

# @AMATS

THE GREATER AKRON AREA'S TRANSPORTATION JOURNAL

July - December 2019

Volume 8, Issue 2

## Inside



2019 AMATS Annual Meeting - Funding Challenges Remain .....pages 3-4.

Howe Avenue Walking Tour .....page 5.

Back-to-Back B-N-Bs .....page 6.

Better Block Comes to Copley .....page 7.



Actively Planning for 2045  
- The New Active Transportation Plan  
.....page 2.

## Actively planning for 2045 - Introducing the region's new ATP

The new *2019 Active Transportation Plan (ATP)* prepared by AMATS presents the various strategies and recommendations that the Greater Akron area will pursue to improve the region's bicycling and pedestrian networks over the next 26 years.

Adopted by the AMATS Policy Committee during its Dec. 19 meeting, the ATP is the successor to the agency's *2016 Bike Plan* and *2015 Pedestrian Plan*. The ATP represents a more holistic planning approach by the agency with regards to the region's bicycle and pedestrian networks, according to AMATS Director Curtis Baker. The plan builds upon the foundations of the agency's previous reports while clarifying the strategies and defining the goals that AMATS will pursue to promote accessibility, efficiency and safety throughout the area's networks.

"We determined through various public outreach initiatives that many residents consider biking and walking to be desirable vibrant modes of travel, but not necessarily convenient or safe ones. The ATP is our first step to change that," Baker explains.

The plan presents the agency's vision of a region in which biking and walking are not only integral parts of daily life, but vital components of a first-class, multi-modal transportation system. The ATP will also be a key component of the agency's upcoming *Transportation Outlook 2045*, the long-range transportation plan for the region's highway, public transit and alternative transportation networks.

The ATP is divided into two sections devoted to the region's bicycling and pedestrian networks. Among the plan's more ambitious goals are its calls to promote zero-death targets for bicycle and pedestrian crashes and a 100 percent participation rate among area school districts in the Ohio Safe Routes to Schools Program. Other goals include investment targets for new bicycle, pedestrian and shared-use infrastructure and increased cooperation among project sponsors and the region's transit authorities, METRO RTA of Summit County and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA).

The ATP is available for viewing on the agency web site – [amatsplanning.org](http://amatsplanning.org) - and by clicking [here](#).



## Annual Meeting speakers warn funding challenges remain despite state help

On a crisp, sunny autumn morning in early October, more than 180 attendees gathered in the ballroom of the Sheraton Suites Akron Cuyahoga Falls for the 2019 AMATS Annual Meeting. The attendees were there not only to celebrate the planning agency's accomplishments over the past year, but to learn what's on the horizon for the Greater Akron area, state and nation with regards to transportation.

The Oct. 11 meeting began with a call to order by Policy Committee Chairwoman and Richfield Mayor Bobbie Beshara. During her comments welcoming attendees, the mayor recounted some of the agency's most significant accomplishments over the course of the year.

Making the agency's voice heard in Columbus regarding the need for new transportation revenue led the mayor's list of achievements by AMATS. The mayor proudly informed the attendees that state policymakers heeded the Policy Committee's March resolution endorsing Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's proposed increases in state fuel taxes as part of the state's two-year transportation budget. Before turning the podium over to AMATS Director Curtis Baker, the mayor noted that – while the estimated future preservation needs of the Greater Akron area through 2045 total nearly \$4 billion – those needs also represent a single region out of many across the nation that are striving for diminishing federal resources.

After thanking the event's record number of nine sponsors, Baker described the ongoing funding challenges that the agency faced during 2019, many of which will likely continue to mount as the current federal Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015 will expire in 2021. Baker added that, despite these challenges, the region witnessed the successful launch and completion of several significant projects and events within the region. The Main Street Redevelopment Project in Akron, Howe Avenue in Cuyahoga Falls, Cleveland-Massillon Road in Norton, and major improvements on state Routes 8, 18 and 91 were just some of AMATS' project success stories during the year. The agency also hosted several bike and pedestrian events throughout the region as part of its ongoing Connecting Communities and Bike-N-Brainstorm initiatives.

*Continued Next Page*

### GOOD CROWD:

Attendance at the 2019 AMATS Annual Meeting on Oct. 11 was robust. Agency officials say that this year's meeting in the Riverfront Ballroom West of the Sheraton Suites Cuyahoga Falls Akron garnered one of the largest turnouts in the last several years. To view scenes from the day's events, please view the accompanying slideshow at right.



*Continued from Page 3*

One of the day's two featured speakers, Dr. Jack Marchbanks, the director of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), announced that the state's new two-year transportation budget will provide much-needed infrastructure funding for the department and local governments across the state, including the Greater Akron area. Under the transportation budget signed by DeWine in April, ODOT will receive an additional \$450 million annually and local governments across the state will receive \$370 million annually. AMATS-area communities alone will see an expected increase from slightly less than \$21.3 million to more than \$34.7 million in state fiscal year 2021.

Despite this promising future regarding state transportation funding, Dr. Marchbanks added that other challenges – such as a potential rescission of about \$7.6 billion under the federal FAST Act – are looming. Marchbanks explained that rescissions allow the federal government to reduce the amount of funding appropriations provided to states by Congress as a method to obtain budgetary savings. The director noted that Ohio alone was initially facing the potential loss of \$243 million in federal funds under rescission next year, but due in large part to the efforts of state officials, that total has been reduced to \$86 million in the most recent continuing resolution of the FAST Act.

The American Association of State Highway, Transportation Officials (AASHTO) is urging Congress to repeal the FAST Act's rescission provision. Marchbanks – a member of the AASHTO Policy Board - urged the attendees to do likewise with their respective Congressional representatives. The director said that state officials have secured the support of Ohio's U.S. senators, Democrat Sherrod Brown and Republican Rob Portman, to seek the end of the act's rescission language and to halt a repeat of it in successor legislation.

The day's second and final featured speaker was Renato Camacho, the president and chief executive officer of the Akron-Canton Airport (CAK). Camacho – who recently marked his first year as head of the Green-based facility – described the airport's recent growth and its importance as a regional economic powerhouse. The airport generated an economic impact of more than \$1 billion and served 930,000 customers in 2018 alone. Camacho noted that many people are unaware that – although a public entity – the airport operates on its own revenue without using taxpayer dollars.

Situated on 2,400 acres in southern Summit County, CAK plans to keep growing in the future. The airport is working with ODOT to craft an air service development program similar to those in 19 other states and a gate modernization and expansion project is well underway. Improved amenities, new carriers, additional routes and – hopefully – more passengers, are all on the airport's horizon. "We're embarking on a five-year strategic plan and we're hyper-focused on that plan and on customer service," Camacho said.

Annual meeting presentations are available for viewing on our web site – [amatsplanning.org](http://amatsplanning.org) - and our YouTube channel – [AMATSPPlanning](#). Subscribing to our agency's channel is a great way to stay informed regarding transportation news in the Greater Akron area.

**Marchbanks****Camacho**

# Project Updates

The following table lists significant projects that were awarded between Dec. 15, 2018 and June 30, 2019.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	AMOUNT
<b>Various</b> - Two-year lighting maintenance and repair contract along various routes in Portage, Stark and Summit counties. Contract includes LED upgrades.	9/30/2021	\$1,788,394
<b>Various</b> - Guardrail maintenance and repair on various routes throughout the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) District 4 region.	9/30/2020	\$1,369,375
<b>Various</b> - Systematic guardrail maintenance and repair on various routes throughout ODOT District 4 region.	9/30/2020	\$1,221,125
<b>Interstate 77 and State Routes 21 and 176</b> - Resurfacing of portions of I-77 and state Routes 21 and 176. Project includes minor bridge work to several structures.	8/31/2020	\$6,043,893
<b>State Routes 18, 241 and 261</b> - Resurfacing portions of state Routes 18, 241 and 261 in Akron. Project includes minor work to 14 bridges.	8/30/2020	\$2,263,818
<b>Various</b> - Installation of raised pavement markers along various routes throughout ODOT District 4.	7/01/2020	\$120,000
<b>State Route 43</b> - Resurfacing of state Route 43, from Frost Road to North Corporate Line, in Streetsboro.	6/30/2020	\$480,262

## HOWE AVENUE WALKING TOUR:

Cuyahoga Falls Engineer Tony Demasi and Planning Director Fred Guerra led the AMATS staff on a tour of the Howe Avenue improvement project area on June 28. Phases 2 and 3 of the project were completed in October. Construction will be suspended during the winter and all lanes will be open to traffic. Construction resumes on the north side of Howe Avenue in spring 2020. AMATS programmed more than \$5.5 million in Surface Transportation Block Grant funds for the more than \$7 million project. To view scenes from the tour, click on the slideshow at right.





**BACK-TO-BACK B-N-Bs:**

AMATS hosted three of its popular Bike-N-Brainstorm events over the summer. Cyclists gathered in Hudson on June 1 and in Akron on June 15 and Sept. 6 to become active participants in regional transportation planning. Bike-N-Brainstorms or "B-N-Bs" are public meetings that include a bike ride and brainstorming session. During sessions, participants share their insights on how to improve biking and pedestrian access in a community.

During the Hudson Bike-N-Brainstorm, top, at right, participants rode along a 7-mile loop during which city officials described areas where Hudson is developing paved, multi-purpose trails along city roads. The middle photo shows the start of the Akron Bike-N-Brainstorm which took cyclists on a more than 5-mile loop through Akron's west side and included a portion of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. At bottom, Kenmore Boulevard was the site of the aptly named "Kenmore Bike-N-Sip" in September. Sponsored by AMATS, the city of Akron, and the Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance, the ride was part of the final summertime "Kenmore First Friday" event hosted by the alliance. Participants experienced the Kenmore Business District's new cycling and pedestrian amenities while sharing their thoughts on future improvements.

For more about the agency's B-N-Bs and its Switching Gears Program, please visit [Switching-Gears.org](http://Switching-Gears.org).





# COPLEY ROAD

## BETTER BLOCK

### BETTER BLOCK COMES TO COPLEY ROAD:

Akron's Copley Road, between Hawkins and Nome avenues, was reimagined as a neighborhood destination during the May 24-25 Better Block event. City of Akron officials, The Knight Foundation, Summit County Think Tank Coalition, and the Progressive Alliance CDC partnered with **The Better Block Foundation** for the event. AMATS participated in the event with personnel hosting a table to distribute information such as the agency's updated **Bike Map**.

The Better Block Foundation is a non-profit organization that educates, equips, and empowers communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments to promote the growth of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods. The site chosen for May's Better Block event was a strip of buildings in the Maple Valley district of West Akron along Copley Road. The district is home to long-standing local businesses, such as Hanini's Subs, Gino's Pizza, and barbershops and beauty salons. Community meetings and surveys found that residents harbor safety concerns and that the area's design is not conducive to people spending time on Copley Road, but rather, drive in and drive out.

During the event, all parking in front of the buildings was removed to create a public space. In the newly reclaimed space, three parklets provided seating for attendees and performance areas for local artists and bands. There was even café seating for people to relax and other temporary aesthetic changes such as string lights and plants.

From the top down, patrons enjoy the added walking space and chairs of Copley Road's storefronts; second from top, a few scenic planters provide safety while opening the area to foot traffic; and at right, a bike lane was one of the temporary amenities built to show the area's potential to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians.



## Dates to Remember

Date	Time	Committee/Event	Location
January 16	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Hilton Garden Inn
January 16	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Akron-Summit County Public Library - Main Library
January 20	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Martin Luther King Day
January 23	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Hilton Garden Inn
February 17	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Presidents Day
March 5	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Hilton Garden Inn
March 5	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Announced
March 11	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Hilton Garden Inn
May 6	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Hilton Garden Inn
May 7	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Announced
May 14	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Hilton Garden Inn
May 25	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Memorial Day
June 18	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Hilton Garden Inn
June 18	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Announced
June 25	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Hilton Garden Inn
July 3	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - July 4th Holiday

The City of Akron is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities are able to fully participate in public programs, services, and activities. Anyone who is in need of an accommodation from any City department is invited to contact Donald Rice, Director of Human Resources, 166 South High Street, Room 103, Akron, Ohio 44308, (voice) 330-375-2780 as soon as possible. If you require TDD phone service call Ohio Relay at 800-750-0750 and they will assist in contacting the Department of Human Resources at (330) 375-2780.

@AMATS is published by the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study, 161 S. High St., Suite 201, Akron, Ohio 44308  
Editorial comments are welcome.

Director - Curtis Baker

Editor/writer - Kerry Prater

Phone - 330-375-2436 / Fax - 330-375-2275

E-Mail - [amats@akronohio.gov](mailto:amats@akronohio.gov)

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.