

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) is responsible for planning an efficient transportation system in the Akron metropolitan area. As part of the transportation planning process, AMATS prepares and maintains a long-term Regional Transportation Plan. *Transportation Outlook 2035 (TO2035)*, an update to *Transportation Outlook 2030*, is AMATS' Regional Transportation Plan which examines the current and future needs of the transportation system to develop policy and project recommendations. In order for transportation projects to receive federal funds they must be consistent with *TO2035*.

*TO2035* includes long-term highway, transit, bike and pedestrian project recommendations that are expected to be completed by 2035. The Plan also provides information on key issues in the region, such as population and demographics, transportation funding and alternative modes of transportation.

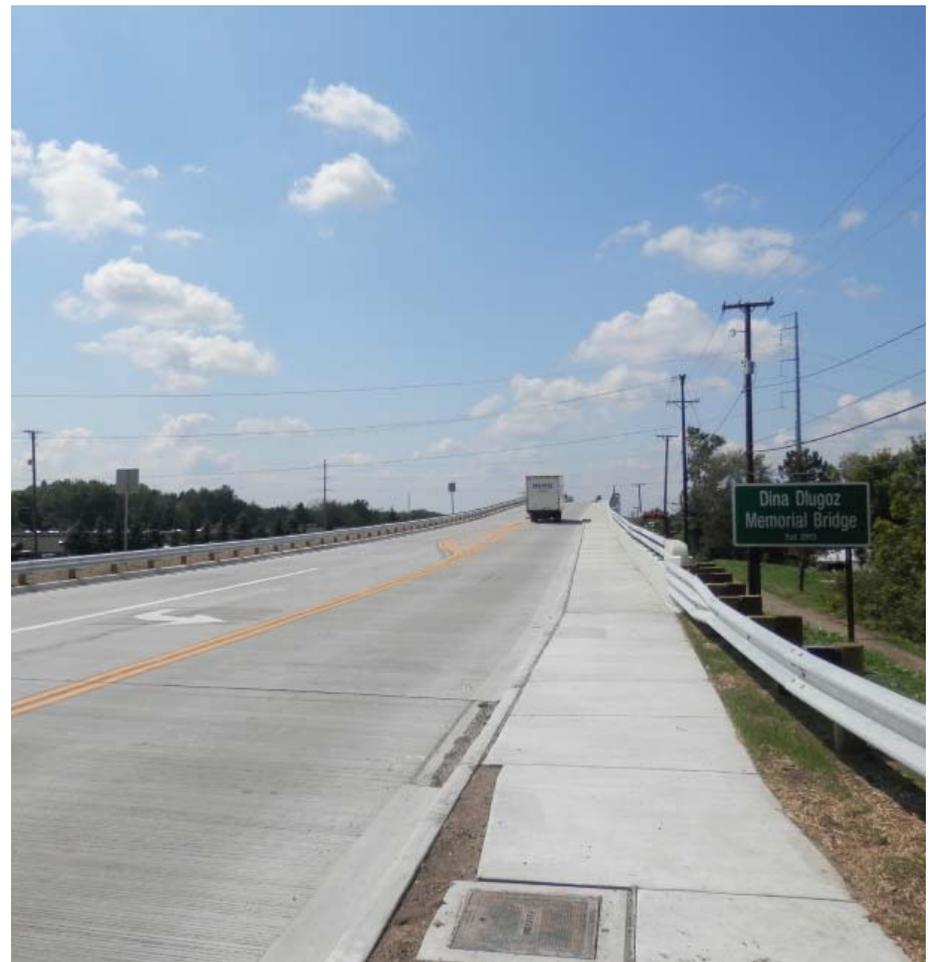
*TO2035* must be fiscally constrained. AMATS must forecast revenues available for projects and also forecast project costs in year-of-expenditure dollars. Due to increasing project costs and lower revenue estimates, fewer funds are available for projects in *TO2035*. Most of AMATS' projected revenues will be used for maintaining the existing system.

*TO2035* recommends over \$4.3 billion of highway infrastructure investments through 2035. This funding includes over \$2.5 billion for preservation of the existing system. Over \$300 million is recommended for Akron's Central Interchange and Main/Broadway Interchange and includes \$118 million for specific projects throughout greater Akron.

*TO2035* recommends over \$1.7 billion of investment in the region's public transportation system through 2035. Of that investment, \$1.4 billion will be dedicated to general operating expenses of the existing system, \$240 million will be reinvested to preserve the existing system and approximately \$76 million will be allocated toward expansion of the regional public transportation system.

*TO2035* recommends \$30 million of bicycle and pedestrian improvements through 2035. This funding includes on-road bicycle improvements, pedestrian improvements and multi-purpose trails.

The following sections contain an analysis of the current trends and conditions which affect the greater Akron area's transportation system, followed by recommendations to maintain and enhance it.



# INTRODUCTION

Over the past four years, governments at the local, state and federal level have been learning to do more with less. On the issue of transportation planning and infrastructure, it is no different. Funding for transportation has gone down, while the cost for maintaining the transportation network has gone up. Inflation has slowly eroded the purchasing power of transportation funds. People are driving less and driving more fuel-efficient vehicles, therefore transportation revenues (the gasoline tax) have dropped.

Our region's population and economy are growing slowly. As fuel prices have fluctuated so has transit ridership. Express bus services from Akron to Cleveland have continued to grow in use. Demand for bicycle and pedestrian facilities has gotten stronger as more people look to alternatives to driving. Crash rates in the region have gone down, but there are still many high crash locations that require improvements.

Doing more with less means making difficult choices. *Transportation Outlook 2035 (TO2035)* provides a framework for how the greater Akron area will continue to thrive over the next 20 years.

AMATS estimates that roughly \$6.1 billion will be available for our region's transportation network between now and 2035. *TO2035* contains the following strategic priorities:

1. Preserve and maintain existing roadways
2. Promote alternatives to driving (public transit, walking, biking)
3. Identify and cultivate new sources of revenue
4. Invest in highway safety
5. Encourage sustainable development that focuses on integrating transportation and land use
6. Strategically address existing traffic congestion while not adding unnecessary capacity

Over the last four years, AMATS has worked with its member communities to develop multiple programs to support their needs. The AMATS resurfacing program has been maintained to ensure communities can use federal funds for their preservation needs. The Connecting Communities Planning Grant Program

was established to help communities plan with land use and transportation in mind.

Over the next 20 years AMATS will continue its commitment to being a service agency that supports all of its member communities and their citizens, ensuring that our transportation network will continue to be a strong asset for our region.



Robert A. Walker. Kent, OH. 2013.

# WHAT IS AMATS?

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) is the regional transportation planning agency for the greater Akron area. Specifically, AMATS covers Summit and Portage counties and Chippewa Township in Wayne County. The agency is tasked with regional planning and appropriating approximately \$20 million annually to area transportation projects. Projects include road and bridge repairs, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and public transportation investments.

AMATS is one of 17 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in Ohio. MPOs were established in the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act, which required urban areas greater than 50,000 residents to create a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process in order to receive federal funds for transportation improvements.

The purpose of AMATS is to make sure that federal funds spent in the greater Akron area are used strategically with the region's best interests in mind. AMATS promotes all forms of transportation including the automobile, bicycle and pedestrian travel. AMATS offers numerous opportunities for area citizens to provide public input, and is committed to ensuring input received is considered in all transportation planning decisions.

AMATS serves as a regional forum for discussion and cooperation between elected officials, the public, planners and engineers to work together to set transportation policies and implement transportation improvements. AMATS works to ensure that transportation improvements meet the needs and challenges of the region and that federal transportation funds are used in an efficient, effective and equitable manner.

The AMATS Policy Committee is responsible for directing the transportation planning process, policy and funding decisions. It is comprised of elected representatives from municipalities, counties, regional transit authorities and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT).

The AMATS staff serves all the committees and is responsible for carrying out the



technical work of the agency. They are responsible for developing the Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program and various other reports and recommendations for the consideration of the Policy Committee. The staff is made up of individuals primarily from engineering and planning disciplines.

# AMATS COVERAGE AREA

