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COVER:

The theme of the 2014 AMATS Annual Meeting was "The Importance of Place" and how people's emotional attachments to their home communities can be a great motivator for civic improvement.



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The 2014 AMATS Annual Meeting**

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The Right Time, The Right ‘Place’ - The 2014 AMATS Annual Meeting

The theme of mid-October’s 2014 AMATS Annual Meeting, The Importance of Place, evoked a surprising question. And that question didn’t concern Geographic Information Systems, city limits, maps or even aerial photos.

The question posed to the more than 220 attendees at this year’s annual meeting concerned love and relationships. It even broached the subject of “love notes.”

Usually such questions are the domain of radio call-in shows, but the day’s featured speaker, author Peter Kageyama, asked a straightforward question of those that gathered at the Sheraton Suites Akron Cuyahoga Falls. “Do you love your city?” Kageyama asked.

Possibly a surprising question to an audience that in all likelihood is more accustomed to dealing with seemingly mundane day-to-day questions concerning federal funding programs and project phases, but Kageyama explained the link between people loving the places that they call home and planning for better communities.

The Akron native is the author of *For the Love of Cities*, a tome about “lovable cities” and the emotional connections that people have with some places versus others and the benefits that communities can reap when they are able to tap into that emotional connection. Kageyama observed that communities and their residents are in a relationship of sorts.

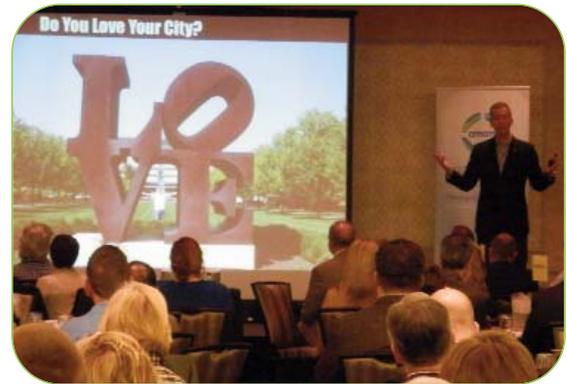
“We have these highly examined personal-professional relationships and we spend lots of time writing on them. When was the last time that we stopped and thought about the relationship that we have with our place? Probably not at all and, like any unexamined relationship, it can go stale, it can go bad,” Kageyama said.

Once people recognize that they are in a type of relationship with their communities, then the next step should be to modify their behavior. A good start would be realizing that a relationship implies a two-way conversation. In this case, it is a conversation between those who sit on the official side of city-making and those who are its citizens. “Many of you sit on both sides of that relationship,” Kageyama said of his audience.

With the recognition that it was highly likely that most in the audience love their cities – especially as they were there to hear from an author who wrote about the subject – Kageyama said that it was incumbent upon those present to be “emotional standard-bearers” to those who don’t feel the same way. He explained to this audience that, as many of them are “thought leaders” in their respective communities, others pay attention to not only what they say, but to how they behave.

“If you are feeling reticent or apprehensive or a little bit down about this place, other people are going to feel it. But, if you’re excited and upbeat and positive and looking forward to what’s next, people are going to feel that as well,” Kageyama continued, “How we feel about a place matters because emotions are contagious.”

A positive emotional outlook towards a place can create a “virtuous cycle of spiraling up as opposed to spiraling down,” he added. Based on his travels around the world, Kageyama noticed that there are universal features about communities that people hate: traffic, parking and, quite possibly most of all, the dreaded pothole.



LOVE - EXCITING AND NEW: Author Peter Kageyama, standing, talked about how peoples’ emotional attachment to their cities can be a catalyst for action during the AMATS Annual Meeting.

People know to ask their community leaders to fix such things. Potholes get repaired with little fanfare and life goes on. What people don't think to ask their leaders about are things such as beauty, art, fun, whimsy and design, according to Kageyama.

"You need to understand that people actually expect something more from us than merely fixing potholes. Because, let's face it, if it is just about fixing potholes, paved roads and basic police and fire service, then there is nothing that distinguishes one place from another and clearly that is not the case," Kageyama said.

The author urged those present to identify the characteristics and features that they love about their cities that make them unique. Kageyama explained that such things are "love notes" that residents emotionally attach to their communities. Love notes can be a powerful catalyst to spur a community into action for events and various projects to promote a community's sense of self. He cited examples of small, medium and large cities where people came together for various events to celebrate their homes. Those events led to subtle changes in those cities' perception of themselves and, in turn, their marketing, planning and development. Many of the events were simple ideas that blossomed into unique happenings.

One such example was a woman in Durham, North Carolina who loved her hometown so much that someone once told her that "she should marry Durham." She did. So did more than 1,600 brides and grooms in a March 2011 "civic union" in which they professed their love for Durham and took an oath of commitment to the city. The oath included promises to keep the city's streets clean and safe, to support local arts and culture, to buy locally, to protect the environment, and to vote responsibly. Other love note examples included efforts in New York City to make its landmark area, Times Square, more pedestrian friendly. Before pedestrian and sit-down areas with WiFi were set up, New Yorkers tended to pass through the area with blinders on. Now, there are spots where residents – not just tourists - can savor the sights and sounds of The Great White Way.

If Kageyama got people thinking about love notes and relationships with cities, his fellow author, David Giffels, gave the audience reasons to cherish being from a Rust Belt city with a trip down memory lane. 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 Midwest's Rust Belt. The agency invited the author to share his thoughts on regional identity and what it means to those that call the Greater Akron area their home. To view his presentation, click [here](#).

Giffels spoke about the Akron area's seeming "desperation of place" to carve out a unique identity for itself distinct from its larger northern neighbor, Cleveland, which has led to a rivalry of sorts between the two cities. This desperation has led the area to grasp at ridiculous claims of being the inventors of the hamburger and embracing with pride the title of "most swearing region" in the country, according to a recent report. It has also led to inhabitants developing a diehard devotion to such local icons as the Goodyear blimp and LeBron James.

The Knight Foundation's former Akron program director, Josh McManus, was another speaker during the meeting. McManus spoke about economic and demographic trends occurring in other post-industrialized cities – most notably Detroit – that could similarly impact the future of the Greater Akron area. Changes are underway that will impact how communities attract talent and create opportunities. Many of these changes are rooted in the "craving of authenticity of place" among those under 35, according to McManus. To view his presentation, click [here](#).



GIFFELS

AMATS Director Jason Segedy said that the audience's reaction to this year's annual meeting has been overwhelmingly positive. "We have been focusing on the importance of creating connected, lovable places, and these speakers were a good fit," Segedy commented.

Community Focus: Twinsburg

Community Focus presents information about communities within the Greater Akron area. Located in northeastern Summit County, the city of Twinsburg has been a member of AMATS since February 1970.

Founded – The area was originally named Millsville in 1817. Two years later the community was renamed “Twinsburg” at the behest of identical twins, Moses and Aaron Wilcox, following their efforts to settle the area.



Population – 18,795 (2010 U.S. Census Bureau) **Area** – 13.75 square miles

Policy Committee Member – Mayor Katherine Procop

History – The Wilcox twins moved to the community in 1823. After establishing their homestead, they began selling land for settlement. Early trade and industry in the community was centered on farming and exploitation of the area’s natural resources including stone, lumber and water power.

In 1957, industrial development arrived in Twinsburg when the Chrysler Corporation erected a stamping plant on East Aurora Road. Shortly after this development, the interstate highway system wound its way to the area. Interstate 480 enabled quick access to the community and its vacant developable land. Although Chrysler no longer operates facilities in Twinsburg, the city’s tax base has continued to grow and diversify. Manufacturing remains its largest employer followed closely by health care and education.

Transportation Challenges – The employment centers and neighborhoods of Twinsburg are served by a well-developed roadway network. Twinsburg Planning and Community Development Director Larry Finch says that, while no new arterial or connector road construction is anticipated, the existing network requires substantial improvements to deal with current demands for congestion mitigation, pedestrian safety, bicycle safety and multi-modal integration. Central Twinsburg has been the subject of planning efforts to accommodate mixed-use development and enhance the area’s walkability. Finch says that these efforts are continuing with assessments of potential new mixed use development, quadrant connectors, and application of complete streets standards.

He adds that state Route 91 (Darrow Road) is impacted by congestion and high-accident frequency. I-480, which off-ramps to Darrow Road, also suffers from congestion issues. North of the city’s Public Square and Ravenna Road, Darrow Road is limited to two travel lanes with congestion frequently occurring at peak hours from this area to Twinsburg’s Northern Corporate Line. Finch notes that the northern portion of the Darrow Road corridor is being widened and improved over the next few years to include a roundabout at the intersection of Darrow Road and Glenwood Drive. Additionally, the city is in the process of evaluating the benefits of widening Darrow Road to three lanes, from Ravenna Road north to the Tinkers Creek Bridge.

The redevelopment of the former Chrysler plant as Cornerstone Business Park will require a new interior access road, which is currently under construction. Cornerstone Boulevard will intersect with state Route 82 (East Aurora Road) east of Chamberlin Road. The boulevard will connect with the existing Cornerstone Parkway, which runs west to intersect with Chamberlin Road. A new signal will be provided at the East Aurora Road intersection.

Twinsburg also has goals to expand and improve its existing multi-purpose trail network and is cooperating with adjacent communities of Glen Willow, Reminderville and Twinsburg Township to add connections to other trail networks outside the city.

Web site – www.mytwinsburg.com

Project Updates

The following table lists significant projects that have been awarded between May 20, 2014 to November 25, 2014.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	AMOUNT
Highland Avenue/Diamond Street - Resurfacing of Highland Avenue, from Sycamore/Cleveland Street to Diamond Street, and Diamond Street, from Highland Avenue to Mill Street, in Ravenna.	10/01/2015	\$282,847
State Route 5 - Resurfacing and repair of six bridges on state Route 5, from Riddle Road to the Trumbull County Line, in Ravenna, Charlestown and Paris townships.	07/31/2015	\$3,709,373
State Route 14 - Minor rehabilitation and bridge repair on state Route 14, from the Ravenna Corporate Line to Tallmadge Road, in Ravenna and Edinburg townships.	07/01/2015	\$4,203,868
Interstates 76 and 77 - Demolition of 30 structures along Interstates 76 and 77 west of the Main Street/Broadway and Grant Street/Wolf Ledges Interchanges in Akron.	12/31/2015	\$1,587,599
Quick Road - Resurfacing, from the Cuyahoga Falls Corporate Line to Akron-Peninsula Road, in Boston Township.	05/29/2015	\$1,691,479
Robinson Avenue - Resurfacing, from Van Buren Avenue to Fifth Street, in Barberton.	05/29/2015	\$489,200
State Route 8 - Resurfacing, from the Northfield Corporate Line to the Cuyahoga County Line, in Northfield Village.	10/01/2014	\$652,458
State Route 261 - Resurfacing, from the Tallmadge West Corporate Line to state Route 91 (Tallmadge Circle), in Tallmadge.	06/30/2015	\$536,260
State Route 93 (Manchester Road) - Resurfacing and repair of four bridges at various locations along state Route 93 in New Franklin and Coventry Township.	07/31/2015	\$1,491,429
Swinehart Avenue Bridge - Replacement of bridge spanning Mud Run Ditch in Akron.	12/29/2014	\$692,935

Number of Greater Akron area crashes slowly increasing in latest report

The number of crashes on Greater Akron area roadways, intersections and freeways increased slightly in 2011 and 2013 reversing an 11-year trend of declining crash totals for the region, according to the latest three-year analysis compiled by AMATS.

The agency's analysis identified 51,361 crashes in the area between 2011 and 2013. There were 17,143 crashes in 2011, a significant drop to 16,778 in 2012 and a jump to 17,440 in 2013. AMATS Transportation Engineer Dave Pulay says that 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. "They have been slowly creeping back up since then. This may be due to the region's economy stabilizing and more people driving," Pulay observes.



As the agency responsible for transportation planning in Portage and Summit counties and a portion of Wayne County, AMATS uses this information to identify needed projects throughout the area. Communities rely on the report when applying for Highway Safety Program funds through the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). For its most recent analysis, the agency identified 124 high-crash roadway sections and 271 high-crash intersections in the region. AMATS prepares its reports based on crash records provided by the Ohio Department of Public Safety. The analysis of freeway crashes was done by ODOT.

Pulay notes that the inclusion of bike and pedestrian crashes in this report is a first for the agency. This is an acknowledgement by planning officials to address the safety of cyclists and pedestrians as cycling and walking increase in popularity. Among the findings of the analysis are:

- Akron is home to the top three highest ranked high-crash roadway sections and six of the highest ranked high-crash intersections in the region. In Portage County, the highest ranked high-crash intersection remains state Routes 14/303 and 43 in Streetsboro.
- Out of the 349 bicycle-related crashes that occurred during the period, 281 or nearly 80 percent resulted in an injury. Two crashes resulted in a fatality. Out of 488 pedestrian-related crashes during the period, 430 or 88 percent resulted in an injury. Thirteen resulted in a fatality.
- Alcohol was a factor in over 4 percent of all area crashes, but was a factor in nearly 16 percent of all fatal crashes.
- Eight freeway locations were identified by ODOT for further study. Of the eight locations, four are located on the Ohio Turnpike and four are near downtown Akron.
- 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.

The *2011-2013 Crash Report* and reports dating back to 2005 are available on the Reports page of the agency's web site.

Switching-Gears' Active Transportation Conference was a rolling good time

AMATS' Switching Gears Program hosted a successful Active Transportation Conference in the heart of Akron on June 26. The 135 conference attendees learned groundbreaking techniques on how to promote walking, biking and transit use in their communities and how to create vibrant neighborhoods.

The day included presentations by Jason Roberts of The Better Block project and Dave Cieslewicz, the executive director of Wisconsin Bike Fed and former mayor of Madison, Wisconsin. There were also "breakout sessions" on a variety of cycling and pedestrian-related topics.

The free one-day conference was part of AMATS' efforts to promote cycling and walking in the Greater Akron area. The conference highlighted successful policy and implementation strategies, as well as grassroots efforts, to create more walkable and bikeable communities, which foster economic growth, improve health and increase transportation options.

During their presentations in the Akron-Summit County Public Library auditorium, Roberts explained how Better Block can influence city policies and Cieslewicz described how Madison became a top bike-friendly community. Later, the conference moved to the nearby John S. Knight Center for lunch and how-to workshops on bike share programs, bike and pedestrian safety, and active transportation design.

At the end of the conference, the Switching-Gears Program hosted another of its increasingly popular Bike-N-Brainstorms. The route for the B-N-B was through downtown Akron. Following their ride, participants met in a brainstorming session to discuss how cycling can be improved in Akron. The Switching-Gears Program plans to hold additional B-N-Bs at yet-to-be-determined locations during 2015.

YOU CAN ALWAYS GO - DOWNTOWN:

The Bike-N-Brainstorm during June's Active Transportation Conference evoked a mix of suggestions from participants following their ride through downtown Akron. Bike storage stations, improved signage, repaving, and new bike lanes connecting to Portage Trail, Freedom Trail and Akron's Middlebury area were among the ideas offered by cyclists to AMATS.



TAKING THE REINS: Jason Roberts, on stage, of The Better Block project shares his insights on how to spur renewed interest in forgotten areas of American cities with a little effort, some dedication and available resources.



Dates to Remember

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Committee/Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
January 1	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - New Years Day
January 19	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Martin L. King Day
January 22	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
January 22	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Akron-Summit County Public Library
January 29	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
February 16	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Presidents' Day
March 19	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
March 26	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
April 16	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Determined
May 7	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom C
May 14	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom C
May 25	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Memorial Day
July 3	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - July 4th Holiday
July 16	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
July 16	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Determined
July 23	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
September 7	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Labor Day
September 17	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
September 24	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
October 12	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Columbus Day
October 16	8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Annual Meeting	Sheraton Suites Akron Cuyahoga Falls
November 11	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Veterans Day
November 19	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Determined
November 26-27	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Thanksgiving
December 10	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
December 17	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
December 25	*	*	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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