



PROPOSAL: REDESIGNATING STATE ROUTE 8 AS INTERSTATE 380

Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS)

October 31, 2013

Why? State Route 8 has now been completed as a limited-access, multi-lane freeway between Akron's Central Interchange (I-76/77) and I-271 in Macedonia. It is tied with I-77 as Greater Akron's busiest freeway facility; and, carrying peak traffic volumes of nearly 120,000 vehicles per day, is comparable to some of the most-heavily traveled Interstate highways in the State of Ohio.

The freeway connects to four Interstate highways over its roughly 18-mile length: I-76, I-77, I-80, and I-271. It also provides a vital local linkage between Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, Stow, Hudson, Boston Heights, and Macedonia; and serves as a critical linkage between Summit County and Cleveland's eastern suburbs. It also provides a direct linkage between the City of Akron and the Ohio Turnpike.

The freeway deserves an Interstate designation, due to its high volume of traffic and its functional importance as one of the region's most vital, best-connected, and accessible roadways. Had State Route 8 been constructed exactly as it appears today (all at one time back in the 1960s) rather than in the piece-meal fashion that it was actually built in, it would have undoubtedly carried an Interstate designation from the very beginning. This proposal would give the freeway the prominence it deserves.

Redesignating State Route 8 as an Interstate highway is important for the following reasons:

- Improving wayfinding (via the familiar red, white, and blue Interstate shield), especially for visitors to the region and its many attractions, including: the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Blossom Music Center, and the University of Akron
- Benefitting businesses and enterprises located directly within the freeway corridor in terms of jobs and commerce, since an Interstate designation carries a subtle, but important message to clients, customers, and visitors that a business is located off of a "major highway".
- Raising the freeway's status (commensurate with its functional importance) with State and Federal officials that may be unfamiliar with our region, whom are charged with administrative and transportation funding decisions.

What? The proposal recommended by the AMATS staff is to redesignate State Route 8 as Interstate 380 between Akron's Central Interchange (I-76/77) and I-271 in Macedonia. Signage would need to be updated accordingly, but the roadway could continue to carry the State Route 8 designation (similar to the way that I-77 in Bath Township is also State Route 21) in order to help the public navigate and adapt to the change.

I-380 is the new name that we recommend for State Route 8. A three-digit interstate designation is appropriate in this case, as it is typically applied to local freeways that connect to longer-distance two-digit interstate highways within a metropolitan area.

Three digit interstates that directly connect a major city (Akron) with a long-distance Interstate (I-80, in this case) typically receive a designation that begins with an odd number (I-376 in Pittsburgh, for example). Interstate designations that begin with an even number are normally reserved for freeways that bypass a major city (I-271, for example).

Identical three-digit Interstate numbers can repeat from state-to-state (e.g. there is an I-275 in Ohio, and there is an I-275 in Michigan), but they cannot repeat within the same state. Currently, Ohio already has an I-280; I-480; and an I-680. It does not have an I-380.

State Route 8's redesignation as an Interstate highway could potentially have a positive impact on federal funding levels for roadway maintenance and improvement. It is not expected to have any negative impact on current maintenance responsibilities or law enforcement responsibilities. These responsibilities could stay exactly as they are today, unless the respective local governments and ODOT desire to change them.

How? There are two basic paths to having a freeway redesignated as an Interstate:

Administrative – this process would involve a request to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) from the state DOT (ODOT) and the MPO (AMATS). A case needs to be made that demonstrates why the highway should become part of the interstate system:

The FHWA may, at the request of a State or States, designate sections of the National Highway System (NHS) as Interstate Highway under Section 103(c)(4)(A), Title 23, United States Code (23 U.S.C.). The proposed section must:

- *Be built to Interstate standards and*
- *Be a logical addition to the System*

State Route 8 is currently part of the National Highway System (NHS) and meets both of these criteria.

Congressional – this process would involve support from the congressional representatives serving the corridor (Representatives Joyce, Fudge, and Ryan) and requires a legislative act of Congress to designate the corridor as an Interstate highway

Recommendation

The AMATS staff recommends redesignating State Route 8 as Interstate 380 between I-76/77 in Akron and I-271 in Macedonia. This memorandum has been transmitted to the local governments in the corridor (Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, Stow, Hudson, Boston Heights, the Summit County Engineer, and Macedonia) for their review and comment.

The local governments in the corridor concur with and support this recommendation. AMATS is seeking ODOT's support and co-sponsorship of this recommendation. AMATS is committed to working diligently and cooperatively with ODOT, local government officials, FHWA, and the U.S. Congress to complete the necessary legislative and regulatory actions in order to make this proposal a reality.