



# AMATS

THE GREATER AKRON AREA'S TRANSPORTATION JOURNAL

January - June 2016

Volume 5, Issue 1

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**COVER:**

AMATS recently completed its 2016 Freight Plan, an in-depth analysis of the Greater Akron area's existing freight system. To find out what it means for the upcoming Regional Transportation Plan, turn to page 2.

## 2016 Freight Plan carries vision for region's freight system

The movement of freight is part and parcel of AMATS' transportation planning responsibilities in the Greater Akron area. The agency recently completed its *2016 Freight Plan*, a comprehensive analysis of the area's existing freight system that presents various multi-modal recommendations for the upcoming long-range Regional Transportation Plan.



The *2016 Freight Plan* identifies transportation systems that are used to move freight into, out of, and within the region. The plan identifies freight movement issues and recommends broad strategies and specific projects to improve the movement of freight throughout the area's transportation network. The plan also presents ways to improve planning procedures for data collection, modeling and system performance measures for freight-related projects. (Such projects include bridge replacements, operational improvements, grade separations, and connections to air cargo.)

AMATS Transportation Planner Jeff Gardner says that the agency began developing the plan in September. "It's based on input from our committee members and includes many of their ideas to improve the efficiency, speed and safety of freight transport through our region," Gardner adds. Although there are recommendations to improve the region's rail lines, the new plan - like the previous version adopted in 2012 - identifies improvements to the highway system as the region's highest freight-oriented priority need. Major corridors for truck-freight movement in the AMATS area include state Route 8 and Interstates 76, 77, 80, 271 and 480.

Among the plan's highway recommendations for the region are to:

- Improve high rated congestion locations, emphasizing areas with high truck traffic.
- Improve and modernize Akron's Central Interchange (I-76/I-77/state Route 8), such as the current project to improve the I-76 westbound to I-77 southbound ramp.
- Continue planned improvements to I-76 across the AMATS area.
- Add a truck lane to I-77 northbound in the Bath Township-Richfield area.
- Improve the I-77/state Route 21/state Route 18 Interchange.

Among the plan's rail recommendations for the region are to:

- Address safety and congestion issues at railroad crossings by recommending grade separation projects.
- Maintain rail lines owned by METRO RTA and make them available to local industry.
- Preserve out of service rail lines for future rail use or conversion to bike and pedestrian trails.
- Consider public/private partnerships with rail companies to improve freight service and reduce congestion-related delays in the area.

The plan includes several specific recommendations to improve rail-highway grade separations at the Hines Hill and Stow Road crossings of the Norfolk-Southern Line in Hudson and the North Main Street (state Route 91) crossing of the CSX Line in Munroe Falls. To view the *2016 Freight Plan*, please click [here](#).

## 2016 will be a record year for AMATS-funded projects

This year will be a high water mark for funding of transportation projects in the Greater Akron area. For the first time in its 54-year history, AMATS has programmed nearly \$35 million for various highway, bike and pedestrian projects throughout the region.

AMATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Coordinator Victor Botosan says that the record funding level was accomplished through the agency's pursuit of two strategies: The "over-programming" of projects in the region's four-year TIP and trading funds with other metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in Ohio that were not fully utilizing all of their funds.

"Over-programming' puts us in a position to obtain funding for additional projects beyond our available funding. That may sound contradictory, but that allows us to put projects on the radar of the state and federal governments by including them in our TIP. If funds become available, then we have a better chance of landing them," Botosan explains.

Federal funding recently became available for these over-programmed projects through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Surface Transportation Program, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program and Transportation Alternatives Program. The region is also reaping the benefits of nearly \$7.5 million in trades that AMATS made with several of its sister MPOs across Ohio in recent years, which were lean ones for many agencies in terms of project funding. These funding trades will support projects in the Greater Akron area. The result of this funding influx is that the agency can now fund 36 projects throughout the region. Botosan notes that most of the nearly \$35 million in funding will be used for highway projects with the largest portion being dedicated to preserving and maintaining the region's existing system of roadways.

"Some pretty significant projects are going to benefit from this funding. The East Summit Street project in Kent will receive more than \$6 million and a project to re-route the state Route 59 Innerbelt in Akron will receive \$5 million. There are also sidewalk projects in Akron and the Village of Hiram that will receive a boost," Botosan says. A complete listing of 2016 projects is available on the AMATS web site by clicking [here](#).

### **SWEEPING UP:**

Kent's East Summit Street project, shown at right in mid-July, is one of 36 in the Greater Akron area to benefit from 2016's funding influx. Spanning from South Lincoln Street to Loop Road, the project received more than \$6 million for construction. To view our YouTube feature, *A Record Year*, please click [here](#).



## Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes! Connecting Communities updated for new funding round

The 13 applicants to AMATS' Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program found themselves seeking funds from a changed program this year. The increasingly popular program provides funding for studies by Greater Akron area communities and other would-be sponsors that promote communitywide connectivity and livability through walking, cycling and public transit.

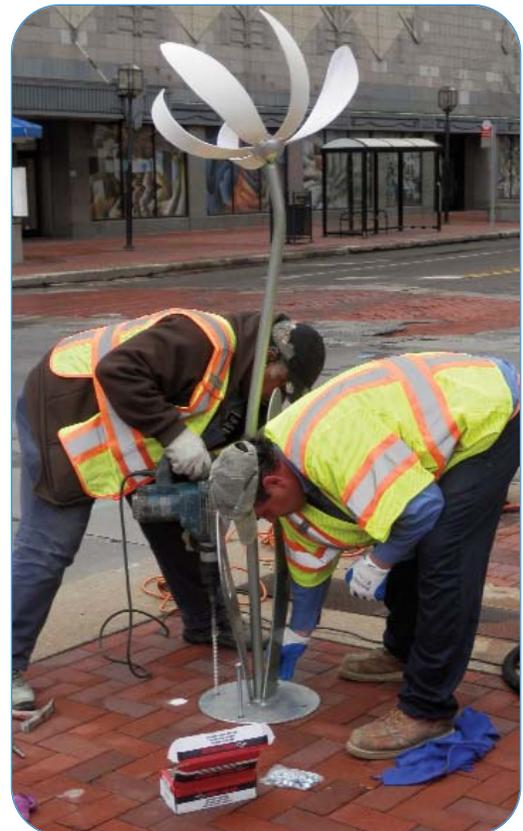
In the spring, the agency's Connecting Communities Task Force - which screens project applications to the program on behalf of the AMATS Policy Committee - gave the go-ahead to several significant changes to the program's application and scoring criteria. These changes are intended to encourage communities to provide greater commitments to more focused projects.

One change presented itself early in this year's application process. For the first time in the program's four-year history, communities were required to approve and submit legislation committing themselves to their respective projects. In terms of scoring, points are now awarded on a sliding scale for matching funds that communities commit to projects. Additional points are offered as incentives to communities that seek fewer grant dollars. Anticipated level of use to gauge the impacts of projects is another new criterion approved by the task force.

Communities from across Portage and Summit counties and other entities are among this year's program applicants. The task force will issue its final funding recommendations to the Policy Committee in the coming weeks and a vote by the full committee is expected during its July meeting.



**RACKING 'EM UP:** City of Akron work crews installed 17 artistic bike racks throughout downtown Akron in early May thanks to the efforts of AMATS, Akron, the Downtown Akron Partnership, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The racks encourage bike travel throughout downtown. Above and at right, work crews plant flowers near Akron's Lock 3 entertainment area. To view our YouTube feature, *Biking with Character*, please click [here](#).



## Community Focus: New Franklin

*Community Focus* presents information about communities within the Greater Akron area. The area that became the city of New Franklin has been a member of AMATS since June 1963.

**Founded** – The area, originally known as Franklin Township, was founded in 1817. A two-square mile Village of New Franklin within the township was formed in 1997. In 2003, residents voted to merge the township and village officially becoming a city in 2006.

**Population** – 14,227 (2010 U.S. Census Bureau)     **Area** – 26.68 square miles

**Policy Committee Member** – Mayor Al Bollas

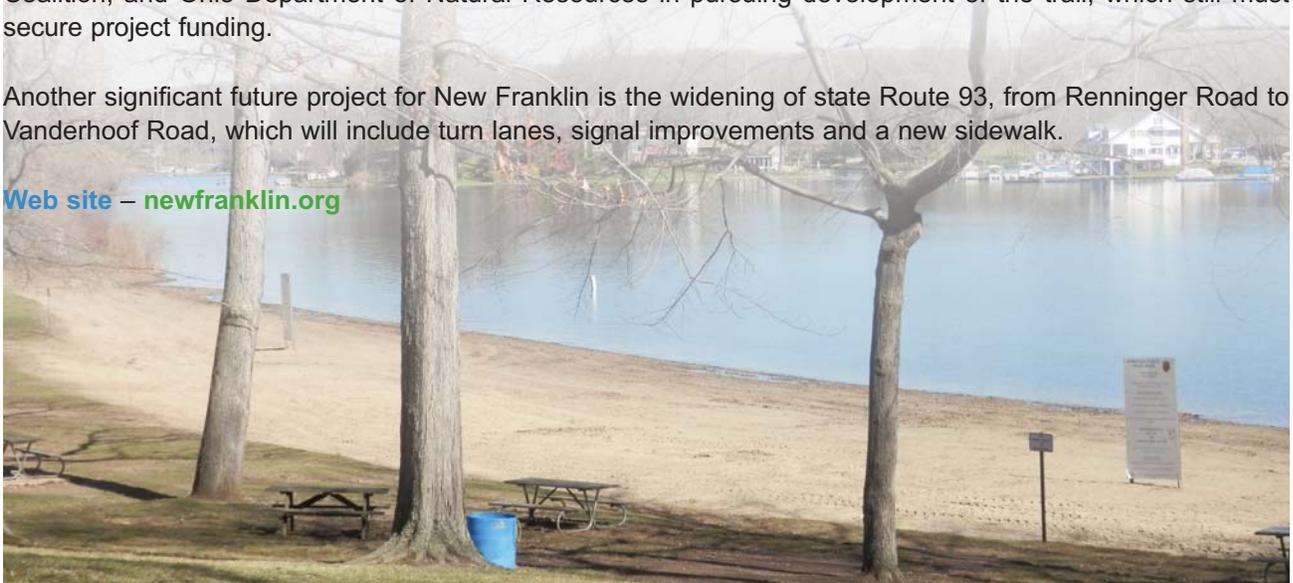
**History** – The Treaty of Fort McIntosh made it possible for the portion of Franklin Township lying east of the Tuscarawas River to be surveyed in 1800. The nearby Tuscarawas River afforded travel with the southern portion of the state while Turkeyfoot Lake attracted many hunters, trappers and fishermen. Today, this lake is part of the Portage Lakes State Park, which draws hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. After the Ohio and Erie Canal was built through the township in the 1820s, many grist mills and saw mills were constructed. Beginning with the 1940s and 1950s, Franklin Township became known as a “bedroom community” consisting mainly of housing allotments and few retail businesses or industrial areas.

**Transportation Challenges** – State Route 93 (Manchester Road) bisects the city in a north-south direction and is intersected by state Route 619 (West Turkeyfoot Lake Road), which extends in an east-west direction in the northeastern portion of the city. Significant roadways traversing New Franklin include Caston, Center, Comet, Nimisila and Vanderhoof roads

Improving bicycle and pedestrian access is a priority for New Franklin, according to Mark Kochheiser, the city’s zoning and planning coordinator. The Towpath Trail/Portage Lakes State Park Connector Trail is a key piece of the city’s access improvement strategy. The connector trail will extend along state Route 93, from Renninger Road to Tait Road to Vanderhoof Road, and will provide sidewalks and bike lanes within one of the city’s main business districts. The connector trail will also provide additional access to the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail at the Vanderhoof Road and Vanderhoof Towpath trailheads. New Franklin Mayor Al Bollas says that the city is partnering with the city of Green, the Summit County Engineer’s office, the Ohio and Erie Canal Coalition, and Ohio Department of Natural Resources in pursuing development of the trail, which still must secure project funding.

Another significant future project for New Franklin is the widening of state Route 93, from Renninger Road to Vanderhoof Road, which will include turn lanes, signal improvements and a new sidewalk.

**Web site** – [newfranklin.org](http://newfranklin.org)



## Project Updates

The following table lists significant projects that were awarded between Oct. 22, 2015 and June 22, 2016.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	AMOUNT
<b>State Route 225</b> - Resurfacing, from state Route 14 to Interstate 76, in Deerfield Township.	07/17/2016	\$772,956
<b>West Side Signals</b> - Signal improvements and new curb ramps at Cleveland Avenue, Diamond Street, Highland Avenue and Sycamore Street in Ravenna.	08/22/2016	\$394,533
<b>Arlington Road</b> - Resurfacing, from Killian Road to Krumroy Road, and turn lane and signal improvements at Warner Road in Coventry and Springfield townships.	12/05/2016	\$2,525,579
<b>Bank Street</b> - Bridge replacement in Akron.	09/23/2016	\$874,000
<b>Brittain Road</b> - Major signal improvement project, from East Market Street to Eastwood Avenue, Akron.	07/11/2016	\$994,011
<b>Cedar and Exchange Streets</b> - Reduction to two lanes on Cedar Street, from Exchange Street to Broadway, and Exchange Street, from Main Street to Rhodes Avenue, in Akron. Project includes signal improvements, new bike lanes and crosswalks.	05/08/2017	\$10,546,256
<b>Cleveland-Massillon Road</b> - First phase of widening, from Pleasant Drive to Greenridge Road, in Norton.	11/30/2016	\$2,022,555
<b>Copley Road</b> - Signal improvements, from Collier Road to Glendale Avenue, in Akron.	09/29/2016	\$1,723,545
<b>Interstates 76 and 77</b> - Reconstruction of Main/Broadway Interchange by changing the access points of the Main/Broadway and Grant/Wolf Ledges interchanges, in Akron.	07/31/2020	\$84,228,886
<b>Interstate 480</b> - Resurfacing from the Cuyahoga County Line to the Portage County Line, through Macedonia, Twinsburg, and Hudson.	08/01/2016	\$1,755,027
<b>Interstate 76-Main/Broadway</b> - Building demolitions in the area of the Main/Broadway Interchange project.	07/01/2016	\$1,666,837
<b>Akron Innerbelt</b> - Re-routing and re-purposing the Akron Innerbelt (state Route 59) from a grade-separated, limited-access facility to adjacent surface arterial streets, Dart and Rand avenues, in Akron.	12/15/2017	\$16,266,599
<b>North Avenue</b> - Reconstruction and various turn lane and sidewalk improvements along North Avenue (state Route 91), from Tallmadge Circle to Garwood Drive, in Tallmadge.	05/26/2017	\$4,516,574

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PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	AMOUNT
<b>State Route 91</b> - Various improvements at state Route 91 and Norton Road intersection. Project includes widening, new turn lanes and a bridge replacement.	09/15/2017	\$6,010,720
<b>North Main Street</b> - Resurfacing, from state Route 303 to Clinton and Aurora streets, in Hudson. Project includes sidewalk and signal upgrades.	07/07/2017	\$4,413,011
<b>State Route 303</b> - Resurfacing, from the Peninsula West Corporate Line to the Boston Heights East Corporate Line, in the villages of Peninsula and Boston Heights. Project includes bridge repairs.	09/01/2016	\$793,630
<b>Market Street</b> - Signal improvements on Market Street (state Route 18), from Portage Path to Summit Street, in Akron.	10/31/2016	\$1,853,756
<b>Seiberling Way</b> - Demolition of “Micropoise” property, from Englewood Avenue to Eagle Street, in Akron.	09/30/2016	\$769,766
<b>Tallmadge Avenue</b> - Signal improvements, from Home Avenue to Brittain Road, in Akron.	11/28/2016	\$754,614
<b>White Pond Parkway</b> - Construction of a new roadway, west of White Pond Drive and across from First Energy Drive, in Akron.	10/28/2016	\$1,482,202
<b>Interstate 76</b> - Complete pavement replacement, from the Medina County Line to Wooster Road (state Route 619), and widening to six lanes, from state Route 21 to Wooster Road, in Norton and Barberton.	07/31/2019	\$77,027,444

**WANT SOME PLANNING WITH YOUR COFFEE?:**

In early June, the Knight Foundation hosted Gil Penalosa, the founder of the Toronto-based urban planning non-profit, 80 Cities. Penalosa made a June 9 presentation at the Akron Civic Theatre entitled, *Inspiring a More Livable Akron: Moving From Talking to Doing*.

A June 10 “pop-up” coffee shop, shown at right, was part of the events marking Penalosa’s visit.



## Dates to Remember

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Committee/Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
July 4	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - July 4th Holiday
July 14	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom A
July 21	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom A
August 3	6 p.m.	CIC	ACOT, 571 W. Tuscarawas Ave., Barberton
September 5	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Labor Day
September 15	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom A
September 22	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom A
October 7	8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Annual Meeting	Sheraton Suites Akron Cuyahoga Falls
October 10	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Columbus Day
November 11	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Veterans Day
November 17	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Determined
November 24-25	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Thanksgiving
December 8	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom A
December 15	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom A
December 26	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Christmas Day

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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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.