. Below are some of the ways that AMATS harnesses the power of the Internet.



AMATSPLANNING.ORG

AMATS routinely updates its website to make the site even more user-friendly. The agency is working to show you how your tax dollars are being spent in a clear, easy-to-understand format. Our web site includes an easy-to-use interactive *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP), which provides details about AMATS-funded projects and includes map images of TIP project locations.

Among the agency's goals for its site have been to make it easier to inform the public about events while providing opportunities for them to become more engaged and involved in the planning process. From the *Home* and *Meetings* pages, a visitor can check out dates and times for our next Policy Committee, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) meetings. A visitor can also view the most recent committee meeting packet, listen to an MP3 meeting podcast, or complete an *Audience Participation Form* (p. 23) to speak to the Policy Committee. Visitors will also find access to timely features under *What's New*, check out our Twitter feed, or search the entire site for a specific topic.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that AMATS shall not, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or sex, exclude anyone from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. In the event that a member of the public believes that they are the victim of an alleged discriminatory practice by AMATS during the Greater Akron area's transportation planning process, our agency provides a *Nondiscrimination Complaint Form* on our agency web site - **amatsplanning.org**. Using this form, citizens may describe in detail why they believe that their concerns or needs are not being addressed by the agency.

Additionally, our agency web site - **amatsplanning.org** - includes a link to language interpretation software to assist those for whom English is not the first language. Using this link, visitors to our web site can translate pages into other languages including Chinese, French and Spanish. The **AMATS Title VI - Program Procedures and Documentation** Plan outlines other steps to include limited-English proficient persons in the planning process.

SWITCHING-GEARS.ORG

This web site provides information to people on ways to take advantage of the Greater Akron area's trails and inform them on ways to utilize cycling as a means of transportation. Switching-Gears.org also has a calendar announcing organized bike rides and events in our region and an easy-to-use Bike User Map.

Social Media

Social media has fast become one of AMATS' most utilized tools for public outreach. The agency can interact with the public regarding transportation-related topics instantaneously. Below are some of the most popular media that AMATS uses on a regular basis.

- **X (formerly know as Twitter)** is a great online tool that lets you send messages to your followers. Stay up to date with the most relevant news in transportation and land use planning. Follow **@amatsplanning** on Twitter to receive tweets about the latest transportation news.
- **Facebook** is a popular social media tool that is increasingly being used by agencies to reach new audiences and AMATS is no exception. The agency's Facebook page is updated frequently with our latest tweets and pictures of the region. It is also linked to the AMATS website where the public can get more information.
- **YouTube** is a social media site that allows users to post videos and share them with friends. Through its channel - **AMATSPPlanning** - the agency presents many special video features highlighting transportation topics. Topics range from meeting summaries to informative features.

AMATS does not limit its use of social media to the aforementioned platforms. The agency will consider additional platforms as they emerge for potential use by AMATS. The use of new platforms by AMATS will largely depend upon their appropriateness, feasibility, suitability, and timeliness to the agency's public outreach endeavors.

It is the policy of AMATS and its personnel to refrain from allowing personal or political biases to influence the agency's use of social media. Information and materials posted through various social media platforms shall be presented in an apolitical and objective manner with the sole goal of being to promote a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative regional transportation planning process for all.

New Approaches

AMATS continually seeks new approaches to engage the public throughout the transportation planning process. Below are descriptions of some of the newer strategies that our agency has embraced in recent years.

Public Empowerment

AMATS pursues innovative public *empowerment* strategies that present opportunities to challenge the public beyond



mere dialogue. These strategies actively urge the public to tackle transportation issues directly through participation in unique events. Generally, these events entail a topic-specific activity geared to spur dialogue between participants and area policy makers. Following participation in a group endeavor, participants share their ideas and insights gained through firsthand experiences as to what can be done to improve accessibility and livability in a particular locale. Below are several examples used by the agency:

- **Active Transportation Conferences** - AMATS hosts conferences dedicated to transportation-related topics designed to provoke discussions between policy makers and the public. The intent of the conferences are to help communities address and identify needs that policymakers may have overlooked. These conferences are daylong events with featured speakers and breakout sessions.
- **Better Block** - Better Block encourages the public to take one neighborhood block at a time, start small, and actually *do* something. It could be setting up new temporary bike lanes; it could be makeshift street art or furniture; it could be a coffee shop, art gallery or beer garden for a brief period of time. These events help the public experience something new in their neighborhoods by letting them see it, live it and - perhaps most importantly – participate in actually *creating* it.
- **Bike-N-Brainstorms** - These events embark on a group bike ride along key corridors as an alternative way to get feedback about on-road biking. At the end of their ride, group members participate in a brainstorming session with agency personnel and local officials to share their ideas as to what can be done to improve bike travel within the area.
- **Jane's Walk** - Inspired by pioneering author and urban activist, Jane Jacobs, these events provide opportunities for people to engage in city planning by meeting and exploring cities through short walking tours. During these tours, participants discuss what can be done to make areas more pedestrian friendly.

The agency also welcomes invitations and suggestions from the public to participate and support community-oriented events benefitting the area's transportation systems.

Community Outreach

As part of its efforts to fashion a vibrant, livable Greater Akron area, AMATS frequently partners with various civic groups on a host of projects. Among the agency's past partners have been the Barberton Community Foundation, The Knight Foundation, Leadership Akron, Neighborhood Development Services and Torchbearers.

AMATS welcomes opportunities to work with new partners in appropriate community-oriented endeavors. Those interested in seeking the agency's involvement should contact AMATS at amats@akronohio.gov or at 330-375-2436.

Speakers' Bureau

AMATS staff members are available by appointment to discuss technical and policy information with citizens and other interested parties during and outside of the agency's normal business hours. Staffers

are also available by appointment to present technical and policy information to the public and to participate in a variety of forums such as panel discussions.

Individuals and groups can request a speaker by contacting AMATS at **amats@akronohio.gov** or at **330-375-2436**. Requests should be transmitted via the agency's public information coordinator.

Public Information

As part of our efforts to provide the region with a transparent planning process, AMATS goes beyond merely accommodating requests for public information - which we will gladly do! The agency disseminates all meeting materials one week prior to scheduled committee meeting dates via email and through postings on its web site - **amatsplanning.org**. The public is welcome to subscribe to these electronic mailings. All that's needed for a subscription to AMATS is a subscriber's name and their email address. Postal delivery of materials may be arranged by special request at no charge to recipients.

Many materials, such as our current and past reports, plans and studies are available for review and download on the agency web site. Please note that selected draft and interim materials may be available for viewing and downloading only for specified times, such as public comment periods.

Records of committee meetings are available in the form of minutes and MP3 podcasts on the agency web site. AMATS will gladly forward pdf or printed versions of committee minutes to the public via email or postal delivery upon request. The agency also offers a podcast subscriber service in which committee recordings can be automatically downloaded to your computer as soon as they become available.

In addition, AMATS regularly distributes press releases and other information to Greater Akron area media regarding transportation-related events and developments. The agency also provides a free annual report and a semi-annual newsletter to committee members, the media, and subscribers. Other information and services such as traffic data, project status information, accident data and more are readily available on the agency web site. The staff is available to answer questions regarding information that is not readily available on the site.

Visualization

Visualization is used to support public participation in the planning process. Federal guidance calls for agencies such as AMATS to use visualization techniques. Specifically, visualization is an aid used for presenting proposed plans or projects. Through visual imagery, the complex character of proposed transportation plans, policies and programs can be portrayed at appropriate scales -- state, regional, local, project specific and from different points of view. The effective presentation of a plan's impact to the public has become an increasingly essential part of the planning and design of transportation systems.

Examples of visualization techniques include:

- maps, photos, air photos, bird's eye views of the project area
- sketches, drawings and artist renderings
- powerpoint presentations, slide shows and videos
- simulated photos and videos, computer modeled images, interactive mapping systems, GIS based scenario planning tools, photo manipulation and computer simulation

- graphs, flowcharts
- dashboard summaries of data in place of lengthy spreadsheets
- icons and logos – using symbols that are familiar to the general public
- Concise text that summarizes complex ideas free of professional jargon
- Bulleted lists instead of an ocean of text

Planning documents traditionally contained a limited amount of visualization. By adding photos, images, flow charts, diagrams or maps to illustrate, transportation planning concepts may be more clearly conveyed. New technology has changed the communication process. Providing visual images to a broader audience has become easy, fast and high quality.

Visualization can provide the public and decision-makers a clear idea of the proposed policies and plans that affect the human and natural environment. Visuals can make information understandable instantly or intuitively. This new technology has made it possible to communicate what the proposed plan may look like when implemented. Visualization techniques assist planners and the public in understanding future projects and scenarios.

The US Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides helpful information on using visualization for transportation planning:

www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/scenario_and_visualization/visualization_in_planning/visplanning.cfm

Scenario Planning is a process through which transportation professionals and citizens work together to analyze and shape the long-term future of their communities. Scenario planning allows planners and community members to understand how different policies, plans, and programs will affect a community or region. This planning tool can be used in the transportation planning process to assess long-term risks, financial budgets, system management and operations, and corridor planning. Traditional scenario planning efforts assess possible outcomes by using measures such as traffic congestion, shifts in modal split (the percent use of cars, bicycles, public transit, walking), impacts on open spaces, or contributions to air pollution.

Unique Populations

AMATS strives to involve low-income and minority groups in the public participation process for the Greater Akron area. The agency relies on the definitions of these populations provided by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Order 5610.2(a) on Environmental Justice, contained in the *Federal Register* (May 2, 2012). "Low-Income" is defined as a person whose median household income is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines.

A "Minority" is defined as a person who is:

- 1) Black (a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa);
- 2) Hispanic (a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race);
- 3) Asian (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent);
- 4) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands; or

- 5) American Indian and Alaskan Native (a person having origins in any of the original people of North America and who maintain cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition)

Using 2010 U.S. Census Bureau data, the agency recognizes where these groups are located within the region (p. 13-16) and seeks their involvement throughout the planning process using a mix of outreach strategies involving advertisements, community groups, press releases, social media and other available means. The aforementioned *Public Empowerment* strategies, such as Better Block and Bike-N-Brainstorms (p. 7), present valuable opportunities for the agency and members of these populations to coordinate, network and organize activities with direct participation and firsthand experiences given the targeted neighborhood scale of many of these events.

The region is also witnessing growth in its Asian and Hispanic populations. The agency also recognizes that the elderly represent another growing segment of the region's population. These populations have unique interests and needs which will contribute to and influence the area's transportation policies and systems. AMATS recognizes this and strives to foster a dialogue with these and other diverse communities within the area. Recently, the agency has increased its outreach efforts to these populations by initiating a dialogue with various organizations including:

- the Akron National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- the Akron Urban League
- Asian Services in Action, Inc.
- Direction Home Akron Canton
- the International Institute of Akron
- the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission
- Torchbearers
- VANTAGE Aging (Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP))
- and other community and neighborhood groups.

The agency actively pursues opportunities to collaborate on the development of transportation-related programs and projects with representatives of these populations. Each public process confronts the challenge of getting traditionally underrepresented populations involved in the planning process. These potentially underrepresented populations may include the youth and elderly of the community, persons with disabilities, and others who may be too busy or unable to attend public meetings.

AMATS shall make every effort to accommodate the disparate and varied needs of these populations. The agency shall arrange for language translation assistance in circumstances where such assistance is warranted, e.g., during public meeting in communities where languages in addition to English are primarily spoken. Agency personnel will arrange for American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken language translation assistance to be available if deemed appropriate, feasible and necessary.

Long an adherent to the spirit and wording of Title VI of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Orders 12898 and 13166, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the agency will broaden and continue its outreach to the region's many varied communities and populations. The passages below demonstrate that the agency recognizes the importance of these federal requirements throughout the regional planning process.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations (49 CFR), Part 21 states that "no person in the United States shall on the grounds of race, color, or national origin be excluded from the participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal Financial assistance." In May 2024, AMATS updated the comprehensive [*AMATS Title VI - Program Procedures and Documentation*](#) Plan, which defines the agency's program, procedures and means of documentation. AMATS employees are responsible for ensuring that the agency's programs, policies, and services are developed, conducted and implemented without regard to a person's race, color, national origin (including Limited English Proficiency), sex, disability, ancestry, religion, military status or age. Employees must ensure that ethnic minorities and low-income populations are not adversely impacted, and aim to achieve full participation by these groups in the agency's programs, policies and activities.

AMATS' Public Information Coordinator and Title VI Coordinator are responsible for initiating and monitoring Title VI activities, preparing required reports, and other responsibilities as required by Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 200, and Title 49 CFR Part 21.

Executive Order 12898 - Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations

Executive Order 12898 requires that disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations be identified and addressed to achieve environmental justice. Since the establishment of Title VI, Environmental Justice has been considered in local, state, and federal transportation projects. Additionally, Title 28 CFR Section 42.104 of Title VI and related statutes require federal agencies to ensure that no person is excluded from participation in, denied the benefit of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, or religion.

Executive Order 13166 - Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Executive Order 13166 requires federal agencies to examine the services that they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so that LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. This order also requires that recipients of federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries.

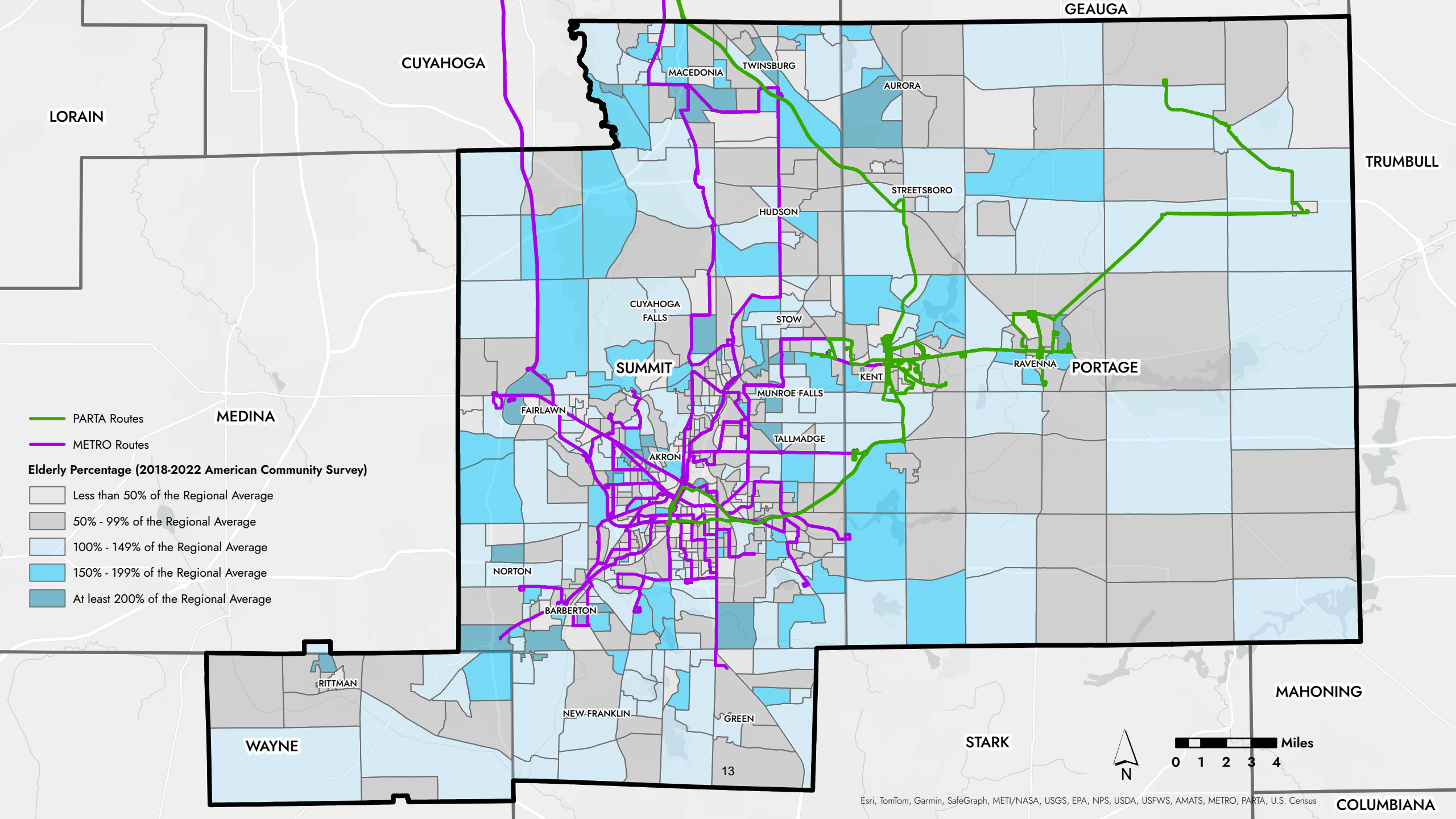
To assist federal agencies in carrying out their LEP responsibilities, the U.S. Department of Justice has issued a Policy Guidance Document, *2002 LEP Guidance*. This document sets the compliance standards that recipients of federal financial assistance must follow to ensure that their programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to LEP persons and thus do not discriminate on the basis of national origin in violation of Title VI's prohibition against national origin discrimination.

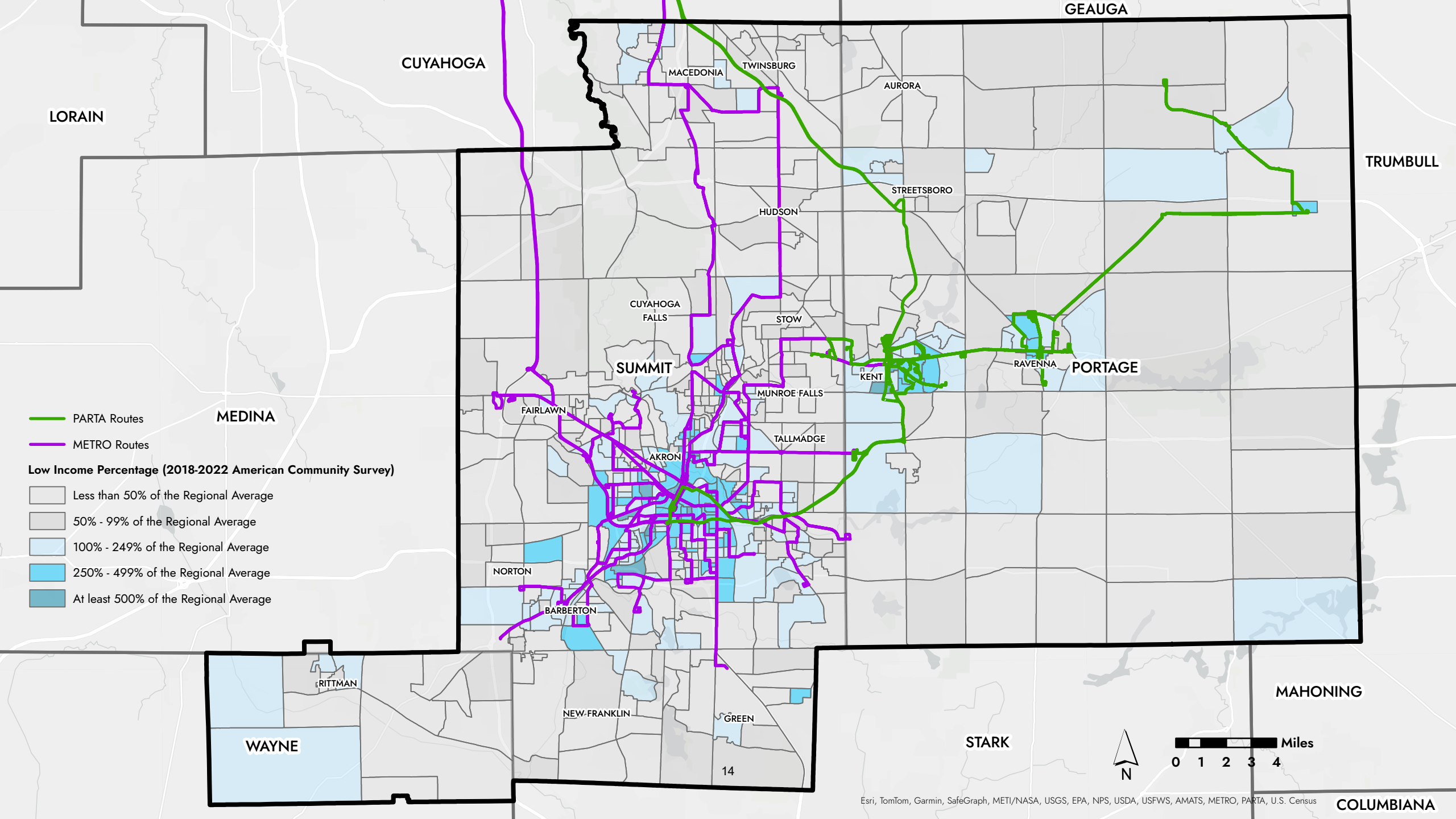
Appendix E - Language Assistance Plan for Limited English Proficient Populations (p. 41-45) details how AMATS meets the needs of LEP populations within the Greater Akron area and evaluates the effectiveness of its efforts.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The agency prides itself on its ongoing efforts to meet and exceed the standards outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. AMATS will make every effort to arrange for translation, sign language and other special assistance at meetings for individuals with special needs who request them in a timely manner of at least three business days beforehand.

In addition, our agency web site - **amatsplanning.org** - includes a link to language interpretation software to assist those for whom English is not the first language. The **[AMATS Title VI - Program Procedures and Documentation](#)** Plan outlines other steps to include limited-English proficient persons in the planning process.





CUYAHOGA

LORAIN

GEAUGA

TRUMBULL

MEDINA

- PARTA Routes
- METRO Routes

Low Income Percentage (2018-2022 American Community Survey)

- Less than 50% of the Regional Average
- 50% - 99% of the Regional Average
- 100% - 249% of the Regional Average
- 250% - 499% of the Regional Average
- At least 500% of the Regional Average

SUMMIT

CUYAHOGA FALLS

HUDSON

AURORA

STREETSBORO

STOW

MUNROE FALLS

KENT

RAVENNA

PORTAGE

AKRON

TALLMADGE

FAIRLAWN

NORTON

BARBERTON

TRITTMAN

WAYNE

NEW FRANKLIN

GREEN

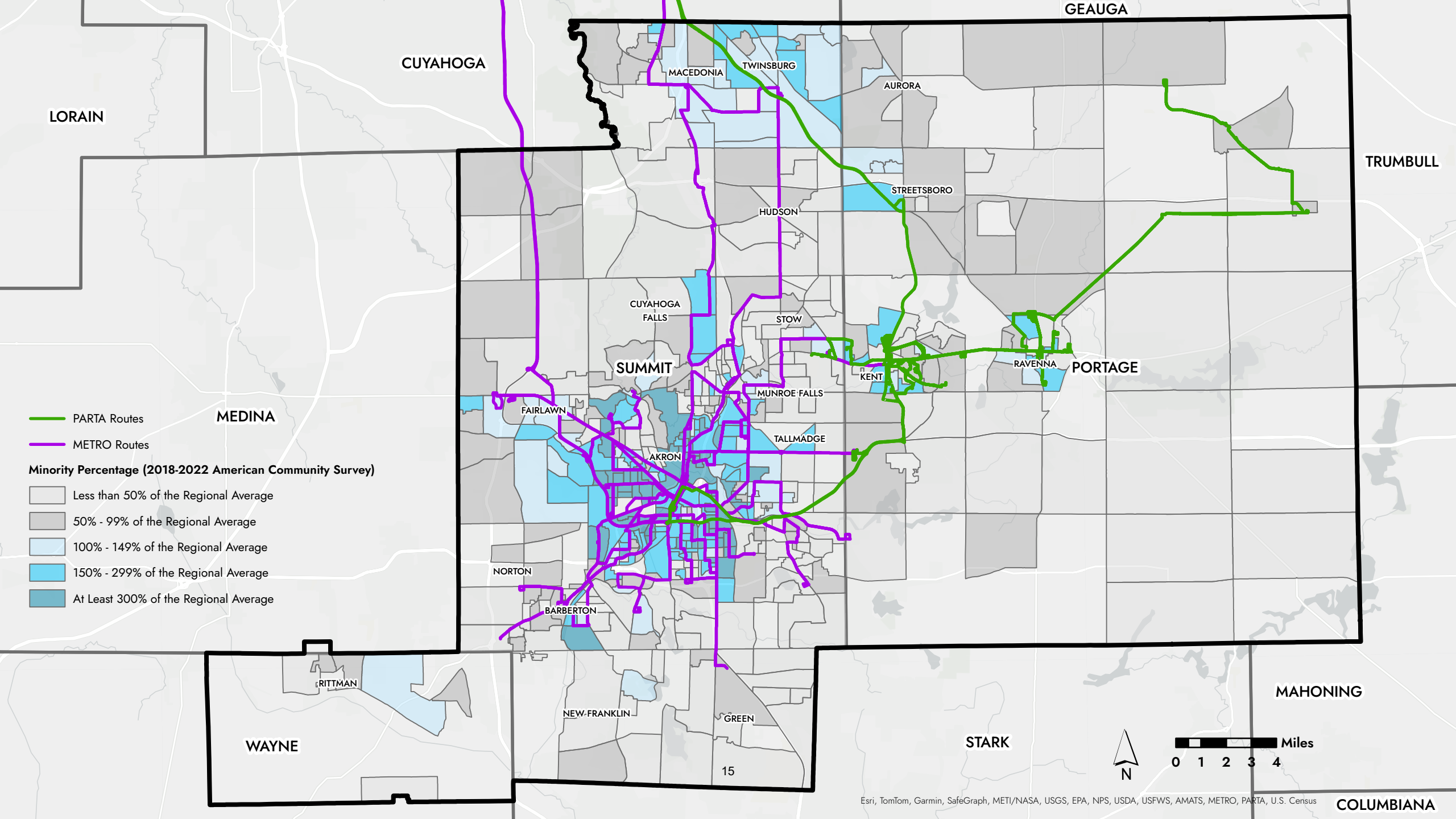
STARK

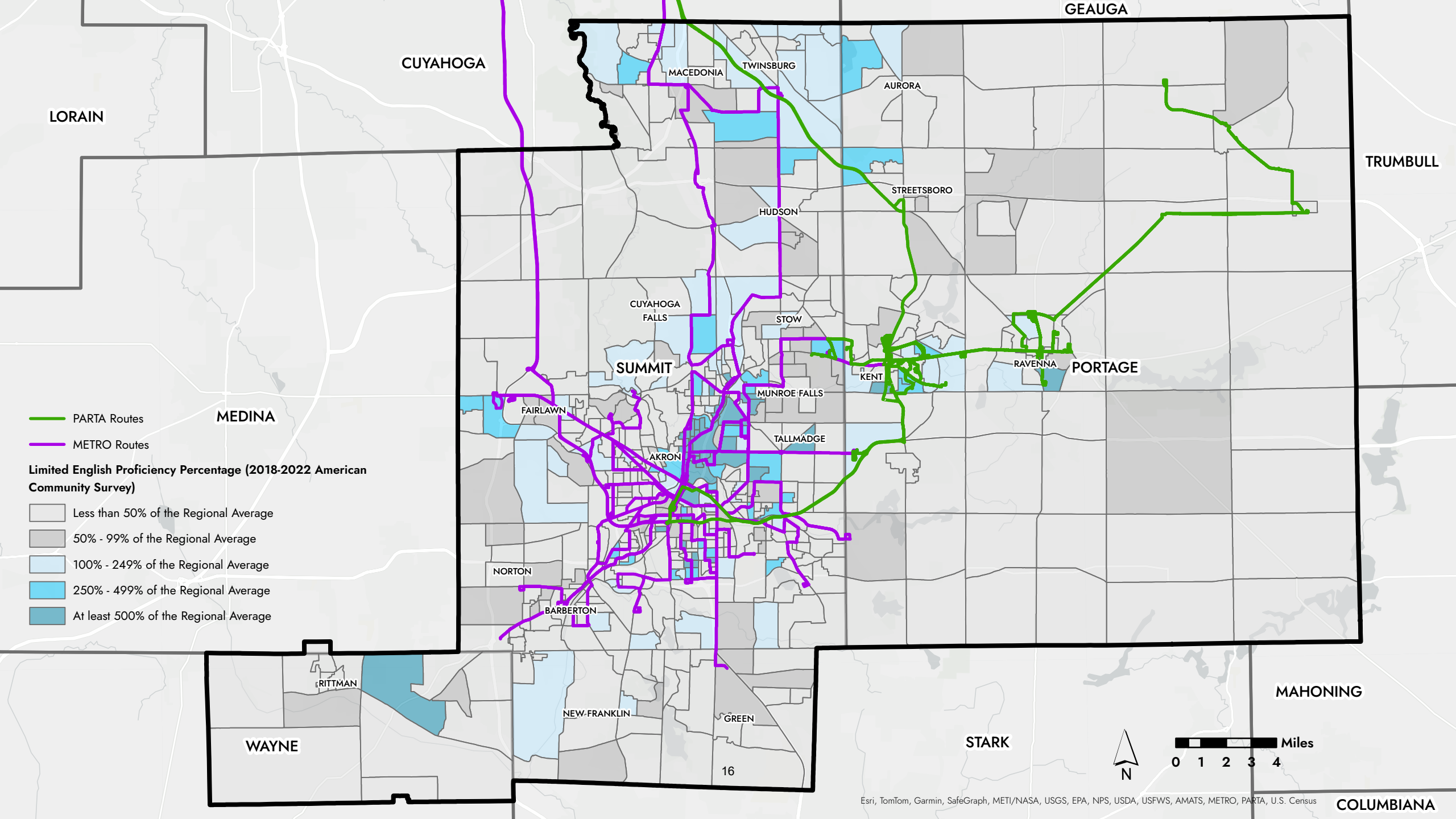
MAHONING

14



0 1 2 3 4 Miles





Procedure for Addressing and Processing Public Comments

AMATS is committed to fostering a dialogue with our members, stakeholders and the public. Public involvement should inform transportation planners early in the long-range planning process, through the project programming and project development phases of the transportation decision-making process. Effective public involvement allows transportation practitioners to access the public's rich source of ideas and information, which allows for the early identification of opportunities and issues that may affect efficient project implementation. AMATS strives to employ an array of traditional and virtual public involvement techniques and strategies to broaden its engagement to all communities within the planning area. To ensure maximum effectiveness, AMATS routinely monitors the performance of their engagement techniques and strategies.

As a metropolitan planning organization (MPO), AMATS is responsible for:

- actively involving our members, stakeholders and the public in an open, cooperative, and collaborative participation process
- providing meaningful opportunities to influence transportation decisions at any stage
- considering social, economic, and environmental consequences
- demonstrating to the public that transportation projects support land use plans and community values
- consulting with interested parties to develop and document the Public Participation Plan (3P)
- evaluating the effectiveness of the 3P

To that end, AMATS incorporates a system for handling comments when they are received from the public.

Procedure for Addressing and Processing Public Comments -

1. Receive and acknowledge public comments promptly
2. Direct comments to the agency study director or planning administrator
3. Respond to public comments, answer questions, provide additional information
4. Incorporate survey responses or interactive web applications into planning documents or recommendations. Interactive webmaps allow people to drop pins on locations and leave their ideas or describe their concerns.
5. Incorporate public input into the production of major planning documents and the planning process
6. Demonstrate explicit consideration of and response to public input received during the development of the regional transportation plan (*Transportation Outlook*), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the unified planning work program, or any special studies
7. Incorporate all applicable public comments into the appendices of *Transportation Outlook* or the TIP, along with agency staff responses
8. Incorporate all applicable public comments and survey summaries into the appendices of plans and major studies, such as the Active Transportation Plan and Safe Streets for All

Conclusion

Our agency aims to be as open as possible when it comes to sharing information and explaining why and how transportation decisions are made in the Greater Akron area.

Our *Public Participation Plan* or "3P" is intended to appeal to as many different interested people through a mix of opportunities and strategies both digital and personal.

AMATS will continue to explore new opportunities for public outreach as they become available. Outreach can be challenging and our agency is committed to receiving as much feedback as possible.

Appendix A - Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

A primary responsibility of AMATS is to prepare and maintain a long-term *Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP) that meets the travel needs of the region. The RTP creates a framework for the region's transportation system through the identification of needs and project recommendations. It also sets the direction for transportation decisions, policy and planning throughout the region.

Public participation is an integral part of preparing the RTP. This is your chance for your voice to be heard! Comments received during the review of the Draft RTP will be presented to the Policy Committee and other stakeholder planning agencies for consideration before final adoption of the RTP by the Policy Committee.

Once a Draft RTP has been created, AMATS will:

- Make copies of the draft available to the public at:
 - AMATS website – **amatsplanning.org**
 - AMATS office
- Tweet on **@amatsplanning**
- Post on **facebook.com/amatsplanning**
- Schedule at least one public meeting for review and comment
- Place advertisements in newspapers including the *Akron Beacon Journal*, the *Record-Courier* and *The Reporter* and other publications deemed as appropriate by the AMATS staff.
- Send news releases
- Regularly maintain and update its lists of those interested parties and transportation stakeholders that receive information pertaining to the area's transportation planning process.

Please note that AMATS will not limit itself to the activities identified above to promote awareness of the Draft RTP and will actively pursue additional opportunities to do so.

Amending the Plan

Periodically, local or state officials request that the approved RTP be modified, or that a project recommendation be added or dropped. Such requests will be identified as either a major or minor amendment. The individual amendment determines which public involvement procedures are appropriate. The procedures for Major and Minor amendments and Administrative Modifications are described below.

• Major Amendments

If the amendment involves a project recommendation that includes a new interchange; a new roadway or lane addition greater than one mile in length; a new major public transit project; commuter rail; or has a significant impact on air quality, then it will be considered a major amendment and public involvement for the amendment will follow the same procedures as the Draft RTP.

- **Minor Amendments**

If the amendment does not include a project such as one previously mentioned, it will be considered a minor amendment. Such amendments will be available for public consideration and comment through the appropriate *Meeting Packet* link and the *Get Involved* page of the agency website - amatsplanning.org - prior to Policy Committee action.

- **Administrative Modifications**

The staff is granted the discretion by the AMATS Policy Committee to implement minor revisions or administrative modifications to the *Regional Transportation Plan*, and various plan-related amendments, reports, and studies as may be warranted. Such administrative modifications are largely grammatical and typographical corrections or revisions that do not require demonstration of fiscal constraint or an air quality conformity determination.

For the sake of transparency, the staff will present all changes to the *Regional Transportation Plan* to the AMATS Policy Committee regardless as to whether they are amendments or minor administrative modifications.

If adopted by the Policy Committee, amendments and administrative modifications will be included in the RTP and will be posted on the website.

Appendix B - Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) is the Greater Akron area's four-year program of highway, public transit, and bicycle and pedestrian projects. It must be consistent with the *Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP). Through the TIP process, projects are scored and selected, providing funding for area transportation projects.

Public participation is necessary in the development of a sound TIP for the area. Comments generated during the review of the Draft TIP will be presented to the Policy Committee and other stakeholder planning agencies for consideration before adoption of the Final TIP document by the Policy Committee.

Once a Draft TIP has been created, AMATS will:

- Make copies of the draft available to the public at:
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 - AMATS office
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- Post on **facebook.com/amatsplanning**
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- Send news releases
- Regularly maintain and update its lists of those interested parties and transportation stakeholders that receive information pertaining to the area's transportation planning process.

Please note that AMATS will not limit itself to the activities identified above to promote awareness of the Draft TIP and will actively pursue additional opportunities to do so.

Amending the TIP

Periodically, state or local officials request that a project in the approved TIP be modified or cancelled or that a new project be added. Such requests will be identified as either a major or minor amendment. The individual amendment determines which public involvement procedures are appropriate. The procedures for Major and Minor amendments and Administrative Modifications are described below.

- **Major Amendments**

If the amendment involves a project that includes a new interchange; a new roadway or lane addition greater than one mile in length; a new major public transit project; commuter rail; or has a significant impact on air quality, then it will be considered a major amendment and public involvement for the amendment will follow the same procedures as the Draft TIP.

- **Minor Amendments**

If the amendment does not include a project such as one previously mentioned, it will be considered a minor amendment. Such amendments will be available for public consideration and comment through the appropriate *Meeting Packet* link and the *Get Involved* page of the agency website - amatsplanning.org - prior to Policy Committee action.

- **Administrative Modifications**

The staff is granted the discretion by the AMATS Policy Committee to implement minor revisions or administrative modifications to the *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*, and various TIP-related amendments, reports, and studies as may be warranted. Such administrative modifications are largely grammatical and typographical corrections or revisions that do not require demonstration of fiscal constraint or an air quality conformity determination.

For the sake of transparency, the staff will present all changes to the TIP to the AMATS Policy Committee regardless as to whether they are amendments or minor administrative modifications.

If adopted by the Policy Committee, amendments and administrative modifications will be included in the TIP and will be posted on the website.

Public Transportation Annual Program of Projects (Yearly Capital Program)

AMATS assists our two local public transit agencies with public involvement regarding their annual capital projects development. Public notice of public involvement activities and time established for public review and comment on the TIP will satisfy the Program of Projects (POP) public review requirements of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Section 5307 Program for METRO RTA and PARTA. FTA's 5307 program provides the bulk of funds used for capital spending, such as buying buses and preventive maintenance.

Appendix C - Involvement of Interested Parties and Public Comment

The *2024 Public Participation Plan* or "3P" describes AMATS' ongoing efforts to engage and involve the public in the metropolitan transportation planning process for the Greater Akron area. 3P is an update to the *2022 Public Participation Plan* and will be an input into the upcoming *Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP) and *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP).

In developing 3P, AMATS is actively seeking consultation with interested parties and communities. Our agency seeks to develop a policy document that engages the public and other private and public organizations by providing ample opportunities for input and involvement in the area's planning process. It is our goal to base 3P on the insights of the area's citizens, community groups, affected public agencies and representatives of public transportation, freight shipping and pedestrian and bicycle transportation.

The Draft 3P details how the agency will provide opportunities for public comment and involvement throughout the planning process and for its most significant products, the RTP and TIP. These opportunities include posting committee meeting packets and MP3 podcasts on the AMATS website and using social media tools and non-traditional meetings and strategies to reach out to new audiences and communities.

AMATS will continue to give special consideration to making all of its public meetings convenient and accessible. Meetings of the AMATS Citizens Involvement Committee are scheduled in the evenings and in central locations. Also, all materials, plans and information can be accessed 24 hours a day on the AMATS website - amatsplanning.org. Additional review and involvement opportunities are provided during the development of the RTP and the TIP.

AMATS provides a 45-day comment period for the Draft 3P. During the 45-day period, the public may review and present comments for consideration by the AMATS Policy Committee for possible incorporation into the final version of the draft. The preparation of the 2022 Draft 3P benefitted from a 65-day comment period stemming from two fortuitous events: First, the changes sought by AMATS to the 2022 version of the 3P were deemed by the agency to be of such regional significance that an additional 20 days for public comment was warranted and; Secondly, the AMATS 2022 Committee Meeting Calendar permitted the scheduling of two public meetings hosted by the AMATS Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC) to present initial and final drafts of the 3P.

The 2022 Draft 3P was available for public comment for 65 days beginning on **January 13, 2022 through March 18, 2022**. A Public Comment Form for the Draft 3P was available as a pdf for downloading through the agency web site - [amatsplanning](http://amatsplanning.org) - and is presented as part of *Appendix D* (p. 22) with this draft document. The Draft 3P was also presented to the public for review and comment during the **6:30 p.m.** meetings of the AMATS Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) scheduled for **January 20, 2022** and **March 17, 2022** at the Akron-Summit County Public Library - Main Library located at 60 South Main Street in Akron. These meetings were promoted through advertisements in the *Beacon Journal*, *Record-Courier* and *The Reporter* newspapers, press releases and various social media. These ads will be included in *Appendix D* when available.

The 2024 Draft 3P was available for public comment for 45 days beginning on **October 28, 2024 through December 12, 2024**. A Public Comment Form for the Draft 3P was available as a pdf for downloading

through the agency web site - **amatsplanning** - and is presented as part of *Appendix D (p. 25)* with this draft document.

AMATS is continually seeking new ways to engage and involve the public and other agencies. As new opportunities arise, they will be incorporated into the transportation planning process. The *3P* will be updated accordingly. The public is encouraged to forward their opinions and suggestions regarding this document to **AMATS Public Information Coordinator Kerry Prater** via email at kprater@akronohio.gov or postal mail at the following address:

Mr. Kerry Prater
AMATS
1 Cascade Plaza / Suite 1300
Akron, Ohio 44308-1136

Appendix D - Comment Forms



Comment Form – 2024

AMATS Draft Public Participation Plan - 3P

Name: _____

Email Address: _____

Comments:

To learn more about transportation planning in the Greater Akron area, please visit us online at amatsplanning.org.

Audience Participation Form

The Policy Committee welcomes your comments.

Please keep these guidelines in mind:

- Please register by completing the application below.
- Public comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per person at the beginning of the meeting.
- Groups wishing to address the Policy Committee should select a representative to present the group's position.

Please submit this form to a staff member prior to the meeting.

Forms may also be completed online, faxed, or mailed.

Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study

I Cascade Plaza | Suite 1300 | Akron, Ohio 44308-1136

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

Web: amatsplanning.org/get-involved/

Name: _____ **Date** _____

Representing
(optional): _____

Topic: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **Email:** _____

Would you like to receive meeting material by mail Y___ N___

Map

Continued from Page 1A

candidates over the past decade.

"The commission is required to attempt to draw a plan in which the statewide proportion of Republican-leaning districts to Democratic-leaning districts closely corresponds to those percentages," Stewart wrote. "Section 6 speaks not of desire but of direction: the commission shall attempt to achieve the standards of that section."

Stewart rejected the argument from commission members Senate President Matt Huffman and House Speaker Bob Cupp that the language was "aspirational" and required only if other, more technical, line-drawing requirements weren't met.

"We reject the notion that Ohio voters rallied so strongly behind an anti-gerrymandering amendment to the Ohio Constitution yet believed at the time that the amendment was toothless," Stewart wrote.

The commission must now get to work. The new plan must be adopted within 10 days, and the Ohio Supreme Court retains its authority to review any rewrites.

Feb. 2 is the current deadline to file paperwork to run for the Ohio Legislature. State lawmakers could change that filing date without moving the May 3 primary.

What did O'Connor say?

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor was the key vote, breaking with her party to rule against the maps. O'Connor, a Republican, joined the court's three Democratic justices and the three GOP justices dissented.

O'Connor, who has served in statewide office for 24 years, suggested an alternative to the commission, which she called out for its partisanship.

"Having now seen firsthand that the current Ohio Redistricting Commission - comprised of statewide elected officials and partisan legislators - is seemingly unwilling to put aside partisan concerns as directed by the people's vote,

Ohioans may opt to pursue further constitutional amendment to replace the current commission with a truly independent, nonpartisan commission that more effectively distances the redistricting process from partisan politics," O'Connor wrote in a concurring opinion.

'The plan's result was by design'

On Sept. 16, Republicans on the Ohio Redistricting Commission approved maps that would allow the GOP to retain its veto-proof majority in the state Legislature over the objections of the commission's two Democrats.

According to Huffman, R-Lima, the maps could give Republicans a 62-37 advantage in the House and 23-10 advantage in the Senate.

Republicans justified their maps by saying voters preferred GOP candidates between 54% and 81% of the time. Those figures are the average percentage of votes GOP candidates received in recent statewide elections and the percent of statewide races won by Republicans over the past decade, respectively.

Stewart pointed to several examples of why the commission made an inadequate attempt to match statewide voting preferences. The commission had no employees and initially allocated \$150,000 to each chamber. No money was given to the statewide officials on the panel - Gov. Mike DeWine, Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Auditor Keith Faber - to help with mapmaking.

And there's the fact that the mapmakers - GOP staffers Ray DiRossi and Blake Springhetti - reported to legislative leaders Huffman and Cupp, respectively, and not the commission at large.

"The evidence here demonstrates that Senate President Huffman and House Speaker Cupp controlled the process of drawing the maps that the commission ultimately adopted," Stewart wrote.

Three lawsuits were filed against the maps at the Ohio Supreme Court, claiming GOP mapmakers disregarded a section of voter-approved changes to the Ohio Constitution that re-

quired them to attempt to match voters' political preferences. They argued that the maps gave Republicans an unfair and unearned advantage.

As part of those lawsuits, Dr. Kosuke Imai, a professor at Harvard University, created 5,000 possible district plans. None was as favorable to Republicans as the one adopted by the Ohio Redistricting Commission.

"The fact that the adopted plan is an outlier among 5,000 simulated plans is strong evidence that the plan's result was by design," she wrote.

Stewart also rejected the notion that voters frustrated by the maps had no recourse but to vote out members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission at the next election.

"The notion that the voters who overwhelmingly approved the

amendment of Article XI meant to hinge the eradication of partisan gerrymandering on the election of various officeholders simply holds no water," she wrote.

3 GOP justices dissent

Justice Sharon Kennedy, a Republican who is running for chief justice, wrote in a dissenting opinion that the court did not have the constitutional authority to send the maps back.

She and Justice Pat DeWine, who signed on to her dissent, argued that the section in Ohio's constitution that says no plan "shall be drawn primarily to favor or disfavor a political party" doesn't have the same enforcement mechanisms as other sections. Pat DeWine is the governor's

See MAP, Page 6A



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We want to give the public a greater voice

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) is updating its *Public Participation Plan* or "3P," but we need one key element to update this plan successfully: You!

As the Greater Akron area's federally designated metropolitan planning organization, AMATS needs public participation as it selects which highway, public transit, bike, and pedestrian projects are worthy of receiving federal funds.

The 3P identifies the strategies that the agency uses to engage and empower the public throughout the regional transportation planning process. Periodically, AMATS updates its 3P to identify and pursue new, innovative public participation approaches. You are invited to share your ideas as to how we can improve our public outreach efforts.

The Draft 3P is available for review and comment from now until March 18 at amatsplanning.org and the AMATS Twitter and Facebook pages - @AMATSPPlanning. The AMATS Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) will present the Draft 3P during its Thursday, Jan. 20 meeting at 6:30 p.m. The CIC will meet in the Akron-Summit County Public Library - Main Library located at 60 South High Street in Akron.

Please visit amatsplanning.org/cic-webinar/ or call 330-375-2436 for more information.

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AKR-001848-00



A Family Tradition Since 1955

Gebhardt

Continued from Page 1A

expand that by another 30,000 square feet.

Wurm said there are about 20 employees at the Streetsboro facility and an additional 10 employees who work in the field. With the expansion, he said he expects to hire about 50 to 60 more "by the end of next year."

Streetsboro Economic Development Director Patrick O'Malia said Streetsboro's highway network and transportation system were key selling points in bringing Gebhardt to Streetsboro.

"One of his concerns was, he was going to lose a lot of people from Brunswick," said O'Malia, but, taking the turnpike from Interstate 71, the drive is about 35 minutes.

O'Malia said any drive under 45 minutes is usually OK for most workers.

Gebhardt International has benefited from the acceleration toward online commerce brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, Wurm said.

"We, of course, highly benefited from COVID because any company that didn't have any e-commerce strategy, they had to shut down," he said.



Gebhardt Intralogistics North America moves to Streetsboro after outgrowing the Brunswick location. Klaus-Dieter Wurm, president and CEO, in his office at the new headquarters in Streetsboro. LISA SCALFARO

Unautomated warehouses are one part of the supply chain issues the country is facing, he explained, and Gebhardt provides a solution to the problem. Automated systems are more efficient because they can work three shifts without light,

don't get sick and don't commit errors as often as humans picking orders.

"The more you can automate in your entire supply chain, whether it's food, apparel, or electronics, the better for the consumer," he said, adding it's up to companies

whether they pass efficiency savings on to consumers.

Among the company's clients are Walmart and Amazon, two of the biggest retailers of any kind, as well as clients from any other industries that needed to automate its

warehouses.

Amazon, he added, has scaled back its plans to add distribution centers and warehouses due to supply chain issues.

"So Amazon abandoned about four or five distribution center projects this year because of

the supply chain," said Wurm. "So for us, we're still doing five or six very large distribution centers with Amazon this year. But it would have been at least five or six more had it not been for supply chain issues."

Wurm said Gebhardt anticipated supply chain hiccups and ordered components well ahead of time so it would not contribute to supply chain-related problems.

"We have anticipated — not that we have a crystal ball — but we anticipated what was about to come down the pipeline," he said.

The company has so much business in the pipeline over the next two years that Wurm said he doesn't plan to have a sales force.

"The good news is we're not pursuing sales," he said. "We are booked out for the entire year in '22 and we're at least 78% already booked out for '23. Because of the technology that we have, we're fortunate enough that our customers come to us."

Do you have a business or healthcare story you'd like to share? Reporter Bob Gaeffens can be reached at 330-541-9440, bgaeffens@record-courier.com and @bobbgaef-jens_rc.

Maps

Continued from Page 1A

constitutional amendment overwhelmingly approved by voters.

"We reject the notion that Ohio voters rallied so strongly behind an anti-gerrymandering amendment to the Ohio Constitution yet believed at the time that the amendment was toothless," Stewart wrote.

The new plan must be adopted within 10 days, and the Ohio Supreme Court retains jurisdiction for review of the new plan, according to a court filing.

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor was the key vote, breaking with her party to rule against the maps. O'Connor, a Republican, joined the court's three Democratic justices and the three GOP justices dissented.

O'Connor, who has served in statewide office for 24 years, suggested an alternative to the commission, which she called out for its partisanship.

"Having now seen firsthand that the current Ohio Redistricting Commission — comprised of statewide elected officials and partisan legislators — is seemingly unwilling to put aside partisan concerns as directed by the people's vote, Ohioans may opt to pursue further constitutional amendment to replace the current commission with a truly independent, non-partisan commission that more effectively distances the redistricting process from partisan politics," O'Connor wrote in a concurring opinion.

Now, the seven-member commission faces a time crunch to craft new maps because Feb. 2 is the current deadline to file paperwork to run for the Ohio Legislature. State lawmakers could change that filing date without moving the May 3 primary.

Advocates of fair maps hailed the decision as a resounding victory for Ohio voters who overwhelmingly approved changes to the state constitution to limit partisan line-drawing.

Justice Sharon Kenne-



Attorney Freda J. Levenson argued against the state House and Senate maps before the Ohio Supreme Court on Dec. 8. KYLE ROBERTSON/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

dy, a Republican, wrote in a dissenting opinion that the court did not have the constitutional authority to send the maps back.

She and Justice Pat DeWine, who signed on to her dissent, argued that the constitution in Ohio's constitution that says no plan "shall be drawn primarily to favor or disfavor a political party" doesn't have the same enforcement mechanisms as other sections.

"The majority today, though, finds the constitutionally imposed limits unduly constraining, so it chooses to disregard them," Kennedy wrote.

How Ohio's maps were drawn

On Sept. 16, Republicans on the Ohio Redistricting Commission approved maps that would allow the GOP to retain its veto-proof majority in the state Legislature over the objections of the commission's two Democrats.

According to Senate President Matt Huffman, R-Lima, the maps could give Republicans a 62-37 advantage in the House and 23-10 advantage in the Senate.

Republicans justified their maps by saying voters preferred GOP candidates between 54% and 81% of the time. Those figures are the average percentage of votes GOP candidates received in recent statewide elections and the percent of statewide races won by Republicans over the past decade, respectively.

Three lawsuits were

filed against the maps at the Ohio Supreme Court, saying GOP mapmakers disregarded a section of voter-approved changes to the Ohio Constitution that required them to attempt to match voters' political preferences. They argued that the maps gave Republicans an unfair and unearned advantage.

During oral arguments, attorneys for a slew of voting rights groups and Democratic activists argued that GOP mapmakers drew lines that disproportionately favored Republican candidates — in violation of the Ohio Constitution.

But Phil Strach, the Republican attorney representing mapmakers, argued that those drawing the lines did not need to create maps that matched statewide voting preferences, as long as they followed other rules to prevent splitting communities.

In the end, the Ohio Supreme Court sided with those who found flaws in the maps.

The Ohio Supreme Court is also reviewing the GOP-drawn congressional map, which was challenged by two lawsuits. A ruling on that map is still pending.

Earlier in the day, U.S. District Court Judge John Adams placed a federal case challenging state and congressional maps on hold for 60 days while the Ohio Supreme Court reviewed several pending lawsuits.

Jessie Balmert is a reporter for the USA TODAY Network Ohio Bureau.

which serves the Akron Beacon Journal, Cincinnati Enquirer, Columbus Dispatch and 18 other affiliated news organizations across Ohio.

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11 from Jalen Pickett. In the
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led EMU with 20 points.

Be Accountable!

We want to give the public a greater voice

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Example A:



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Through March 18, AMATS will collect public input to update its Public Participation Plan known as the "3P." (Courtesy of AMATS)

NEWS

AMATS seeks community input: What local projects are worthy of federal dollars?

BY JENNIFER CONN | AKRON

PUBLISHED 3:25 PM ET JAN. 23, 2022

AKRON, Ohio — What does the future look like in northeast Ohio for automated vehicles? Will electric vehicles be accommodated in our region? How will our roadways and railways handle the impact of excess stormwater and other environmental issues brought on by climate change?

What You Need To Know

- AMATS relies on community input to help the organization make key transportation-related decisions
- AMATS is responsible for transportation planning in Summit and Portage counties, and parts of Wayne County
- Highways, bikeways, public transportation and pedestrian walkways all fall under the AMATS umbrella
- The input helps the agency understand what the community cares about, such as electric/automated vehicles and climate change

As the area's federally designated metropolitan planning organization, AMATS is responsible for transportation planning in Summit and Portage counties, and parts of Wayne County.

Highways, bikeways, public transportation and pedestrian walkways all fall under the AMATS umbrella.

To help the organization make key transportation-related decisions for the Greater Akron area, AMATS has relied on community input since the early 1960s.

"It has only grown in importance," Prater said.

AMATS relies on the community to help make decisions about what projects are most worthy to receive federal funding, he said.

Emerging transportation issues the community expresses strong interest in can prompt AMATS to conduct further research.

The topic of electric and automated vehicles has become popular enough for AMATS to take the preliminary steps in launching a smart mobility study, Prater said, to take a closer look at the impact these vehicles would have on the region.

Now, AMATS is looking to the public to weigh in again.

Through March 18, AMATS will collect public input to update its [Public Participation Plan](#) known as the "3P." The 3P helps AMATS identify strategies to better connect with the broader community during the agency's planning process.

The plan can be reviewed [online on the AMATS website](#) and residents can [submit comments online](#). Or, a [hard-copy comment form](#) can be printed out and mailed to 1

as through its active social media account and [monthly newsletters](#), in addition to assorted [online and in-person meetings](#) throughout the year.

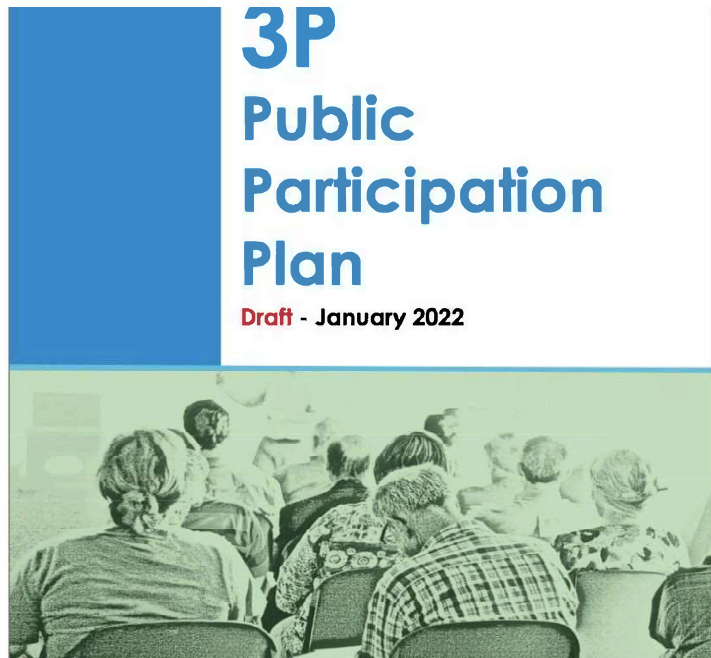
With biking a popular activity locally, AMATS also hosts several Bikeathons throughout the year, for biking enthusiasts to share ideas and concerns, Prater said.

In addition, the transportation agency recently tagged seniors as a population to keep an eye out for in regard to accessibility in various geographic areas, Prater said. It's part of the city's [Age Friendly Akron initiative](#), which is working to

improve daily, quality-of-life issues for seniors from housing to street design.

AMATS already specifically looks to address the needs of immigrants and low-income residents, he said.

The AMATS Citizens Involvement Committee, which is the forum for residents to weigh in, [will meet several times this year](#) at the main branch of the Akron-Summit County Public Library. Participation is open to anyone who wants to attend, the agency said.



The plan helps AMATS identify strategies to connect with the community during the planning process. (Courtesy of AMATS)

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Steel

Continued from Page 1B



Competing schools student job

NETWORK

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Silver Lake mayor delivers State of Village speech

Silver Lake Mayor Bernie Hovey pointed to projects on tap for this year and said the community is "in good shape, both financially and physically" Monday as he delivered the State of the Village ad-

ouncement and up to ten minutes.

Participants will receive a medal and enjoy strolling musicians and complimentary coffee, tea and pastries from SRINA Cafe.

Participants can register or make donations at www.raceroster.com/events/2022/58481/rock-me-on-the-water-7k. Participants registering before May 1 will receive a discounted race fee.

We want to give the public a greater voice

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The 3P identifies the strategies that the agency uses to engage and empower the public throughout the regional transportation planning process. Periodically, AMATS updates its 3P to identify and pursue new, innovative public participation approaches. You are invited to share your ideas as to how we can improve our public outreach efforts.

The Draft 3P is available for review and comment from now until **March 18** at amatsplanning.org and the AMATS Twitter and Facebook pages - @AMATSPlanning. The **AMATS Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC)** will discuss the Draft 3P during a virtual meeting scheduled for **Thursday, March 17** at 6:30 p.m. To join this virtual meeting, please visit <https://amatsplanning.org/cic-webinar/> to register.

Please visit amatsplanning.org or call 330-375-2436 for more information.

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AK-00072841



Judge favors boosting Sackler payment in Purdue Pharma deal

Geoff Mueller/Associated Press

A judge said Wednesday that he will approve a plan that looks members of the Sackler family who own OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma into pumping at least another \$1.2 billion into a nationwide lawsuit settlement that, if ultimately confirmed, would transform the company into a public trust.

The initial approval from U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Robert Drain set the stage for an emotional virtual hearing Thursday that will allow people recovering from addiction and those who have lost loved ones to the crisis to directly address some of the Sacklers.

Wednesday's hearing with Drain, whose courtroom is in White Plains, New York, was more conventional, but in a topsy-turvy legal saga, even the routine matter had a twist.

States that were among the first to support earlier versions of the Purdue settlement objected to one key provision. Joined by some local governments, unions and individuals, they contended it's unfair that the states that held out and then negotiated a larger payment from the Sacklers will receive an outside share of the additional money to use to address the epidemic.

John Guard, the chief deputy attorney general in Florida, told Drain in the hearing, conducted Wednesday by videoconference, that allowing extra money for the holdout states could complicate negotiations for future nationwide opioid settlements involving other companies.

Anton Calix, a lawyer representing West Virginia, called the extra \$277 million for the subset of states "a cash grab."

Still, Drain, who approved an earlier settlement last year, approved the new settlement terms, pointing out that all states would receive more money to address the opioid crisis under the deal than they would have before. The original deal was later rejected by an appellate court judge largely because of the opposition of the attorneys general for eight states and the District of Columbia.

After the initial deal was thrown out, the Stamford, Connecticut-based drugmaker went through two months of mediation to reach a new one, announced last week.

Even if Drain approves the settlement terms Wednesday, several legal hurdles remain before the company's entire bankruptcy reorganization plan is final, including having the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rule that Purdue's overall reorganization plan is even legal. If that happens, company's overall reorganization plan would still need to be confirmed by a bankruptcy court.

Like the original settlement, the new one would require members of the Sackler family who own Purdue to give up

their ownership. It would be turned into a new company known as Krona Pharma, with profits being used to fight an opioid crisis that has been linked to the deaths of more than 500,000 Americans over the past two decades.

Also like the original deal, the new one calls for the Sacklers to contribute cash to fight the epidemic in exchange for protection from civil lawsuits. The key difference is that the Sackler contribution would now be \$5.5 billion to \$6 billion in cash, rather than just over \$4.3 billion and \$675 million in charitable assets. The exact amount would depend on how much they bring in by selling their international drug companies.

In all, the settlement could be worth \$10 billion, or more over time.

Most of the money is to be used by state and local governments to counter the crisis, although \$750 million is to be distributed to victims of the crisis and their survivors. More than \$100 million is being set aside for medical monitoring and payments for children born in withdrawal from opioids, and Native American tribes are in line for more than \$150 million.

Advocates say the money is essential to stemming the crisis. Overdose deaths have been on the rise in the U.S., exacerbated by the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread availability of illicit versions of the synthetic opioid fentanyl.

While Sackler family members would be shielded from civil lawsuits, they would not have immunity from criminal charges. There's no indication any are in the weeds, but seven Democratic U.S. senators called upon the U.S. Department of Justice last month to consider charges.

Also under the new plan, a longer list of company documents would now be made public. Family members also agreed not to resist if educational and cultural institutions to which they've donated want to remove their names.

Another part of the crowded recommended by the mediator is Thursday's airing of statements from people whose lives were devastated by the crisis, either by losing loved ones or years of their own lives to addiction. The names of the speakers, who will represent millions of people affected by the crisis, have not been announced.

It will be the first opportunity for them to address Sackler family members directly in a public setting. It's not clear which of the Sacklers will attend, but there are to be at least two of them — and they are not to speak.

"No one can possibly underestimate how historic tomorrow's session will be," Ark Prae, a lawyer representing Purdue's creditors, told Drain on Wednesday.

Portage's Dussel named chief medical officer at UH Parma

Photo by Jeffery H. Heston for the Record-Courier

Portage County native Dr. Christopher J. Dussel has been named chief medical officer of University Hospitals Parma Medical Center.

Dussel has served as associate chief medical officer for the medical center over the past year. Dr. James Hill, who previously held the dual role of CMO and chief operating officer, will continue to lead UH Parma Medical Center as CEO.

"Dr. Dussel has represented our hospital well throughout the pandemic with agile, responsive leadership," said Dr. Kimberly Tuggett-Trickett, chief medical officer for University Hospitals' West Medical, which includes UH Parma, Elvira and St. John medical centers. "He cultivates positive relationships with physicians and staff, as well as our emergency responders."

As associate chief medical officer, Dussel has actively participated in Hospital Incident Command operations, helping to manage through multiple surges in the pandemic. He also has served on numerous quality committees and process improvement initiatives and helped to expand the hospital's advanced practice program.

Dussel has served as medical director of emergency medical services since June 2015, overseeing operations of UH Parma's Emergency Department and EMS in the eight cities under the hospital's medical control. In this capacity, he has also overseen the EMS Education Program that has trained and provided continuing education for



Portage County native Dr. Christopher J. Dussel has been named chief medical officer of University Hospitals Parma Medical Center.

Photo by Jeffery H. Heston for the Record-Courier

paramedics and EMTs throughout the community for more than 25 years. A practicing emergency medicine physician, Dussel will maintain a clinical presence in the ED.

Prior to joining University Hospitals, Dussel held various leadership roles within the Summa Health System, including vice chairman of the department of emergency medicine. He earned his medical degree from Northeast Ohio Medical University in Rootstown and completed his emergency medicine residency at Summa Health System. Dussel earned his MBA from Youngstown State University. He is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Dussel and his wife and four sons live in Portage County on Dussel Farm in Brimfield, which has been in his family for six generations.

We want to give the public a greater voice

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) is updating its Public Participation Plan or "PP" but we need one key element to update the plan successfully: You!

As the Greater Akron Area's federally designated metropolitan planning organization, AMATS oversees transportation projects which highway, public transit, bike, and pedestrian projects are worthy of receiving federal funds.

The PP identifies the ways through which the agency uses to engage and empower the public throughout the regional transportation planning process. Currently, AMATS updates its PP to identify and pursue even more public participation opportunities. You are invited to share your ideas on how we can improve our public outreach efforts.

The Draft PP is available for review and comment from now until March 18 at 2:00pm planning.org or at AMATS 3600 and 3600th Street. The AMATS Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) will discuss the Draft PP during a virtual meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 17 at 6:30pm. To join the virtual meeting, please visit <https://uhh.zoom.us/j/926146091> or call 330.216.2438 for more information.

Please visit planning.org or call 330.216.2438 for more information.



The City of Akron is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities are able to fully participate in public programs, services, and activities. Anyone who is in need of an accommodation when any City department is called to conduct a public hearing, please contact the City of Akron, Office of Public Services, 100 South High Street, Room 700, Akron, Ohio 44308, phone 330-216-2761 or email publicservices@akron.gov. If you require TDD/voice relay, call City Relay at 800-735-2746 and they will assist in contacting the Department of Public Services at (330) 216-2761.

IN BRIEF

Portage Health District to meet

The Portage Health District will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, March 16, 2022, at 7:00 a.m. at the Portage Courthouse, 100 N. Main St., Portage, Ohio 44882. For more information, call 330-296-4444 or visit www.portagehealth.org.

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Kandi Burr **ENTERTAINMENT NEWS****A&E Announces James**

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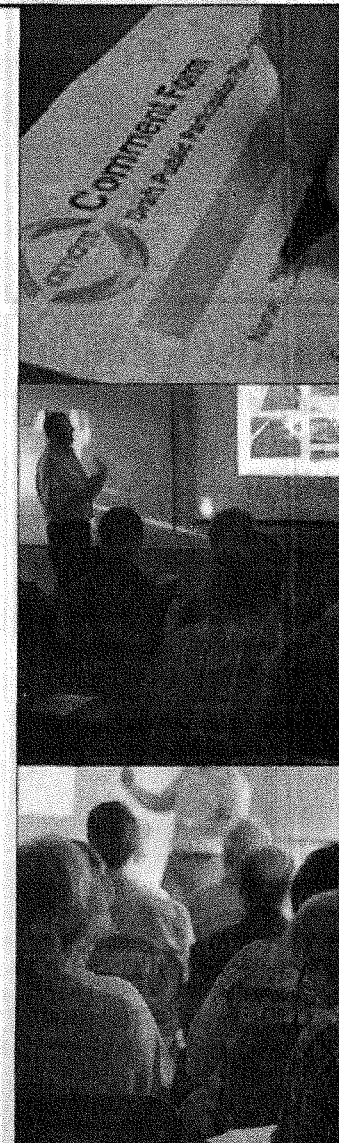
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News | Local



AMHA names Marco Sommerville as new chairman of board of directors

Leads only to one more

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1990). In addition, the fact that the response to the test is not a simple function of the number of stimuli, as it is in the case of the simple matching test, may be due to the fact that the stimuli are not presented in a random order, but rather in a fixed order, which may lead to a bias in the response.

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Trump allies

Continued from Page 4A

New Deal, which I call the Green New Scam, and rescind all unspent funds under the misnamed Inflation Reduction Act,” Trump said when he unveiled elements of his economic policy platform in a speech in September.

Trump campaign senior adviser Brian Hughes told Reuters a broad rollback of the IRA remains a top priority if he wins the Nov. 5 election, arguing the package has contributed to inflation and expanded the deficit.

Rescinding any part of the IRA would require an act of Congress.

The Biden administration has already worked to give out the vast majority of IRA grants, but the law’s tax credits are set to continue for years.

Frank Wolak, president of the Fuel Cell & Hydrogen Energy Association, said it will be essential for Congress to protect the tax credits if Trump wins election.

“We’re going to just do some hard educating on the IRA to our congres-

sional allies,” he said.

Allies with IRA benefits

● **Mosaic:** Trump’s son-in-law and former presidential adviser Kushner’s private equity fund Affinity Partners in 2022 invested \$200 million in Mosaic, a California-based provider of financing for solar energy and home efficiency improvements, according to investment data provider PitchBook.

Founded in 2011 as a crowdfunding startup, the company got a boost from the IRA’s 30% tax credit for residential solar, as well as its consumer incentives for solar panels, electric heat pumps and other efficiencies by raising consumer interest for clean energy loans.

● **Summit Carbon Solutions:** Oil magnate Hamm has long been an energy adviser and political financier for Republican politicians, including Trump, and in May hosted a Houston fundraiser for Trump’s third presidential campaign.

His company Continental Resources in 2022 made a \$250 million strategic investment into Summit Carbon Solutions, a carbon capture and sequestra-

tion, or CCS, project that will capture CO2 from ethanol plants and other industrial sources in the Midwest.

Former Iowa Gov. Branstad, who served as Trump’s ambassador to China and remains a staunch ally, is Summit’s chief policy adviser.

● **Tesla:** Tesla is a massive beneficiary of IRA tax credits. The electric vehicle and solar company called the package a “significant boost towards accelerating our mission” shortly after it passed into law in 2022, despite CEO Musk’s public hostility toward subsidies.

● **Occidental Petroleum:** Occidental CEO Vicki Hollub co-hosted the Texas fundraiser for Trump in May, which helped rake in tens of millions for Trump’s campaign.

● **Energy Transfer:** Energy Transfer’s CEO Kelcy Warren is a longtime supporter of Trump. The pipeline operator also participates in projects supported by IRA tax credits, including two planned Louisiana CCS hubs, and a hydrogen hub in Texas that recently won just over \$1 billion in Energy Department funding.

● **Cantor Fitzgerald:** Trump’s transition team co-chair Lutnick is the CEO of

Cantor Fitzgerald, a major financial services firm that has made significant investments in companies that benefit from the IRA.

As transition co-chair, Lutnick is playing a key role in the search for high-level appointees to staff a potential Trump administration, and he has also served as a high-dollar fundraiser for Trump.

Among the companies that Cantor Fitzgerald has invested in that have benefited significantly from the IRA are Invenergy, a renewable energy firm that is the top constituent of the Cantor Fitzgerald Infrastructure Fund.

The infrastructure fund has over \$150 million in total net assets, according to a July news release, and its investment in Invenergy consists of 14.65% of that fund’s total investments.

The fund is also heavily invested in NextEra Energy, the largest U.S. renewable energy developer.

Both companies have praised the IRA as helpful to their businesses.

Cantor Fitzgerald has over \$13 billion in assets under management and provides a wide array of financial services.



Heating Assistance Available
Application Deadline: May 31, 2025



The Ohio Department of Development and Direction Home Akron Canton want to remind older Ohioans that assistance is available to help with their home energy bills. The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) helps Ohioans at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines pay their heating bills.

Applied directly to the customer's utility or bulk fuel bill, the benefit can help manage heating costs.

Individuals need to have copies of the following documents:

- Most recent utility bills
- A list of all household members (including birth dates & Social Security numbers)
- Proof of income for the past 30 days for all household members (12 months for certain income types)
- Proof of U.S. citizenship or legal residency for all household members
- Proof of disability (if applicable)

*HEAP benefits are applied to an individual's energy bill after January 1st.




DIRECTION HOME
AKRON CANTON AREA AGENCY ON AGING & DISABILITIES

For more information or assistance with applying for HEAP, including a list of required documents, contact Direction Home Akron Canton at 877-770-5558.

To be connected to your local Energy Assistance provider, call (800) 282-0880 (hearing impaired clients may dial 711 for assistance) or visit www.energyhelp.ohio.gov.

AK-40180217

We want to hear from you!



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AMATS needs public participation as it selects which highway, public transit, bike, and pedestrian projects are worthy of receiving federal funds. The 3P identifies the strategies that the agency uses to engage and empower the public throughout the regional transportation planning process.

The Draft 3P is available for review and comment until **Dec. 12** at amatsplanning.org and our X and Facebook pages - @A_ATSPlanning. The AMATS **Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC)** will present the Draft 3P during its **Dec. 5** virtual meeting at **6:30 p.m.**

AMATS is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities are able to participate fully in public programs, services, and activities. Anyone who needs an accommodation from AMATS is invited to contact AMATS Public Information Coordinator Kerry Prater at 1 Cascade Plaza, Suite 1300, Akron, OH 44308, (voice) (330) 375-2436 as soon as possible. If you require TDD phone service call Ohio Relay at 800-750-0750 and they will assist in contacting AMATS at (330) 375-2436.

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‘There’s a war on contraceptives’

Misconceptions can keep women from popular birth control methods

Elizabeth Weise
USA TODAY

There’s a battle being waged between people who see birth control as essential for women’s health and self-determination, and to avoid abortions – and those who claim some forms of contraception cause abortions and should not be funded by taxpayers.

Birth control remains legal in all 50 states and can be purchased over the counter with no age limit. Some groups that oppose abortion support the wide availability of birth control to help prevent unwanted pregnancies. But lawmakers in at least seven states have attempted to cut off funding or scuttle bills that ensure access to some popular forms of birth control. Opposition to birth control has made contraception harder to access in many places and, experts say, unnecessarily scared people away from safe, effective methods for preventing pregnancy.

Major medical groups and 10 health researchers interviewed by USA TODAY say there is no evidence that any of the popular forms of birth control end human lives.

Logically, people who think abortion is murder should be supporting birth control, said Dana Singiser, co-founder of Contraceptive Access Initiative. “The opposite is happening,” she said.

“There’s no question that there’s a war on contraceptives,” said Dr. Dan Grossman, a professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and director of the school’s Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health program. “There’s been a lot of rhetoric and misinformation coming from anti-abortion groups alleging that contraceptive methods do cause abortions, which seem to be an attempt to set them up for further restriction.”

On Oct. 21, the White House proposed new rules under the Affordable Care Act that would require private insurers to cover the cost of over-the-counter birth control – including emergency contraception pills, non-prescription birth control pills, spermicides and condoms – without additional co-payments.

The proposed rule, which came two weeks before the presidential election, requires a 30-day comment period. If finalized, it would bring no-cost birth control to 52 million American women who have private health care insurance.

“At a time when contraception access is under attack, Vice President Harris and I are resolute in our commitment to expanding access to quality, affordable contraception,” President Joe Biden said in a statement.

Conservative concern about contraception

The anticontraceptive push is being led by groups that say birth control methods such as IUDs and the “morning-after” pill, which includes popular brands such as Plan B and ella, cause abortions and should not be funded by taxpayer money.

A group called Students for Life goes further, calling birth control

pills, IUDs, birth control implants and emergency contraception all abortifacients. They say only condoms, diaphragms, vaginal sponges, spermicide and “natural family planning” – that is, the rhythm method – are acceptable.

At the state level, lawmakers have based several legislative efforts on these beliefs:

- In Colorado in 2015, some conservative lawmakers tried to stop a program that provided free IUDs because they said the devices could cause abortions.

- In 2022, some Missouri lawmakers wanted to stop the state’s Medicaid agency from paying for IUDs and emergency contraceptives because they said they caused abortions.

- Since 2022, Idaho public college and university health clinics have only been allowed to provide condoms, “to protect against disease.” No other method of birth control may be offered.

- Oregon Right to Life, a group opposed to abortion, asked in 2023 to be exempted from a state law requiring health insurance plans to cover birth control so that it doesn’t have to fund IUDs and morning-after pills.

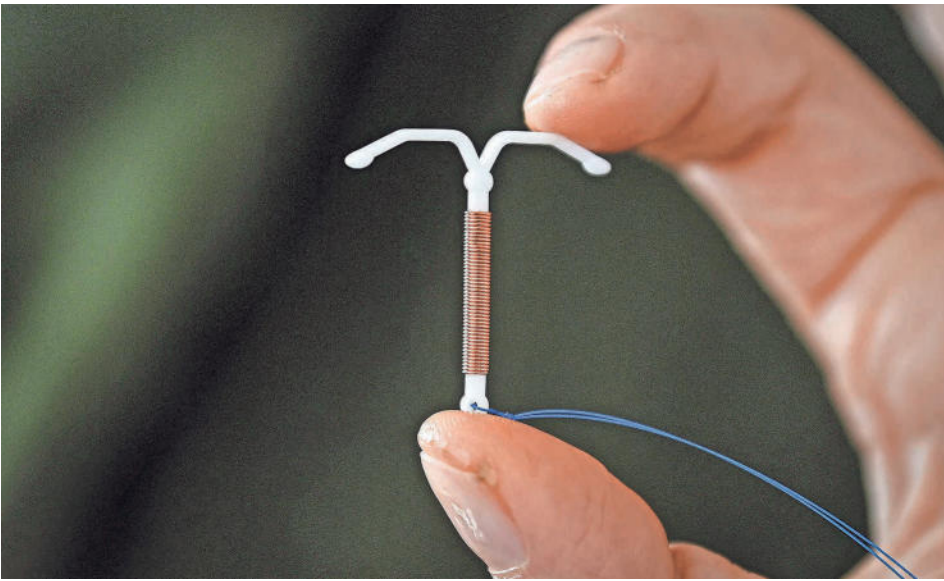
- Oklahoma lawmakers in February proposed a bill that would ban the morning-after pill and some IUDs.

- In Louisiana, a bill this spring to protect access to contraceptives was derailed because lawmakers were concerned some types caused abortions.

- Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin vetoed a bill in May protecting access to contraception, saying because some Virginians believed it causes abortions, their religious freedoms could not be trampled by such a requirement.

And in the U.S. Senate, a bill introduced in June called the Right to Contraception Act, which would have protected birth control access, failed when all but two Republicans voted against it.

Not all abortion opponents are anticontraception. In Idaho, which has some of the most restrictive laws governing abortion and access to contraception, three Republican women, two of them lawmakers, came together to found the Idaho Contra-



An intrauterine device is a piece of thin, flexible plastic about 1 inch long that is inserted long-term into the uterus. Some contain copper, some contain tiny amounts of hormones. They last between three and 10 years depending on the type. VALENTINE CHAPUIS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES FILE

ceptive Education Network.

“The fact of the matter is that all birth control methods are essential tools to prevent pregnancy; they do not terminate existing pregnancies,” said board member Tara Malek. “We know that the majority of Republicans in Idaho support access to birth control, including IUDs and emergency contraception.”

Biology and misinformation

“Contraception by definition is prevention of pregnancy, not the interruption of pregnancy,” Emma Chew Murphy, a doctor at the University of California, San Francisco’s department of obstetrics, gynecology & reproductive sciences. “Birth control does not cause abortion.”

Doctors and reproductive health experts say opposition to birth control is based on a misunderstanding of biology.

According to the medical definition, pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg implants into the uterus, said Dr. Beverly Gray, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Duke University in North Carolina. This is accepted medical understanding according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

The central conundrum is that while medical science says a pregnancy begins at implantation, a substantial portion of Americans believe life begins at fertilization. The question for them is then whether IUDs and emergency contraception can harm a fertilized egg.

But even for those who believe fertilization, not implantation, is the beginning of life, doctors say opposition to contra-

ception is based on a misunderstanding of how it works. Birth control methods do not threaten human life, they say, because in almost every case, the egg is never fertilized.

To better understand why popular birth control methods don’t cause abortions, it helps to learn exactly how they work, several doctors told USA TODAY.

An intrauterine device is a piece of thin, flexible plastic about 1 inch long that is inserted long-term into the uterus. Some contain copper, some contain tiny amounts of hormones. They last between three and 10 years depending on the type.

IUDs are more than 99% effective in preventing pregnancy. About 14% of patients of reproductive age in the U.S. use them as birth control – more than 9 million

Americans.

Slightly more than two-thirds of the IUDs used in America contain small amounts of progestin, according to the National Institutes of Health. These thicken the mucus at the mouth of the cervix so that sperm cannot get to the egg. “It almost makes it like cement,” said Gray, of Duke.

IUDs also inhibit ovulation in about 12% of patients, meaning they don’t produce an egg for a sperm to fertilize.

The second form of IUD contains a small bit of copper. When these are used, sperm and egg do not meet because the copper harms sperm’s ability to swim so they can’t get to the egg through the vagina, uterus and fallopian tubes.

“It mainly works as a spermicide,” said Amy Alspaugh, a professor in the College of Nursing at the

University of Tennessee who studies reproductive health.

In addition, the IUD can make it less likely the recently released egg could accept a sperm, said Dr. Deborah Bartz, a professor of obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive health at Harvard Medical School. “If for whatever reason some rogue sperm were able to swim up to get to the egg that had gone through the ovulation process, it also changes the egg,” making fertilization impossible, she said.

In very rare instances, an IUD might keep a fertilized egg from implanting. Research done 28 years ago did find that, in a very small number of cases, it was possible, though not proven, that a sperm might manage to reach an egg and fertilize it. However, due to changes in the fallopian tubes, it would be unable to travel down to the uterus to implant.

The overall finding was that in IUD users, embryos are formed at a significantly lower rate.

“Therefore, the common belief that the major mechanism of action of IUDs in women is through destruction of embryos in the uterus (i.e., abortion) is not supported by the available evidence,” the paper stated.

Emergency contraception

IUDs can also be used as a type of emergency contraception if they are inserted within five days

See METHODS, Page 8A

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The Draft 3P is available for review and comment until **Dec. 12** at amatsplanning.org and our X and Facebook pages - @AMATSPanning. The AMATS **Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC)** will present the Draft 3P during its **Dec. 5** virtual meeting at **6:30 p.m.**

AMATS is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities are able to participate fully in public programs, services, and activities. Anyone who needs an accommodation from AMATS is invited to contact AMATS Public Information Coordinator Kerry Prater at 1 Cascade Plaza, Suite 1300, Akron, OH 44308, (voice) (330) 375-2436 as soon as possible. If you require TDD phone service call Ohio Relay at 800-750-0750 and they will assist in contacting AMATS at (330) 375-2436.

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Levies

Continued from Page 1A

Aurora schools proposing facility project

Issue 32 is a 7.57-mill bond issue to raise more than \$136 million to pay off a large-scale facilities-improvement project over 37 years.

It is estimated to cost \$265 per year per \$100,000 in home value.

District officials say that the project is needed both to address needs of the individual buildings, as well as current crowding at some schools and increasing population anticipated in coming years.

The plan includes the construction of a new 274,000-square-foot high school and work on three of the four other existing buildings, including:

- Converting the existing high school for a middle school for grades six to eight.

- Harmon Middle School would become an intermediate school for grades three to five.

- Leighton Elementary School, now for grades three to five, would take over for Craddock Elementary School as the district's building for grades one and two. It would also house pre-kindergarten classes.

- Miller Elementary School, now for pre-K and kindergarten students, would be an all-kindergarten school.

- The 113-year-old Craddock Elementary School, the district's oldest building, would be closed and possibly demolished.

- The levy also would fund maintenance issues and external work, including athletic fields and parking lots.

The district began work on developing a facility master plan in March 2022, which included collecting community and school staff feedback during meetings and open houses.

District officials are conducting informational virtual meetings, called "lunch and learns," with Superintendent Mike Roberto and Treasurer Bill



This artists rendering shows what a new Aurora High School might look like if voters approve a 7.57-mill, 37-year bond issue on the Nov. 5 ballot to raise more than \$136 million for a major facilities project Aurora schools have been planning for more than two years. PROVIDED BY THEN DESIGN ARCHITECTURE

Volosin, from noon to 12:30 p.m. each day this week. For more information check Aurora City Schools' project page at www.google.com/view/acsd-facility-master-planning/home or the committee's website, www.auroraohlevy.com.

Ravenna schools trying to prevent budget crunch

Voters in Ravenna City School District will see Issue 33, an 8.31-mill, five-year levy that is projected to raise \$3.25 million each year for operating costs.

It would cost homeowners \$291 per year per \$100,000 in property value. This will be the district's fourth attempt to pass an operating levy. The most recent was in March, when voters rejected a 6.9-mill, five-year levy that would have generated \$2.7 million annually.

"Ravenna School District is in a state of fiscal caution with the state of Ohio, and that means that there's additional monitoring by the state, additional reporting, and the potential to fall deeper into a state of fiscal crisis," said Lisa Wunderle, who is deputy treasurer and handles communications for Friends of Ravenna Schools, which is campaigning for the levy.

"So, a state of fiscal watch or fiscal emergency are very real possibilities within our schools, specifically without this levy funding," said Wunderle. The Ohio Department

of Education and Workforce placed Ravenna City Schools in fiscal caution earlier this year, in response to the district's May 2024 five-year forecast, which projected deficits of \$3,143,154 in Fiscal Year 2025, and \$7,010,642 in fiscal year 2026.

In response, the district has eliminated busing for all high school students and restricted it for the lower grades. In addition, said Wunderle, the district has cut more than 30 staff members in the last three years, including teachers. At least some of these cuts have been through attrition and combining positions.

"Last year, our class size, our ratio, was 19 to 1, and this year, it's an average of 24 to 1," she said.

Other cuts have included consolidating girls and boys middle school sports teams into co-ed teams, to reduce the cost of coaches and transportation.

According to the Ohio Auditor of State, fiscal caution is the initial category for a school district that is in financial distress.

"There's a real possibility that we would fall into fiscal emergency for the school district, which basically means that decision-making powers would be removed from the school board, from the staff, parents, community," said Wunderle. "The way that all of those entities have in school district operations would be limited, severely limited, or removed, because the state would be the one

year levy that raises nearly \$1.66 million annually for current expenses. It costs homeowners \$82 per year per \$100,000 in home value.

Issue 36 - Streetsboro City School District, renewal of a 3.9-mill, five-year levy that raises nearly \$1.92 million annually for current expenses. It costs homeowners \$97 per year per \$100,000 in home value.

Issue 37 - Tallmadge City School District, replacement levy restoring an existing levy to 1.25 mills. It would collect \$807,000 per year, and cost property owners \$40 per year per \$100,000 in home value.

Issue 38 - Mogadore Local School District, additional 5.9-mill, five-year levy that would collect \$743,000 annually, and cost homeowners \$207 per year per \$100,000 in home value.

For more information, check Friends of Ravenna Schools' website www.supportravennaschools.com. The district's website is www.ravennaschools.us.

Other school levies on the ballot

Other school levies on the Nov. 5 ballot affecting some Portage County voters include:

Issue 34 - Stow-Munroe Falls City School District, an 8.89-mill bond issue to raise nearly \$240 million over 35 years to construct four new elementary schools and a new middle school, and demolish existing schools. It would cost homeowners \$311 per year per \$100,000 in home value.

Issue 35 - Streetsboro City School District, renewal of a 3.5-mill, five-

home value.

Issue 39 - Springfield Local School District, renewal of a 1.62-mill, five-year levy that generates \$930,000 annually. It costs homeowners \$50 per year per \$100,000 in home value.

Issue 40 - Springfield Local School District, renewal of a 2.79-mill, five-year levy that generates \$1.6 million annually. The levy costs homeowners \$50 per year per \$100,000 of home value.

Issue 41 - Springfield Local School District, renewal of a 7-mill, five-year levy that generates \$2.34 million, costing homeowners \$110 per year per \$100,000 of home value.

Akron Beacon Journal reporter April Helms contributed to this story.

Reporter Jeff Saunders can be reached at jsaunders@recordpub.com.

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Appendix E -

Language Assistance Plan for Limited English Proficient Populations

It is the policy of AMATS to provide meaningful access to all of its programs and services to all individuals, including those who are limited in English proficiency. AMATS recognizes that there are many individuals for whom English is not their primary language. Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can be limited-English proficient or "LEP." These individuals are entitled to language assistance with respect to a particular type or service, benefit, or encounter. By definition, the term LEP refers to any person age 5 and older who reported speaking English less than "very well" as classified by the U.S. Census Bureau. The term "English proficient" refers to people who reported speaking English only or speaking English "very well" on their Census response form. If a respondent answered that they spoke English "well," then they would still be considered LEP.

According to the *2013 American Community Survey*, 0.18 percent of the AMATS area population is unable to speak any English. The U.S. Census Bureau – *American Fact Finder (2016-2022)* reports there are several languages spoken in the AMATS area. Some of these languages include Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Hmong, and Nepalese. Language for LEP individuals can be a barrier to: accessing important benefits or services; understanding and exercising important rights; complying with applicable responsibilities; and understanding other information provided by federally funded programs and activities.

Many individual federal programs, states, and localities have provisions requiring language services for LEP individuals. Federal laws applicable to language access include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as Title VI regulations, prohibiting discrimination based on national origin, and Executive Order 13166 issued in 2000 by then-President Bill Clinton. Executive Order 13166 is an order to federal agencies stating that people who are LEP should have meaningful access to federally conducted and federally funded programs and activities. This order requires federal agencies to examine the services that they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited-English proficiency, and develop and implement a system to provide those services so that LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. It is expected that agency plans provide for such access consistent with the fundamental mission of the agency. Executive Order 13166 also requires that the federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries.

To assist federal agencies in carrying out these responsibilities, the U.S. Department of Justice has issued a Policy Guidance Document entitled, *Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency (LEP Guidance)*. This guidance sets forth the compliance standards that recipients of federal financial assistance such as AMATS must follow to ensure that their programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to LEP persons and thus do not discriminate on the basis of national origin.

AMATS is committed to taking measures to assure that individuals are not excluded from participating in programs simply because they face challenges communicating in English. The purpose of the LEP Plan contained in *Appendix E* is to outline the steps that AMATS follows to provide language assistance for LEP persons seeking meaningful access to AMATS programs and services. For further discussion of the

agency's LEP Plan, please consult the [AMATS Title VI - Program Procedures and Documentation](#) (May 2024). This document is available at amatsplanning.org.

Determining the Need

Recipients of federal funding and federal agencies are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons. AMATS considers various factors in its pursuit to provide meaningful access to LEP communities and populations within the Greater Akron area. Following guidance from the U. S. Department of Transportation, four factors serve as the developmental foundation of this LEP Plan. These four factors and how the agency considers them are presented below:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible in the service area or likely to encounter an AMATS-funded program, activity or service.

This first factor is the basis of the agency's LEP Plan. It requires AMATS to review U.S. Census data to determine if a language meets the LEP "Safe Harbor" Threshold. The agency determines the Safe Harbor Threshold by initially analyzing LEP demographic data for two to three of the largest identified language groups other than English within the Greater Akron area. The threshold is then calculated by dividing the population estimate for a language group that "Speaks English not well, or not at all" by the total population of the county. The LEP Safe Harbor Threshold provision stipulates that for each LEP group that meets the LEP language threshold (5 percent or 1,000 individuals, whichever is less) AMATS must provide translation of vital documents in written format for the non-English users. Examples of written translation of vital documents include the [AMATS Title VI - Program Procedures and Documentation](#) Plan and/or public notices, Title VI Complaint Procedures and Title VI Complaint Forms.

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 6.2 percent of the population of the Greater Akron area speak a language other than English at home. AMATS recognizes that this percentage is likely to increase in the future given current demographic trends.

**Language Spoken At Home
(U.S. Census 2016-2022 American Community Survey)***

	Number	Percentage
Only English	623,412	93.8%
Spanish	7,848	1.2%
Other Indo-European	12,285	1.8%
Asian/Pacific Island Language	3,941	0.6%
Other	16,884	2.5%
Total	664,370	100.0%

* - Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey's 2022 five-year estimates (2016-2022) for "Age by Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over." Table C16001

2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with an AMATS-funded program.

LEP persons are persons identified as speaking English less than very well, not well or not at all. Just because a person speaks a language other than English doesn't mean they don't speak English or are identified as LEP. AMATS and its contractors, if relevant, will be trained on what to do when they

encounter a person that speaks English less than well. AMATS or its contractor will track the number of encounters and consider making adjustments as needed to its outreach efforts to ensure meaningful access to all persons and specifically to LEP and minority populations of AMATS' programs and services.

AMATS maintains records of public meetings and phone inquiries in order to assess the frequency with which staff has possibly been in contact with LEP persons. AMATS staff has no record of receiving a request for an interpreter nor has there been any request for translated documents to the agency in its capacity as the Greater Akron area's federally designated metropolitan planning organization.

3. The nature and importance of the program, activity or service provided by AMATS to the LEP population.

AMATS understands that an LEP person with language barrier challenges also faces difficulties obtaining health care, education or access to employment. A transportation system is a key link to connecting LEP persons to these essential services. AMATS has identified activities and services which would have serious consequences to individuals if language barriers prevented access to information or the benefits of those programs. The activities and services include providing emergency evacuation instructions in our facilities and providing information to the public on security awareness or emergency preparedness.

AMATS' assessment of what programs, activities and services that are most critical include contact with community organizations that serve LEP persons, as well as contact with LEP persons themselves to obtain information on the importance of the modes or the types of services that are provided to the LEP populations.

It should be noted that AMATS does not provide any actual transportation services beyond its participation with statewide partners in the contract for Gohio Commute, a carpool matching web site. As the Greater Akron area's federally designated metropolitan planning organization, the agency is responsible for the federal transportation funding that reaches communities within its region and for ensuring that there is public participation in how that funding is spent.

4. The resources available to AMATS and overall costs to provide LEP assistance.

Translation of all AMATS plans and materials is limited due to cost restrictions. Further, the LEP population in the region is not necessarily of a significant proportion to warrant such expenses. The agency does provide translation services for information and items posted on its web site - **amatsplanning.org**. The agency will provide translation services at AMATS-hosted events in situations deemed appropriate and necessary by the staff or in those situations where a request for such assistance is relayed to the staff in a timely manner of at least three business days beforehand.

Although AMATS does not have a separate budget for LEP outreach, the agency will continue to work with the city of Akron and the Greater Akron area's transit providers - METRO RTA of Summit County and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) in Portage County - to implement low cost methods of reaching LEP persons. For example, the city of Akron has a Spanish speaking person on staff, as do METRO RTA and PARTA. These resources ensure that AMATS can provide assistance to LEP Spanish-speaking persons, if needed. In addition, AMATS and our transit providers work with local advocacy groups to reach LEP populations.

With due consideration of the aforementioned four factors, the AMATS LEP Plan for the 3P, is outlined below:

LEP Implementation Plan

AMATS will strive to accommodate those members of the public who are LEP. If an LEP individual or someone on their behalf should contact AMATS for assistance, the agency staff will take the name and contact information of the person in need of assistance. The staff will work with available interpreter/translator services to assist LEP individuals in their understanding of the transportation planning process. The staff shall promote the availability of LEP assistance upon timely request by LEP individuals through various available media prior to public meetings, comment periods and public empowerment events.

For those with limited-English proficiency, the AMATS website - amatsplanning.org - makes translations available of all of its pages. An automatic translation button allows the AMATS website to be made accessible in Chinese, French and Spanish with the potential for additional languages in the future.

Outreach programs, particularly in the area of bicycle and pedestrian safety education, include the distribution of educational material. The production of multilingual publications and documents and/or interpretation at meetings/events will be provided to the degree that funding permits and based on current laws and regulations. Educational material, e.g., safety brochures, provided free-of-charge from various entities, such as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, will be ordered and distributed at AMATS public participation events. When available, copies of brochures, pamphlets, and similar documents, in other languages will be secured and distributed at events which are held throughout the Greater Akron area.

Citizen involvement with AMATS and/or its three committees is voluntary. AMATS provides ample opportunities for the public to comment on the use of federal funds throughout the regional planning process and specifically during development of the four-year *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) and the long-range *Regional Transportation Plan*.

With the recognition that transportation projects impact all residents, AMATS strives to encourage an understanding of the process and promote opportunities to comment.

Monitoring and Updating the LEP Plan

The staff, in concert with the Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC), monitors the implementation of the agency's LEP Plan. The CIC meets regularly and invites anyone with an interest in regional planning to participate in their meetings and activities.

The AMATS LEP Plan is designed to be a living document that can be updated easily. Updates will examine all plan components, including:

- How to identify persons who may need language assistance.
- Examine past records from past meetings and events for requests for language assistance in order to anticipate possible need for assistance at upcoming meetings, i.e., a tracking system.

- Review to determine staff training needs.
- Address all completed *Nondiscrimination Complaint Forms* received by the staff. This form is available on the agency web site - amatsplanning.org. Using this form, citizens may describe in detail why they believe that their concerns or needs are not being addressed by the agency.

AMATS will post this LEP Plan and related materials on its web site at amatsplanning.org. Any person, including social service, non-profit, and law enforcement agencies and other community partners with internet access, will be able to access the plan. Printed copies will be made available upon request.

Any questions or comments regarding this LEP Plan should be directed to:

AMATS
1 Cascade Plaza / Suite 1300
Akron, Ohio 44308-1136

Telephone - 330-375-2436
Fax - 330-375-2275
E-Mail - amats@akronohio.gov

Appendix F - Title VI Complaint Procedures

Any person who believes that he or she has been excluded from participation in or has been denied the benefits or services of any program actively administered by ODOT or its sub-recipients, MPOs and RTPOs, on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, or income status may file a complaint of discrimination under Title VI, other non-discrimination statutes, and executive orders. The person filing the complaint may submit the written complaint to any agency (local government, MPO, ODOT or directly to FHWA/FTA). Once received, the most relevant federal funding source is used to determine which agency will lead the investigation. For FTA-funded programs, most investigative work would be completed at the local level. For FHWA-funded programs, agencies should route the complaint up the government agency hierarchy to the FHWA District Office, who will initiate the investigation. Please see Appendix E for additional information on the Title VI complaint process.

At a minimum, an agency must:

1. Inform the public of the local Title VI policy and outline the steps an individual must complete to successfully file a complaint. This information should be readily available and easy to access. Examples of where Title VI information (and access to complaint forms) might be effectively disseminated include:
 - Prominent placement on the agency's website (home page link and/or a dedicated Title VI page)
 - Posters prominently placed in common areas of agency's facilities
 - Brochures at public events
2. Provide the mailing address where complaints can be filed
3. Provide the contact information of the office that can answer questions regarding the complaint filing process (Title VI Coordinator, etc.)

The AMATS Title VI Complaint Form is included in Appendix F and is provided in both English and Spanish versions.

**AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (AMATS)
TITLE VI / CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT FORM**

Section I				
Name:				
Address:				
Telephone (Home):			Telephone (Work):	
Electronic Mail (E-Mail) Address:				
Accessible Format Requirements?	Large Print		Audio Tape	
	TDD		Other	
Section II				
Are you filing this complaint on your own behalf?			Yes*	No
*If you answered "yes" to this question, go to Section III.				
If not, please supply the name and relationship of the person for whom you are filing this complaint:				
Please explain why you have filed for a third party:				
Please confirm that you have obtained the permission of the aggrieved party if you are filing on behalf of a third party.			Yes	No
Section III				
I believe the discrimination I experienced was based on (check all that apply):				
[] Race [] Color [] National Origin [] Other _____				
Date of Alleged Discrimination (Month, Day, Year): _____				
Explain as clearly as possible what happened and why you believe you were discriminated against. Describe all persons who were involved. Include the name and contact information of the person(s) who discriminated against you (if known) as well as names and contact information of any witnesses. If more space is needed, please use the back of this form.				
Section IV				
Have you previously filed a Title VI complaint with this agency?			Yes	No

**AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (AMATS)
TITLE VI / CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT FORM**

Section V
<i>Have you filed this complaint with any other Federal, State, or local agency, or with any Federal or State court?</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>If yes, check all that apply:</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Agency: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Court _____ <input type="checkbox"/> State Agency _____
<input type="checkbox"/> State Court _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Local Agency _____
<i>Please provide information about a contact person at the agency/court where the complaint was filed:</i>
<i>Name:</i>
<i>Title:</i>
<i>Agency:</i>
<i>Address:</i>
<i>Telephone:</i>
Section VI
<i>Name of agency complaint is against:</i>
<i>Contact person:</i>
<i>Title:</i>
<i>Telephone number:</i>

You may attach any written materials or other information that you think is relevant to your complaint.

Signature and date required:

Signature

Date

Please submit this form in person at the address below, or mail this form to:

Jeff Gardner
Title VI Coordinator
Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS)
Suite 1300 PNC Building
1 Cascade Plaza / Akron, Ohio 44308-1136
Phone: 330.375.2436 x.4431
E-Mail: amats@akronohio.gov

AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (AMATS)
FORMULARIO DE RECLAMOS DEL TÍTULO VI / DERECHOS CIVILES

Sección I				
Nombre:				
Dirección:				
Teléfono (casa):			Teléfono (empleo):	
Dirección de correo electrónico (e-mail):				
¿Requisitos de formato accesible?	En letra grande		Cinta de audio	
	TDD		Otro	
Sección II				
¿Está completando este reclamo en su nombre?			Sí*	No
*Si respondió que "sí", diríjase a la Sección III.				
Si no, proporcione el nombre de la persona por quien está realizando el reclamo y su relación:				
Explique por qué completó este documento en nombre de un tercero:				
Si está completando este documento en nombre de un tercero, confirme que obtuvo el permiso de la parte perjudicada.			Sí	No
Sección III				
Creo que la discriminación que sufrí fue a causa de (marque todos los que correspondan):				
<input type="checkbox"/> Raza <input type="checkbox"/> Color <input type="checkbox"/> Nacionalidad <input type="checkbox"/> Otro _____				
Fecha de la presunta discriminación (Mes, día, año): _____				
Explique lo más claro posible qué ocurrió y por qué cree que fue discriminado. Describa a todas las personas involucradas. Incluya el nombre y la información de contacto de las personas que lo discriminaron (si las conoce) así como también los nombres e información de contacto de cualquier testigo. Si necesita más espacio, utilice el reverso de este formulario.				
Sección IV				
¿Ha presentado un reclamo de Título VI ante este organismo anteriormente?			Sí	No

**AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (AMATS)
FORMULARIO DE RECLAMOS DEL TÍTULO VI / DERECHOS CIVILES**

Sección V
<i>¿Ha presentado un reclamo ante cualquier otro organismo local, estatal o federal, o ante algún tribunal estatal o federal?</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Sí <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>En caso afirmativo, marque todas las que correspondan:</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Agencia federal: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Tribunal federal _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Organismo estatal _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Tribunal estatal _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Organismo local _____
<i>Brinde información sobre una persona de contacto en la agencia o el tribunal estatal donde presentó el reclamo:</i>
<i>Nombre:</i>
<i>Cargo:</i>
<i>Organismo:</i>
<i>Dirección:</i>
<i>Teléfono:</i>
Sección VI
<i>Nombre del organismo contra el cual presenta el reclamo:</i>
<i>Persona de contacto:</i>
<i>Cargo:</i>
<i>Número de teléfono:</i>

Puede adjuntar cualquier material escrito u otra información que crea relevante para su reclamo.

La firma y la fecha son obligatorias:

Firma

Fecha

Entregue este formulario en persona en la dirección que figura a continuación o envíelo por correo a la siguiente dirección:

Jeff Gardner
Coordinador de Título VI
Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS)
Suite 1300 PNC Building
1 Cascade Plaza / Akron, Ohio 44308
Phone: 330.375.2436 x.4431
E-Mail: amats@akronohio.gov

Appendix G - Measures of Effectiveness Report

The *3P* is a living document that must evolve to meet the changing needs, not only of the Greater Akron area, but the nation and the world as well. A triennial review by AMATS of the *3P* regarding its timeliness and effectiveness is an essential component of this document's evolution.

AMATS deems it necessary to evaluate the successes and failures of its various methods of public outreach. This evaluation assists agency personnel in identifying areas of improvement regarding public outreach and participation. Additionally, AMATS is required by federal regulation (23 CFR 450.316) to review periodically the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the *3P* to ensure a full and open process within the Greater Akron area.

Because public outreach is an ongoing activity, AMATS has a variety of strategies and tools for communicating and engaging the public. The agency is continually working to improve its outreach efforts to ensure inclusivity of all citizens, especially underserved populations. Below are tables presenting the Measures of Effectiveness of each Traditional and Digital outreach method utilized by AMATS.

The Traditional Methods Table presents: the method used by AMATS; the agency's target goals for each method; and the actual results of each method.

Traditional Methods					
Public Participation Method	Target Goal*	2021	2022	2023	Goal Results
Face-to-Face/Virtual Meetings	12	39			
Project Workshops/Open Houses	1	1			
Bike-N-Brainstorm Events	2	4			
Jane's Walk Events	2	6			
AMATS Public Events/Presentations (Move With The Mayors, public displays, speeches, etc.)	1	5			
a. Title VI / Non-discrimination Complaints Received	0				
b. Title VI / Non-discrimination Complaints Resolved	100%				

* AMATS target goal numbers are simply a general target. Actual numbers for each category may fluctuate depending on the year due to the cycle of projects/plans, unforeseen circumstances, or states of emergency.

The Digital Methods Table quantifies the various electronic and social media tools that AMATS uses to inform and involve the public in transportation planning.

Digital Methods					
Digital Tool	Target Goal*	2021	2022	2023	Goal Results
AMATS Website Visitors *	75,000	87,699			
Switching-Gears Website	2,000	2,582			
Electronic Newsletter Subscribers	500	683			
Podcasts	4	3			
Press Releases	8	13			
MailChimp Email Campaigns	6	63			
MailChimp Email Campaigns – Open Rate	20%	29.2%**			
MailChimp Email Campaigns – Click Rate	10%	10.5%**			
Facebook Reach	500	578			
Twitter Impressions	25,000**	32,000			
YouTube Views (Annual)	200	484			

* AMATS target goal numbers are simply a general target. Actual numbers for each category may fluctuate depending on the year due to the cycle of projects/plans, unforeseen circumstances, or states of emergency.

** Based on Yearly Average

* The total number of visitors to the AMATS website is based on totals provided by 427 Design, the agency's website hosting firm. These totals span two months. From Sept. 12-Oct. 11, 2021, the firm recorded 3,717 visitors and, from Oct. 12-Nov. 11, 2021, the firm recorded 3,909 visitors. Based on these totals, AMATS and 427 Design estimate that there were 87,699 visitors to the agency website since January 2020. AMATS and 427 Design will refine how website visitors are tabulated in the coming year using better analytics.

** Twitter impressions logged from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

Memorandum of Understanding
Public Participation Plan for Transit Projects
Akron, OH Urbanized Area

1. **Purpose.** Public involvement is a vital component in transportation planning. Public participation provides citizens access to the decision-making process and to voice ideas and needs. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlines the mutual responsibilities of the undersigned parties for providing public notice and opportunity for public involvement in transportation project planning.
2. **UZA.** The Akron metropolitan area includes Summit and Portage counties and a portion of Wayne County, with a population of over 700,000 people residing in the area.
3. **MPO.** The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) is designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) by the Governor, acting through the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and in cooperation with locally elected officials.
4. **Designated Recipients.** Two RTAs operate public transportation in the Akron metropolitan area, METRO in Summit County and PARTA in Portage County. METRO and PARTA are designated recipients of Federal Transit Administration Section 5307, 5310, and 5330 Urbanized Area Formula Funds.
5. **Public Participation Mutual Responsibilities.** AMATS, METRO, and PARTA work cooperatively to ensure the public has opportunity to review and comment on transportation projects.

➤ **AMATS**

- Six times a year the week before Policy Committee meetings, assembles a Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) to provide a forum through which the public may weigh in directly on transportation-related matters.
- Publishes notice of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for interested persons or agencies to be heard with respect to the social, economic and environmental impacts of draft projects. The RTP is a long-range plan with a 20-year horizon that creates a framework for the region's transportation system through the identification of needs and project recommendations. AMATS holds an additional public meeting for review of the RTP.
- Publishes notice of the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for interested persons or agencies to be heard with respect to the social, economic and environmental impacts of draft projects. The TIP is the Greater Akron area's four-year program of highway, public transit, and bicycle and pedestrian projects. The TIP must be consistent with the RTP. Through the TIP process, projects are scored and selected, providing funding for area transportation projects. No project can be implemented with federal transportation funds unless it is included in the TIP.

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- The TIP and all TIP amendments must be reviewed and approved by AMATS policy committee, which also encourages public participation. Once adopted, the TIP is then included in ODOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and subsequently approved by the Governor of Ohio. AMATS maintains the TIP, as amended on its website including all transit changes and amendments. Those amendments are made available for comment through CIC meetings before the Policy Committee acts on the amendments.

➤ **METRO & PARTA**

- Each RTA maintains a Transit Development Plan (TDP) to forecast local transit planning activities and projects for a period of five (5) to seven (7) years. Each RTA holds public meetings and accepts and considers public comments as part of reviewing or amending its TDP.
- If during a TIP cycle METRO or PARTA determine that it is necessary to amend a project or funding, the RTA will submit a formal request to AMATS for approval.
- Each RTA develops and prioritizes TIP amendments in accordance with TAM and SGR targets, replacement schedules, and availability of grant funds.
- Each RTA publishes notice of TIP amendment(s) on its website and in a local and/or regional newspaper for interested persons or agencies to be heard with respect to the social, economic and environmental aspects of the draft projects. Written comments will be accepted, and interested parties have the option of requesting the RTA to hold a public hearing to receive comments on these projects.
- On an annual basis, the RTAs jointly publish a Program of Projects (POP) on their respective websites and in local and/or regional newspaper(s) to describe federal funding for the upcoming year. Written comments will be accepted, and interested parties have the option of requesting METRO and/or PARTA hold a public hearing to receive comments on these projects.

6. **Agreement.** This MOU represents the mutual agreement and understanding of individual and mutual responsibilities for carrying out the public participation plan. The parties may amend the MOU via mutual, written agreement.


AMATS, Curtis Baker

8/31/18
Date


Angela M. Neelay

8/31/18
Date


PARTA, Claudia B. Amrhein

9/4/2018
Date

08/31/2018

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