

2014 Annual Report



Planning for Greater Akron
The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study



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Special Publication

Annual Report 2014

A New Perspective by Chairman Kline

In January, I took over handling the chair's gavel of the AMATS Policy Committee. As the mayor of Tallmadge, I was used to grappling with the local issues facing my community. As committee chair, I gained a new regional perspective on many of those issues. I soon realized that many of the challenges that face Tallmadge aren't unique to my city and are by no means confined to its corporate limits. My time as chair gave me a deeper appreciation for the concept of regionalism as I saw examples of it in action during our Policy Committee meetings.



KLINE

One such example presented itself early in the year. In January, the committee approved 39 projects totaling nearly \$29 million in new funding. This set of projects represents an ongoing recognition by the committee that we must work together to preserve the area's existing transportation system while pursuing new efficiency strategies due to shrinking local, state and federal funding streams.

Around the same time, AMATS – together with the Summit County Executive and Engineer's offices and the mayors of Akron, Boston Heights, Cuyahoga Falls, Hudson, Macedonia and Stow – sent a formal request to the Ohio Department of Transportation urging that state Route 8 be re-designated as Interstate 380. Re-designation would make the route eligible for federal funds and give it clout that could aid in development along the 18-mile corridor. This joint effort was another example of regionalism in action with local and county leaders joining together for a common purpose.

Yet another example was AMATS and Bath and Copley townships' continued development of the *Montrose Connectivity Plan*. Funded through a grant from AMATS' Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program, the plan will identify pedestrian, bicycle, public transportation and traffic improvements throughout the Montrose area. During the year, the analysis of 740 survey results collected throughout 2013 was completed. Working with METRO, the agency and townships also hosted a meeting in May to seek additional ideas from those who live, work, shop, and dine in the area.

In midyear, the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) released its *Vibrant NEO 2040: A Vision, Framework and Action Products for Our Future*. As one of the founding members of the NEOSCC, the agency played a lead role in developing this vision. Also during 2014, the agency hosted the Switching Gears-Active Transportation Conference in June and completed several significant regional products: the *Pedestrian Related Traffic Crashes 2010-2012* report; the *AMATS: The State of Our Region's Transportation Infrastructure* report; and the *2011-2013 Crash Report*.

The works of AMATS during 2014 are charting a course for the region in the years to come. Judging by the year's accomplishments, the agency and the Greater Akron area are without a doubt going in the right direction.

David G. Kline
2014 AMATS Policy Committee Chairman

Planning

State Route 8 Re-designation

In February, AMATS - acting in concert with several mayors whose communities are located along the state Route 8 corridor and the Summit County Executive and Engineer – sent a formal request to Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Director Jerry Wray, urging that the route be re-designated as Interstate 380.

AMATS officials believe that re-designating state Route 8 makes sense as ODOT recently upgraded the route to a limited-access, multi-lane freeway. Re-designation would make the route eligible for federal funds and give it clout that could aid in development along the 18-mile corridor.



One of the oldest state routes in Ohio, state Route 8 is a ribbon of asphalt and concrete that links Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, Stow, Hudson, Boston Heights and Macedonia. It also connects those communities to Interstates 76, 77, 80 (Ohio Turnpike) and 271 and provides Summit County with easy access to Cleveland's eastern suburbs. The prominent role that state Route 8 plays in the daily lives of nearby residents and businesses is one of the reasons that mayors within the SR 8 corridor and county officials joined AMATS in seeking interstate status.

Among the signatories to the agency's letter to ODOT were:

- Summit County Engineer Alan Brubaker
- Hudson Mayor William Currin
- Stow Mayor Sara Drew
- Village of Boston Heights Mayor Bill Gony
- Macedonia Mayor Don Kuchta
- Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic
- Summit County Executive Russ Pry
- AMATS Director Jason Segedy
- Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Walters

Agency officials are supportive of re-designation as a low-cost and innovative solution for improving the region's transportation system and providing new economic development opportunities.

Reports

As the agency responsible for transportation planning throughout the Greater Akron area, AMATS prepares many analyses and reports focusing on the region's transportation systems throughout the course of any given year. The agency uses this information to fulfill its mission of providing quality transportation planning as well as offering a resource for area communities and other players in the planning process. Below are synopses of several key reports prepared by the agency during 2014.

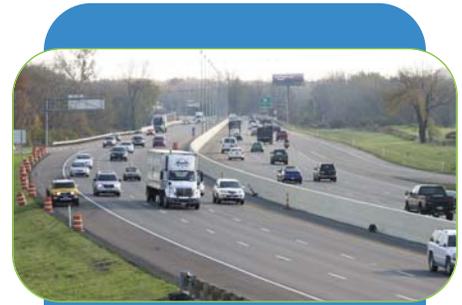
AMATS: The State of Our Region's Transportation Infrastructure Report

In March, the agency released a frank assessment of the status of the area's transportation system. The report found that Greater Akron's major roads are in better condition than those in other Northeastern Ohio metropolitan areas, but they are in slightly worse condition than others across the state.

Using information from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), AMATS determined that nearly half of the area's roads are in "good" condition, but significant portions are in "poor" condition.

Among the report's findings were that:

- 71 of the region's 984 bridges are classified as "structurally deficient."
- 12 percent of the area's major roads are in "poor" condition.
- Overall, the area's roads and bridges are in a reasonably good state of repair, but *keeping* them that way will be an ongoing and costly proposition.
- Significantly *improving* the area's bridge and pavement conditions is likely to require nearly all of our region's currently available federal and state highway dollars.
- As the region's population continues to decline and as the number of vehicle miles traveled and transportation revenues remain stagnant, the Greater Akron area should avoid building additional highway capacity and continue its "fix-it-first" approach to system maintenance.



Pedestrian Related Traffic Crashes 2010-2012

In March, AMATS published a first-of-its-kind area pedestrian analysis. The report is a comprehensive look by the agency at crashes involving pedestrians and spans the years 2010 through 2012. Although the agency regularly prepares vehicle crash reports, until 2014, it had never thoroughly analyzed incidents involving pedestrians. Agency officials felt that the time was right to do so due to increased public interest in alternative forms of transportation such as walking.



Among the report's findings were that:

- Pedestrian-related crashes account for less than 1 percent of all area crashes, but account for over 10 percent of fatalities.

- There were 14 fatalities from pedestrian-related crashes between 2010 and 2012.
- Eighty-six percent of pedestrian-related crashes result in an injury to the pedestrian with 31 percent of those resulting in an incapacitating injury.
- People between the ages of 11-20 account for 28 percent of the area's pedestrian-related crashes while people between the ages of 21-30 account for 15 percent.
- Akron tops the list of communities with the most pedestrian-related crashes with Kent coming in second.

The agency and its member communities will use this report to weigh the awarding of funds for projects to reduce pedestrian crashes such as crosswalks, mid-block and improved signage.

Mid-Block Crossing Analysis

In December, AMATS completed a first-of-its-kind analysis identifying areas where mid-block pedestrian crossings are occurring or are likely to occur in the Greater Akron area. Using this analysis, communities can determine what improvements may lead to improved pedestrian safety at these locations.

The analysis provides insight on pedestrian behavior and land use and roadway development patterns that encourage mid-block pedestrian crossings. The analysis identifies 41 potential mid-block crossing locations throughout the region and possible safety improvements that may be applied to these locations.



Cycling Initiatives

In June, AMATS increased its efforts to promote cycling with an ambitious new event that built upon its successful Bike-N-Brainstorms. With support from the John S. Knight Foundation, the agency hosted the Switching Gears - Active Transportation Conference, a free one-day event in downtown Akron, which drew 135 attendees.

The conference highlighted successful policy and implementation strategies, as well as grassroots efforts, to create more walkable and bikeable communities. Attendees learned groundbreaking techniques on how to promote walking, biking and transit use in their communities and how to create vibrant neighborhoods. There were also "breakout sessions" on a variety of cycling and pedestrian-related topics.



Among the events scheduled during the conference were featured presentations by Jason Roberts of The Better Block project and Dave Cieslewicz, executive director of Wisconsin Bike Fed and former mayor of

Madison, Wisconsin. Roberts explained how Better Block can influence city policies and lead to rapid changes and Cieslewicz described how Madison became a top bike-friendly community. The day was capped off by a Bike-N-Brainstorm through the heart of Akron.

During National Bike to Work Week in May, the League of American Bicyclists announced that the city of Akron was among the 2014 recipients to earn a “Bronze” Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) awards.

The Bronze BFC award recognizes Akron’s commitment to improving conditions for bicycling through investment in bicycling promotion, education programs, infrastructure and pro-bicycling policies. AMATS and Akron partnered together in preparing the city’s application to the BFC Program.



GOING FOR A RIDE:

In October, AMATS’ Switching Gears Program helped coordinate the Ward 1 Community Meeting and Bike Ride in Akron’s Highland Square area.

The event drew over 60 people and included sessions regarding the health benefits of bicycling and bike safety and a 3.8 mile ride through the area.



Bike and Pedestrian Counts

The agency uses data collected from bike and pedestrian counts for use in planning the area’s still-developing bike network and related pedestrian improvements that promote regional connectivity. 2014 marked the third season that AMATS compiled bike and pedestrian counts at key locations. During the months of April, May, July, August, September and October, the agency conducted 14 bicycle counts and 16 pedestrian counts throughout the Greater Akron area.

The top three count dates, locations and totals for bicyclists included:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Total</u>
September 27	State Route 82 and the Bike & Hike Trail (Sagamore Hills)	145
September 25	State Route 59 and Erie Street (Kent)	70
September 24	Erie Street and Water Street (Kent)	58

The top three count dates, locations and totals for pedestrians included:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Total</u>
July 16	Cascade Plaza and Main Street (Akron)	1,381
September 24	Erie Street and Water Street (Kent)	1,183
October 1	Campus Center Drive and Summit Street (Kent)	1,113

Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program

The AMATS Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program capped off a successful third year. The program helps communities strike a balance between their land use decisions and transportation investments by providing two \$50,000 grants for the development of plans and studies that promote vibrant, livable communities.

2014 was a year of significant accomplishments for the program and its 2013 grant recipients – the city of Barberton and the townships of Bath and Copley.

Barberton's *North-South Community Connection Plan* will identify potential connectivity improvements within a 259-acre area between Van Buren Avenue and 2nd Street Southwest.

Early in the year, Barberton selected City Architecture to lead the study's planning process. That process got off to a solid start in March when the planning team – which included AMATS - began conducting analyses, interviews and studies into how to establish safe and intuitive links in Barberton's southern area. During the summer, AMATS, Barberton, the Barberton Community Foundation and Neighborhood Development Services began studying routes to improve links between downtown Barberton with the Towpath Trail through safe biking and walking connections. These efforts included two Open Houses to solicit feedback and direction to shape the emerging plan.



Artist's rendering of proposed "Magic Mile" in Barberton.

City Architecture's final report included a recommendation to add a bicycle and multipurpose trail loop to connect the Towpath Trail and Robinson Avenue Bridge to downtown Barberton and Lake Anna.

The *Montrose: North/South and East/West* study will analyze a 3.25 mile suburban area, bounded by Bath Township to the north and Copley Township to the south. This area encompasses the Interstate 77 and state Route 18 interchange. The study addresses the need for bicycle and pedestrian access improvements throughout the heavily traveled area and transit and vehicle access improvements to nearby retail and parking locations.



Artist's rendering of proposed Rothrock Road/Springside Drive Roundabout.

Early in the year, the study team – which included AMATS - completed its review of the 740 results from the *Building a Better Montrose* survey. A full 80 percent of respondents indicated that they believe that the area's traffic makes it too dangerous for walking and cycling. Nearly two-thirds of respondents stated that the absence of sidewalks and safe crosswalks prevents them from walking.

As a follow-up to the survey, the team hosted the Montrose Community Meeting in May and a second meeting for business and land owners in October. The study's consultant, EDG, used the input gathered from these meetings to prepare its recommendations for the area. The consultant's final set of recommendations urges the construction of sidewalks and crosswalks throughout the study area with an emphasis on the need for sidewalks on the north side of state Route 18. A proposed roundabout on Springside Drive and Brookwall Drive is also among the recommendations.

MAPPING IT OUT:

The May Montrose Community Meeting featured stations to discuss issues and ideas regarding such topics as biking and walking, public transportation service, vehicular access, and land use. The meeting allowed those who live, work, shop and dine in the Montrose area to share their ideas on how to improve connectivity within one of the Greater Akron area's largest retail districts.



Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC)

The NEOSCC was a unique planning program funded largely by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop a regional vision for the 12 counties of Northeast Ohio.



The consortium completed its task in February when the NEOSCC Board voted unanimously to approve and endorse the *Vibrant NEO 2040 Vision, Framework and Action Products*. The vision calls for reinvesting in Northeast Ohio's aging established urban centers and stemming new outward development. Crafted over three years, the vision is based on engagement with residents, elected officials, and experts throughout the 12-county region using a rigorous scenario planning process.

The document defines the realities ahead for the region if present land use and development policies are unchanged. It also offers nine recommendations for the present that the region can pursue to help create a Northeast Ohio that is more vibrant, resilient, and sustainable in the future. To view these recommendations, please click [here](#).

AMATS was one of the key leadership organizations of the 33-member group whose members were a unique mix of communities, county governments, planning agencies and various civic-oriented groups. Among the group's earliest leaders was AMATS Director Jason Segedy. The director served as vice chairman of the NEOSCC Board in 2014 and served in various leadership capacities during the consortium's three-year span, including a term as the NEOSCC Board chairman in 2012.



SEGEDY

Engineering

Transportation Improvement Program

In January, the AMATS Policy Committee approved 39 projects totaling nearly \$29 million in new project funding. Committee approval capped off an exhaustive selection process that began in late 2013 when the agency began sifting through more than 133 applications from project sponsors throughout the Greater Akron area.

Those projects selected for funding reflect AMATS' emphasis on preserving the area's existing transportation system while pursuing new efficiency strategies as a means to stretch the area's federal transportation funding.

The committee approved nearly \$18 million in federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for a mix of 12 improvement projects to widen, reconstruct and re-route some of the area's most vital roadways. Some of the STP-funded projects incorporate such strategies as "road diets," i.e., lane reductions and various bike and pedestrian improvements to achieve systemic improvements.

Area bike and pedestrian projects also got a significant boost from the agency through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). Nearly \$4 million in TAP funds will go to 11 much-needed bike and pedestrian improvements throughout Portage and Summit counties.

The agency also approved nearly \$7 million in Resurfacing Program funds for 16 projects throughout the region. Among the notable projects to land funding were Phases 1 and 2 of the Village of Boston Heights' planned resurfacing of Olde Eight Road which received a commitment of nearly \$1.5 million from the agency. Other significant projects include:

- **\$5 million** for the re-routing of **state Route 59** in **Akron**.
- More than **\$3 million** for the intersection improvement of **Canton Road/state Route 91** in **Springfield Township** and the **Village of Lakemore**.
- **\$500,000** for Phase 2 of the **Headwaters Trail – Hiram Extension** in **Hiram Township**.
- **\$500,000** for Phase 3 of Metro Parks, Serving Summit County's **Freedom Trail** in **Akron**.
- **\$360,000** for the resurfacing of **Prospect Street** in **Rootstown** and **Ravenna townships**.

A complete listing of projects is available on the AMATS web site at amatsplanning.org.



Engineering Activities

2011-2013 Crash Report

In September, the agency released the *2011-2013 Crash Report*. The latest three-year crash report presented evidence that an 11-year trend of declining crash totals for the Greater Akron area may be reversing. The report identified 51,361 crashes in the area between 2011 and 2013. There were 17,143 crashes in 2011, a sizable drop to 16,778 in 2012 and a jump to 17,440 in 2013. The area's crash totals have been trending down since 2002 and appear to have hit their nadir in 2009 when slightly more than 16,000 were documented. Agency officials suspect that the increase in crash totals may be due to the region's economy stabilizing and more people driving.



AMATS relies on its crash reports to identify needed projects throughout the area. For the *2011-2013 Crash Report*, the agency identified 124 high-crash roadway sections and 271 high-crash intersections in the region. The inclusion of bike and pedestrian crashes in the report was a first for the agency and represents an acknowledgement by planning officials to address the safety of cyclists and pedestrians as cycling and walking increase in popularity. Among the report's findings were that:

- The area's intersections account for 46 percent of total crashes during the three-year period with roadway sections and freeways accounting for nearly 38 percent and 16 percent respectively.
- Just as with overall crash totals, the number of crashes that resulted in injuries through the period followed a similar pattern of increases and declines. There were 4,394 crashes with injuries in 2011, a drop to 4,347 in 2012 and then a jump to 4,510 in 2013.
- Alcohol was a factor in over 4 percent of all area crashes, but was a factor in nearly 16 percent of all fatal crashes.
- Akron is home to the top three highest ranked high-crash roadway sections and six of the highest ranked high-crash intersections.

Traffic Counting Program

On-Road Counts

The collection of traffic count data is integral to sound transportation planning. During the summer, the agency compiles data regarding traffic volumes on Greater Akron area roadways and intersections for use in many of its analyses and the evaluation of new projects. In 2014, the agency conducted 175 counts at various roadway segments and at four intersections.

According to findings compiled by the agency during the 2014 traffic counting season, there has been a 1 percent increase in total Average Daily Traffic compared to 2010 or earlier, which indicates that area traffic levels have remained relatively stable over the last several years.

Outreach

Annual Meeting

With its theme of *The Importance of Place*, the 2014 AMATS Annual Meeting drew more than 220 attendees to the Sheraton Suites Akron Cuyahoga Falls in October. The day's featured speakers were authors Peter Kageyama and David Giffels, and Josh McManus, the former Akron program director of The Knight Foundation.

Akron-native Kageyama is the author of *For the Love of Cities*, a book about the emotional connections that people have with their communities and the benefits that communities can reap when they are able to tap into those connections. Giffels is the award-winning author of *The Hard Way on Purpose*, a collection of essays about his coming of age in Akron and the Rust Belt. Giffels shared his thoughts on regional identity and what it means to those that call the Greater Akron area their home.

McManus spoke about economic and demographic trends occurring in other post-industrialized cities, such as Detroit, that could similarly occur in the Greater Akron area. These changes will affect how communities attract talent and create opportunities.

Pdfs and videos of annual meeting presentations and the panel discussion are available for viewing in their entirety on the AMATS web site at amatsplanning.org and on YouTube at [AMATSPanning](#).



KAGEYAMA



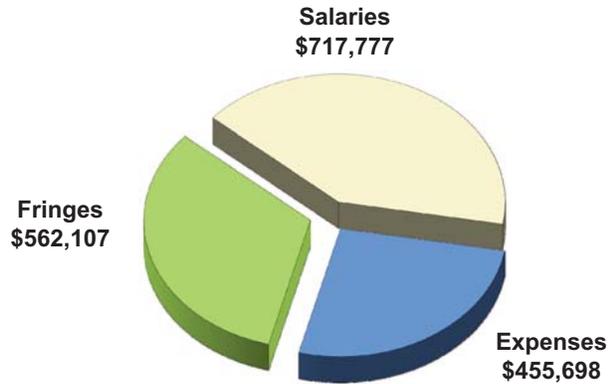
GIFFELS

AUTHOR! AUTHOR!
 Authors David Giffels, left, and Peter Kageyama, right, participated in a panel discussion during the 2014 AMATS Annual Meeting. Both have roots in the Greater Akron area and shared their insights as to how love for a community and regional identity can be powerful motivators of citizens when tapped by civic leaders.

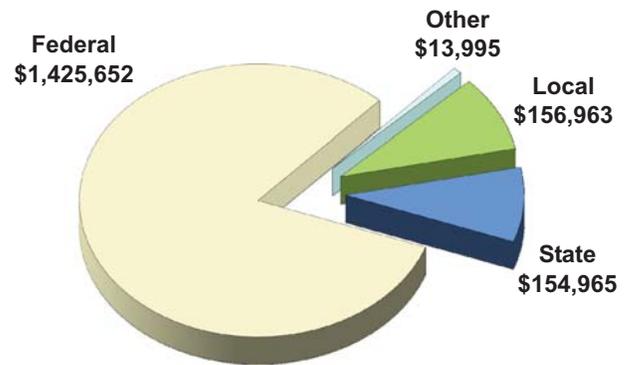


AMATS Financial Data for Fiscal Year 2014

Expenditures by Type



Revenues by Type



2014 Policy Committee Members

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Mayor David G. Kline
Vice Chairman -
Mr. Gene Roberts

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AURORA - Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin
BARBERTON - Mayor William B. Judge, Jr.
BOSTON HEIGHTS - Mayor Bill Goncy
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GARRETTSVILLE - Mayor Rick Patrick
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HIRAM - Mayor Lou Bertrand
HUDSON - Mayor William A. Currin
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LAKEMORE - Mayor Rick Justice

MACEDONIA - Mayor Don Kuchta
MANTUA - Mayor Linda S. Clark
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MUNROE FALLS - Mayor Frank Larson
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ODOT - Anthony M. Urankar
PARTA - Rick Bissler
PENINSULA - Mayor Douglas G. Mayer
PORTAGE COUNTY -
Commissioner Maureen Frederick
PORTAGE COUNTY -
Commissioner Sabrina Christian-Bennett
PORTAGE COUNTY -
Commissioner Kathleen Chandler
PORTAGE COUNTY -
Engineer Michael Marozzi
RAVENNA - Mayor Joseph Bica, Jr.

REMINDEVILLE - Mayor Sam K. Alonso
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RITTMAN - City Manager Larry Boggs
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STOW - Mayor Sara L. Drew
STREETSBORO - Mayor Glenn Broska
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Engineer Alan Brubaker
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Please visit our web site at: www.amatsplanning.org

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