



# AMATS

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Thanks to a TIGER, a Gateway, a doctor, a unique public-private partnership, and years of hard work, Kent once again has a vibrant downtown. Pedestrians, at right, enjoy a mid-day stroll through Kent's Acorn Alley under the gaze of the area's unofficial mascot.



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## Kent - Bringing It All Together

Many pieces of a unique puzzle are coming together in downtown Kent - but when those pieces are finally assembled – they'll make a complete picture of what could be ahead for downtowns in the Greater Akron area. With its ambitious Central Gateway Project, Kent is re-inventing its downtown thanks to the efforts of city officials, the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA), the Kent State University and several private-sector developers.

The Central Gateway provides something for all parties involved while creating a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders and motorists. The project will provide the city and its downtown businesses with additional parking for customers; PARTA will get a multi-modal transfer point for its riders; commuters and pedestrians will have easy access to key areas – including employers, shops and restaurants; the university will gain access to downtown and along state Route 59 through the KSU Esplanade; and two major employers in the region will have new facilities.

Kent's renewed downtown exemplifies what can be accomplished by cooperation between the public and private sectors and the use of urban design principles to create a sense of place and support a vibrant downtown. The project is a puzzle of many pieces and one of its key pieces was a \$20 million federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant.

### The 'TIGER' Pounces

In January 2010, PARTA received the TIGER grant to build its soon-to-be completed Kent Transit Center. Located in Kent's Erie Street and Haymaker Parkway (state Route 59) area, the center will be the transportation hub of the Central Gateway and will be home to 10 bus bays that will serve local and express bus routes operated by PARTA. Although Kent had been planning the re-development of its downtown for years – Kent Engineer Jim Bowling notes that the city began acquiring property in the area between Haymaker Parkway and Water, South Depeyster and Erie streets in 2005 - it wasn't until PARTA landed the grant that the community's efforts gained a newfound momentum. With the grant in hand, PARTA and Kent officials found a greater willingness by the parties involved to commit to the Central Gateway area. The grant's initial \$20 million led to investments in downtown that eventually grew to \$100 million, according to Bowling.

PARTA Planning Director Bryan Smith says that demonstrating that the new transit center would promote a mix of travel modes – transit, pedestrian, cycling and motor vehicles - was instrumental in securing the grant from federal officials. Smith notes that the area is named the Central Gateway because - upon completion - it will be the gateway between the downtown and the university via an extension of the KSU Esplanade, a pathway for cyclists and pedestrians. Funded in part with \$700,000 in AMATS Transportation Enhancement Program funds, the KSU Esplanade will extend from the university's Fashion Institute to Haymaker Parkway along Erie Street. Haymaker Parkway is also undergoing extensive improvements that will allow pedestrians and cyclists to travel safely between the Esplanade and The PORTAGE Hike & Bike Trail. PARTA's transit center will open in two stages, with its parking facilities opening first in March 2013. The center is expected to be fully operational by July 2013.

Bowling observes that bringing many transportation modes together will not only present convenient travel options for downtown visitors, but foster a new sense of identity for the area as a destination. Creating a multi-modal downtown tied into the university was an aim of Kent's redevelopment efforts dating back to the 1980s. Those



**GRAND TOUR:** Kent City Engineer Jim Bowling, second from left, and PARTA Planning Director Bryan Smith, third from left, give AMATS officials a tour of the Central Gateway site in mid-May.



plans lay fallow until 2005, when two of the city's largest employers - The Davey Tree Expert Company and Ametek – began discussions with city officials about their need for new facilities. Those employers – together with KSU officials – also expressed an interest in a new hotel and conference center for their respective needs.

The TIGER grant paved the way – not only for PARTA to begin construction – but for the city to develop an additional 230 parking spaces on top of the transit center for employers and other businesses, according to Smith. With the lure of additional parking in place, Fairmount Properties and its joint venture partner Premiere Development Partners soon secured funding to construct three new buildings for the Davey Resource Group and Ametek. The first building – located at the corner of Haymaker Parkway and South Water Street – will house the Davey Resource Group and is expected to be completed soon. Likewise, the Kent State University Foundation committed to building a 120 room hotel and conference center in the area. As these pieces were coming together for the Central Gateway, Kent's Ron Burbick was busy planting some "acorns" of his own nearby.

### 'Acorns' Take Root

Dr. Burbick had a vision for a walk-able retail and restaurant district in the heart of downtown. The businessman began by investing millions of his own money and other investors through his RLB Phoenix Properties LLC in developing Acorn Alley I. Located along East Main and Depeyster streets, Acorn Alley I is a popular destination since its opening in September 2009 with its unique mix of shops, offices and restaurants. It sprouted Acorn Alley II, which opened in November 2011 at the corner of South Depeyster and East Erie streets. The former five-story Franklin Hotel located at the intersection of East Main and South Depeyster streets is the site of Dr. Burbick's next renovation project – Acorn Corner.



Dr. Ron Burbick

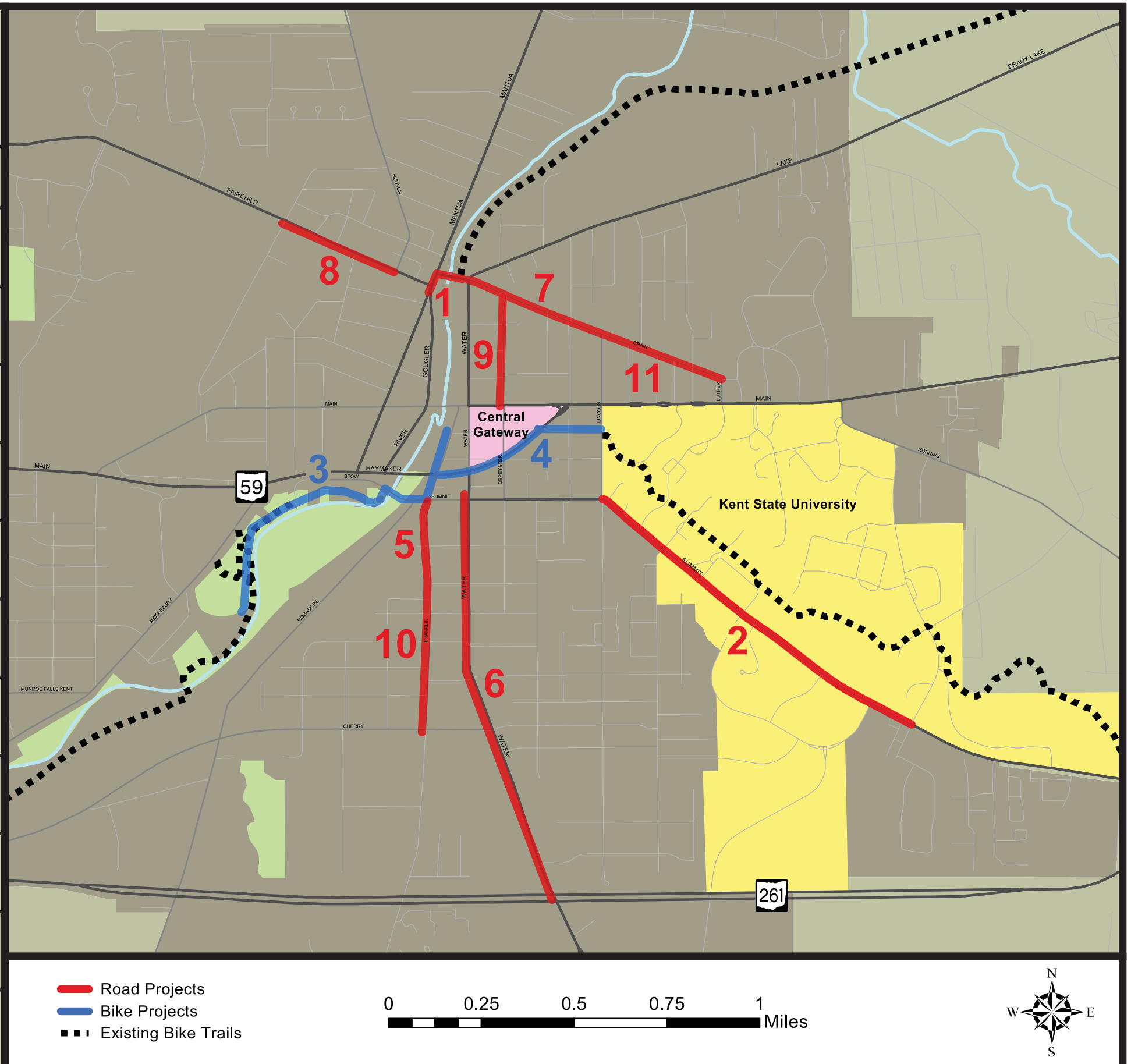
The Acorn Alley area is easily accessible by walking and cycling with ample parking nearby and ties in neatly with the Central Gateway area. Dr. Burbick says that it was through his participation with various civic committees and Main Street Kent – a historic preservation group - that he became aware of key principles regarding downtown revitalization. One principle that impressed Dr. Burbick seems relatively simple: People must have reasons to visit downtowns. Burbick decided that he would apply Main Street Kent's principles on his own by redeveloping a single building that housed several non-profits. That redeveloped building drew new tenants and mushroomed into another redeveloped building that drew new tenants, and then a third building that eventually became Acorn Alley I. Vibrant downtowns are important – not only for commerce – but for a sense of community, Dr. Burbick observes. "Here, in the last 30 years, everyone hopped in their car and went to a mall someplace," he continues, "You don't even know the people that live next door to you. Now, just this last Saturday we had this 'Masterpieces on Main,' a wine and art festival downtown. It was packed. You never had that in the past."

AMATS programmed funding for several projects directly related to the Central Gateway – most notably the KSU Esplanade - and other nearby projects that impact downtown such as the Crain Avenue Bridge project. (For a complete map and listing of projects, see [pages 4](#) and [5](#).) One significant contribution by the agency wasn't related to a particular project or funding at all, but concerned ideas, strategies and principles. Released by AMATS in September 2010, *Connecting Communities – A Guide to Integrating Land Use and Transportation* presents strategies to help create connected livable communities through increasing transportation choices, encouraging coordinated development and reducing environmental impacts.

Urban design principles – such as those presented in *Connecting Communities* – are found throughout the Central Gateway. Bowling cites the 15-foot wide sidewalks that will crisscross the area to accommodate pedestrians with ease and ample on-street parking to slow vehicular traffic for the safety of cyclists as examples of the principles pursued by Kent. Dr. Burbick notes with pride that he incorporated similar concepts into Acorn Alley I and II and cites the abundance of bike racks and well-lit walking areas as examples. Thanks to the pursuit of such principles and a commitment to public-private sector partnerships, Kent has a revitalized downtown.

# AMATS-Funded Kent Projects

Map #	Project	Funding Type(s)	Amount
1.	<b>Crain Avenue Bridge</b> - Replacement of bridge located at Fairchild Avenue, Mantua and Water (State Route 43) streets.	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Highway Safety Program State Safety Transportation Program	\$3 million \$2 million \$3 million
2.	<b>East Summit Street</b> - Reconstruction and intersection improvement project from Lincoln Street and Loop Road.	Highway Safety Program	\$440,500
3.	<b>The PORTAGE Hike &amp; Bike</b> - Construction of a multi-purpose trail from Fred Fuller Park to John Brown Tannery Park.	Transportation Enhancement Program	\$700,000
4.	<b>The PORTAGE Hike &amp; Bike</b> - Construction of a multi-purpose trail from State Route 59 to Lincoln Street.	Transportation Enhancement Program	\$700,000
5.	<b>The PORTAGE Hike &amp; Bike</b> - Construction of a bike trail from Tannery Park Erie Street (State Route 59).	Transportation Enhancement Program	\$700,000
6.	<b>State Route 43</b> - Various turn lane, signal and sidewalk improvements from State Route 261 to Summit Street.	Surface Transportation Program	\$120,000
7.	<b>Crain Avenue</b> - Resurfacing from east of Lake Street to North Willow Street.	Surface Transportation Program	\$113,000
8.	<b>Fairchild Avenue</b> - Resurfacing from Majors Lane to Hudson Road.	Surface Transportation Program	\$129,600
9.	<b>North Depeyster Street</b> - Resurfacing from East Main Street to Crain Avenue.	Surface Transportation Program	\$124,000
10.	<b>Franklin Avenue</b> - Resurfacing from Cherry Street to Summit Street	Surface Transportation Program	\$184,000
11.	<b>Crain Avenue</b> - Resurfacing from North Willow Street to Elmwood Drive.	Surface Transportation Program	\$149,600



## Community Focus: Lakemore

*Community Focus* presents information about communities within the Greater Akron area. The Village of Lakemore in southeastern Summit County resumed its membership in AMATS in July after a hiatus of more than two decades. Village officials felt that the time was right for the community to become an active participant in the regional transportation planning process.

**Founded** – 1921

**Population** – 3,068 (2010 U.S. Census Bureau)

**Area** - About 1.67 square miles, approximately 10 miles southeast of Akron. It is centrally located in Springfield Township.

**Policy Committee Member** – Mayor Richard Justice

**History** - Residents in the late 19th century used the area primarily for camping and as a weekend getaway due to its picturesque location. The beautiful Springfield Lake made an excellent weekend and summer vacation spot. With the popularity of the area, the area developed to welcome big bands and the Springfield Lake Amusement Park.

In 1914, Edwin Shaw Hospital began operating as a sanitarium. Development in surrounding communities and the area tire and rubber companies turned the village into a popular community. Schools, post office, and local government soon followed. Currently, local government and merchants are aggressively seeking improvements and attracting interest.

**Transportation Challenges** – The Village of Lakemore plans to improve traffic flow and community relations with neighboring communities. With increased interest from potential investors, village officials hope to make access improvements for Canton, Sanitarium and Waterloo roads. The village legislators are seeking potential improvements with sidewalks, trailways and roadways for increased traffic.

**Web site** - [www.lakemoreohio.org](http://www.lakemoreohio.org)





## Project Updates

The following table lists projects that have been awarded between Oct. 18, 2011 to June 11, 2012.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATES	CONTRACTOR	AMOUNT
<b>State Route 57</b> - Resurfacing from US 30 to Orrville South Corporate Line and from Orrville North Corporate Line to Rittman South Corporate Line in <b>Chippewa Township</b> .	09/30/2012	Kokosing Construction Co. - Fredericktown -	\$2,094,963
<b>Freedom Secondary Trail Phase 1</b> - Upgrade trail, from Southwest Avenue to Howe Road, and construct new trail, from Howe Road to Kent, in <b>Tallmadge</b> .	Not Available	Kenmore Construction Co. - Akron -	\$1,137,440
<b>State Route 585</b> - Construct offset turn lanes and modify signal at Gates Street in <b>Chippewa Township</b> .	09/30/2012	Karvo Paving Co. - Tallmadge -	\$558,778
<b>Interstate 76</b> - Minor rehabilitation and resurfacing from east of Tallmadge Road to west of New Milford Road in <b>Brimfield</b> and <b>Rootstown townships</b> .	08/30/2012	The Shelly Company - Twinsburg -	\$7,134,445
<b>Hopkins Road</b> - Bridge replacement over Eagle Creek in <b>Nelson Township</b> .	Not Available	Schirmer Construction Co. - North Olmsted -	\$632,900
<b>Chamberlin Road</b> - Resurfacing from state Route 82 to Ravenna Road in <b>Twinsburg</b> .	Not Available	Ronyak Bros. Paving - Burton -	\$528,560
<b>State Routes 44 and 88</b> - Resurfacing and bridge repairs on portions of state Routes 44 and 88 in Village of <b>Garrettsville</b> and <b>Garrettsville</b> and <b>Mantua townships</b> .	08/31/2012	The Shelly Company - Twinsburg -	\$1,572,137
<b>State Route 8</b> - Resurfacing and various bridge and signal improvements, from high-level bridge to Akron North Corporate Line, in <b>Akron</b> .	09/30/2012	Shelly & Sands, Inc. - Zanesville -	\$4,359,113
<b>Interstates 76, 277 and US 224</b> - Resurfacing and bridge improvements from Akron West Corporate Line to east of Kelly Avenue in <b>Akron</b> .	07/30/2013	The Shelly Company - Twinsburg -	\$13,139,798
<b>Interstate 76</b> - Deck reconstruction of two bridges at Sherman and Sandy Lake roads in <b>Brimfield Township</b> .	09/30/2012	A.P. O'Horo Co. - Youngstown -	\$1,858,000
<b>Interstate 271</b> - Resurfacing on six bridges from north of Olde Eight Road to the Cuyahoga County Line in <b>Northfield Center Township</b> and <b>Macedonia</b> .	09/30/2012	The Shelly Company - Twinsburg -	\$2,976,570
<b>Darrow Road</b> - Resurfacing of Darrow Road (state Route 91) under Interstate 480 bridges in <b>Twinsburg</b> .	Not Available	Barbicas Construction - Akron -	\$323,305
<b>State Route 59</b> - Construction of sidewalks and pedestrian signal improvements at intersections, from West Franklin Township Line to Rhodes Road, in <b>Franklin Township</b> .	Not Available	Spano Brothers Construction, Co., Inc. - Akron -	\$107,310

## Dates to Remember

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Committee/Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
September 20	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Stow Safety Building
September 20	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Richard Howe House
September 27	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Martin University Center
October 12	9:00 a.m.	Annual Meeting	Sheraton Suites, Cuyahoga Falls
December 6	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Stow Safety Building
December 6	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Richard Howe House
December 13	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Martin University Center

Persons with disabilities needing assistance are asked to contact Billy Soule, Assistant to the Mayor for Community Relations, 166 S. High Street, Room 200, Akron, Ohio 44308, (voice) 330-375-2189, (TDD) 330-375-2345, at least seven (7) days in advance.

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