

# @AMATS

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**ABOVE:**

Policy changes approved by AMATS may lead to more funding opportunities for Greater Akron area communities and other project sponsors in the years to come. For more information, turn to **page 4.**



**Time to Talk Safety, Equity**  
A Recap of October's 2023 AMATS Annual Meeting  
.....pages 2-3.

# Safety, equity are key topics at 2023 annual meeting

The topics of safety and equity in planning dominated the 2023 AMATS Annual Meeting on Oct. 6. The day's featured speakers, Michelle May, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Highway Safety Program manager, and Dan Rice, the president and chief executive officer of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition (OECC), described how their respective agencies are meeting the challenges posed by these issues.

For the past 15 years, May has managed ODOT's \$185 million Highway Safety Program, which provides technical expertise and funding to state and local governments to prevent severe crashes on Ohio roads. She also manages a statewide coalition of organizations focused on reducing traffic deaths and serious injuries – including those involving distracted driving, speeding, pedestrians, and young drivers.

May noted that, with a few minor peaks and valleys, Ohio's traffic fatality rate had been trending down since 1994 until 2019 when there was a slight increase to 1.0 fatalities per 100 million Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT). However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 coincided with the state's fatality rate spiking to 1.2 fatalities per 100 million VMT where it remained through 2021 before declining slightly to 1.15 in 2022. May said that the department suspects that fatality numbers are staying stubbornly high largely due to distracted driving.

"It's why we're seeing increases despite vehicles being safer," May explained. The use of smartphones that stream videos, provide games, and offer apps and new interactive technologies on cars are causing an evolution in distracted driving.

Another emerging safety concern is that pedestrian deaths across the state are rising. In 2013, Ohio had 88 pedestrian fatalities. By 2021, that number had soared to 176 before dropping to 165 in 2022. One disturbing finding of the department's data is that many pedestrian crash fatalities occur in communities with poverty rates at or above 10 percent. May said that several factors are contributing to pedestrian deaths including vehicle speed, bigger vehicles, more Ohioans walking and biking, and outdated roadway designs that focus on cars rather than people.

Just as the causes and types of crashes are evolving, so

are the state's safety investment strategies to counter these troubling trends. ODOT is shifting its strategies to projects that reduce fatalities and serious injuries while pursuing proactive, equitable safety investments. The department is also providing more resources to protect vulnerable road users (VRUs) and promoting reductions in vehicle speeds.

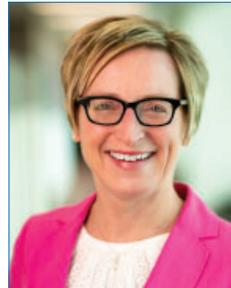
The department has modified its project application scoring to focus on crash severity and encourages sponsors to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in project designs. ODOT also requires that at least 15 percent of allocated project funds be spent on improving VRU safety. May reminded her audience that Ohio has a new distracted driving law which includes fines and penalties.

Equity is an increasingly important concern for the department, according to May. Equity in transportation seeks fairness in mobility and accessibility to meet the needs of all communities, particularly traditionally underserved populations. ODOT's updated investment strategies award more points and provide 100 percent project funding for applications from those communities with higher poverty rates based on U.S. Census data.

Equity is an issue that the OECC is tackling too. In his presentation, Rice described the OECC's engagement of previously overlooked communities and populations as part of its development of the 101-mile, multi-use Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail and the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area.

Rice described the coalition's role as the convener for Akron Reimagining the Civic Commons, a \$40 million investment in public space, park and trail improvements along the trail in Akron. Through the Civic Commons, the OECC has vigorously pursued public engagement efforts particularly in neighborhoods surrounding the Summit Lake NorthShore Park Project.

To view May and Rice's presentations, please visit the AMATS YouTube channel – [AMATSPanning](#).



MAY



RICE



Photos by Kerry Prater - AMATS



**QUITE A GATHERING:**

The 2023 AMATS Annual Meeting drew 150 attendees to the main ballroom of the Akron Cuyahoga Falls Sheraton Suites in early October. Top, in his opening remarks, AMATS Director Curtis Baker summarized the agency's accomplishments as the Greater Akron area's metropolitan planning organization over the last year. Baker listed implementing a new Carbon Reduction Program, starting a new *Traffic Signal Inventory*, and seeing several ambitious regional projects become reality as some of the agency's key achievements.

Middle, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Highway Safety Program Manager Michelle May, left, and ODOT District 4 Capital Programs Administrator Chad Root, right, discuss May's safety presentation during a break at the annual meeting.

Bottom, Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition President and Chief Executive Officer Dan Rice, at podium, described the coalition's public engagement programs such as Summit Bike Share and Summit Lake Ambassadors.



## AMATS loosens its purse strings in Funding Policy Guidelines update

Funding policy changes approved by AMATS may lead to more funding opportunities for Greater Akron area communities and other project sponsors in the years to come.

During its Sept. 21 meeting, the AMATS Policy Committee approved a slate of changes to the *AMATS Funding Policy Guidelines*, which provide detailed eligibility and scoring criteria for project applicants seeking funding from various programs. Amy Prater, the AMATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) coordinator, explains that the agency had to update its guidelines before selecting which area projects will receive support from these programs later this year.

“Updating these guidelines is part of AMATS’ responsibilities in leading the regional transportation planning process within Portage and Summit counties and northeastern Wayne County,” Prater continues, “The agency must update its policies to reflect ever-changing transportation needs within our region. While these changes are relatively minor, they still have ramifications for the area”



PRATER

Prater notes that the most recent changes include an increase in the number of projects that may be awarded to sponsors seeking assistance from the federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA), and carbon reduction funding programs. Sponsors may now seek funding for three projects rather than two for each program. Additionally, the limits or “caps” on the funding amounts that sponsors may seek were increased for the agency’s Resurfacing and TASA programs, from \$700,000 to \$800,000 and \$700,000 to \$1 million, for both programs respectively.

Notably, in a reflection of today’s environmental concerns, the Greater Akron area now has a first-of-its-kind federally funded Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) complete with new scoring criteria and application process. Applicants to this program may seek up to \$2 million in federal funds for projects that emphasize carbon emission reductions while improving traffic flow. The federal CRP was established under the national Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021 and supports programs like AMATS’ across the country.

Once the *AMATS Funding Policy Guidelines* were updated, AMATS began accepting STBG, Resurfacing, TASA, and CRP funding applications from would-be project sponsors. AMATS received 114 funding applications totaling more than \$165.6 million from 26 area sponsors by Nov. 3, the agency’s application deadline.

Prater projects that \$15 million in STBG and another \$15 million in Resurfacing funds will be available to the region. Additionally, \$8 million in CRP funding and \$1.2 million in TASA funds will be available to the region. The agency expects final project selections to be made in January 2024. For more information about the *AMATS Funding Policy Guidelines*, please click [here](#).

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**MAKING CONNECTIONS:**

Top, the ribbon was cut on a new portion of the Spartan Trail in the Village of Lakemore and Springfield Township on Oct. 18. The trail links key destinations throughout the village with the new segment now providing access to Springfield Junior and Senior High School. Working the scissors from left to right are Springfield Local School District Business Manager Dustin Boswell, Springfield Township Trustee Dean Young, and Lakemore Mayor Richard Cole, Jr.



Middle, following the ceremony, village and township officials, in partnership with AMATS, hosted a public engagement meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to gain citizen comments regarding the development of the *Living in Lakemore/Springfield Township Connectivity Plan*.

Funded by AMATS' Connecting Communities Program, the plan will identify new active transportation opportunities for development within the village and township. The meeting in Springfield High School was a follow-up event to a communitywide survey that generated 117 responses. The survey gauged public attitudes regarding walking and biking and potential locations to improve the area's active transportation network.



Bottom, Emil Liszniansky of Envision, standing at left, and Trustee Young, right, field questions from the audience. Envision is the consulting firm working with the village and township to develop the study.

## Project Updates

The following table lists significant projects that were awarded between May 31, 2023 and Oct. 24, 2023.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	AMOUNT
<b>Cleveland Massillon Road</b> - Resurfacing of Cleveland Massillon Road, from Ridgewood Road (south intersection) to Kumho Drive, and from Springside Drive to Ghent Road, in Bath and Copley townships and Fairlawn.	12/30/2023	\$998,000
<b>Interstate 271/State Route 8</b> - Resurfacing I-271, from south of Hines Hill Road to state Route 82, in Northfield Center Township. Project includes retaining wall repairs and minor work to 12 structures and five conduits.	6/30/2024	\$9,878,459
<b>State Route 59 (Main Street)</b> - Resurfacing of state Route 59 in Ravenna. Project also includes minor work to one bridge west of Ravenna spanning a rail line.	7/31/2024	\$2,773,695
<b>Hopocan/Norton/Snyder Avenues</b> - Resurfacing of Hopocan Avenue, from Hillsdale Avenue to 8th Street NW, and Norton Avenue, from 17th Street NW to Barber Road, and Snyder Avenue, from 2nd Street SW to 5th Street SE, in Barberton.	8/15/2024	\$2,375,000
<b>State Route 59</b> - Resurfacing of state Route 59, from state Route 8 to the Portage County Line, within Cuyahoga Falls and Stow and in the village of Silver Lake.	8/30/2024	\$3,546,322
<b>Interstate 271</b> - Bridge deck replacement on Southern Road over I-271 in Richfield Township.	8/31/2024	\$1,731,081
<b>Stanley Road Bridge</b> - Replacement of Stanley Road Bridge over Mahoning Creek in Windham Township.	2/1/2025	\$465,859
<b>Chestnut/South Prospect Street</b> - Resurfacing of Chestnut Street, from state Route 59 (Main Street) to state Route 14, and South Prospect Street, from the South Corporate Limit to state Route 59 (Main Street), in Ravenna.	10/31/2023	\$1,308,021
<b>State Route 21</b> - Reconstruction of state Route 21, from the Stark County Line to the Summit County Line, in Chippewa Township. Project includes bridge maintenance, drainage, and culvert replacements. Project includes safety improvements at the Clinton Road, Edwards Road, and Grill Road intersections.	6/15/2026	\$29,340,350
<b>Interstate 77</b> - Widening of I-77, from Everett Road to state Route 21, from four to six lanes in the village of Richfield and Richfield Township. Project includes bridge widening and culvert replacements.	8/31/2026	\$54,637,274

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

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

**MAKING A BETTER MIDDLEBURY!**

Top, AMATS and several sponsors marked the agency's 11th anniversary of hosting Bike-N-Brainstorms by gathering for a Sept. 23 event in Akron's Middlebury neighborhood. Bike-N-Brainstorms provide cyclists in the Greater Akron area with opportunities to share their insights with planning officials regarding how to improve the region's active transportation network.

Middle, the Middlebury Bike-N-Brainstorm included a four-mile bike ride through the neighborhood. A group discussion immediately followed the ride, bottom. The event provided AMATS with an opportunity to gauge how well the new bike lanes on Arlington Road and East Exchange, the new Freedom Trail extension, and Jewett Park improvements are functioning. The agency will use feedback from the event in planning for upcoming area projects such as the Rubber City Heritage Trail and potential improvements on East Market Street.

Among the event's sponsors were the Akron Food Works, Blimp City Bike & Hike Shop, and Summit Cycling. Other partners joining AMATS in hosting this event included the city of Akron, The Well CDC, the East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation, Habitat for Humanity of Summit County, and the Summit County Public Health Department.



Photos by Heather Davis Reidl - AMATS



## Dates to Remember

Date	Time	Committee/Event	Location
January 1	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - New Year's Day
January 15	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Martin Luther King Day
January 18	1:30 p.m.	TAC	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
January 18	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
January 25	1:30 p.m.	Policy	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
February 19	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Presidents Day
March 21	1:30 p.m.	TAC	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
March 21	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
March 28	1:30 p.m.	Policy	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
May 9	1:30 p.m.	TAC	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
May 9	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
May 16	1:30 p.m.	Policy	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
May 27	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Memorial Day
June 19	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Juneteenth Holiday
July 4	1:30 p.m.	*	AMATS Offices Closed - July 4th Holiday
August 1	1:30 p.m.	TAC	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
August 1	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
August 8	1:30 p.m.	Policy	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
September 2	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Labor Day
September 19	1:30 p.m.	TAC	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
September 19	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
September 26	1:30 p.m.	Policy	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
October 11	8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Annual Meeting	Sheraton Suites Akron Cuyahoga Falls
October 14	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Columbus Day
November 11	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Veterans Day
November 28-29	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Thanksgiving
December 5	1:30 p.m.	TAC	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
December 5	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
December 12	1:30 p.m.	Policy	The Venue @ 10 Tallmadge Circle in Tallmadge
December 25	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Christmas