



# CITY OF KENT, OHIO

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## DIVISION OF ENGINEERING



May 27, 2016

Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study  
806 CitiCenter  
146 South High Street  
Akron, Ohio 44308

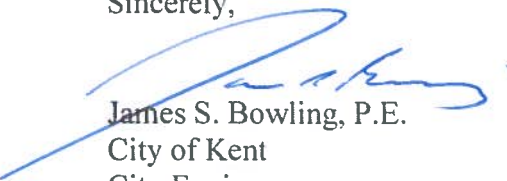
RE: SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor....Planning the Future  
Connecting Communities Planning Grant

To Ms. Heather Reidl:

The City of Kent and the Ohio Department of Transportation are pleased to submit this application for consideration of a Connecting Communities Planning Grant. Both entities are excited about the opportunity to continue our efforts to improve the SR 261 corridor from Middlebury Road to SR 59. The facility was originally planned and partially constructed to be a freeway from Akron, around Kent, to a planned but never constructed SR 435. The overbuilt corridor creates many exciting opportunities to improve the corridor to become a unique complete street facility that provides connections to numerous existing bike facilities, pedestrian amenities, access to transit and is safer for vehicles than the current road configuration.

Both Kent and ODOT are look forward to the opportunity to work with AMATS on this potential study. We appreciate AMATS' goal to create better places in the region and believe that this corridor creates a unique opportunity to do that. Should you require any additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either of us at your convenience.

Sincerely,

  
James S. Bowling, P.E.  
City of Kent  
City Engineer

Sincerely,

  
John P. Picuri, PE  
ODOT, District 4  
Planning and Engineering Administrator

Enclosures

c: Dave Ruller – Kent City Manager  
Tom Euclid – Kent State University  
Chad Root – ODOT LPA Manager  
File



CITY OF KENT &  
OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

**SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor....  
Planning the Future**

**APPLICATION**

Due May 27, 2016

**2016 Connecting Communities Planning Grant**

## APPLICATION

**Local commitment, in the form of specific legislation, is required of sponsors and co-sponsors seeking planning grant funds at the application deadline.** This ensures that Councils and Boards recognize that the project is being submitted for federal funding. Legislation must include the following: project name, description and cost, if providing a local match. All projects, whether or not a local match is provided, are required to include legislation. Sample legislation is provided at [amatsplanning.org](http://amatsplanning.org). Failure to submit legislation by the established due date may result in cancellation of project application.

### 1. Applicant/Sponsor (Implementing Governmental Agency Only).

City of Kent, Ohio  
Jim Bowling, PE  
330-678-8106 (work); 330-842-2372 (cell)  
330-673-1893 (fax)  
BowlingJ@kent-ohio.org  
930 Overholt Road  
Kent, Ohio 44240

### 2. Project Co-Sponsor (If applicable. Please indicate which agency and project manager will be the lead.)

Ohio Department of Transportation  
John Picuri, PE  
330-786-4804 (work)  
330-786-2226 (fax)  
2088 S. Arlington Rd.  
Akron, Ohio 44306

### 3. Planning Study Summary

*List the planning study title and briefly describe the project. (150 words max.)*

#### **SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor....Planning the Future**

SR 261 is a relic from the 1960's transportation planning philosophy. Once, but no longer planned to be a freeway from Akron, around Kent, to a planned but never built SR 435. SR 261 is currently an overbuilt limited access facility that causes safety problems and limits logical, interconnected development of surrounding lands.

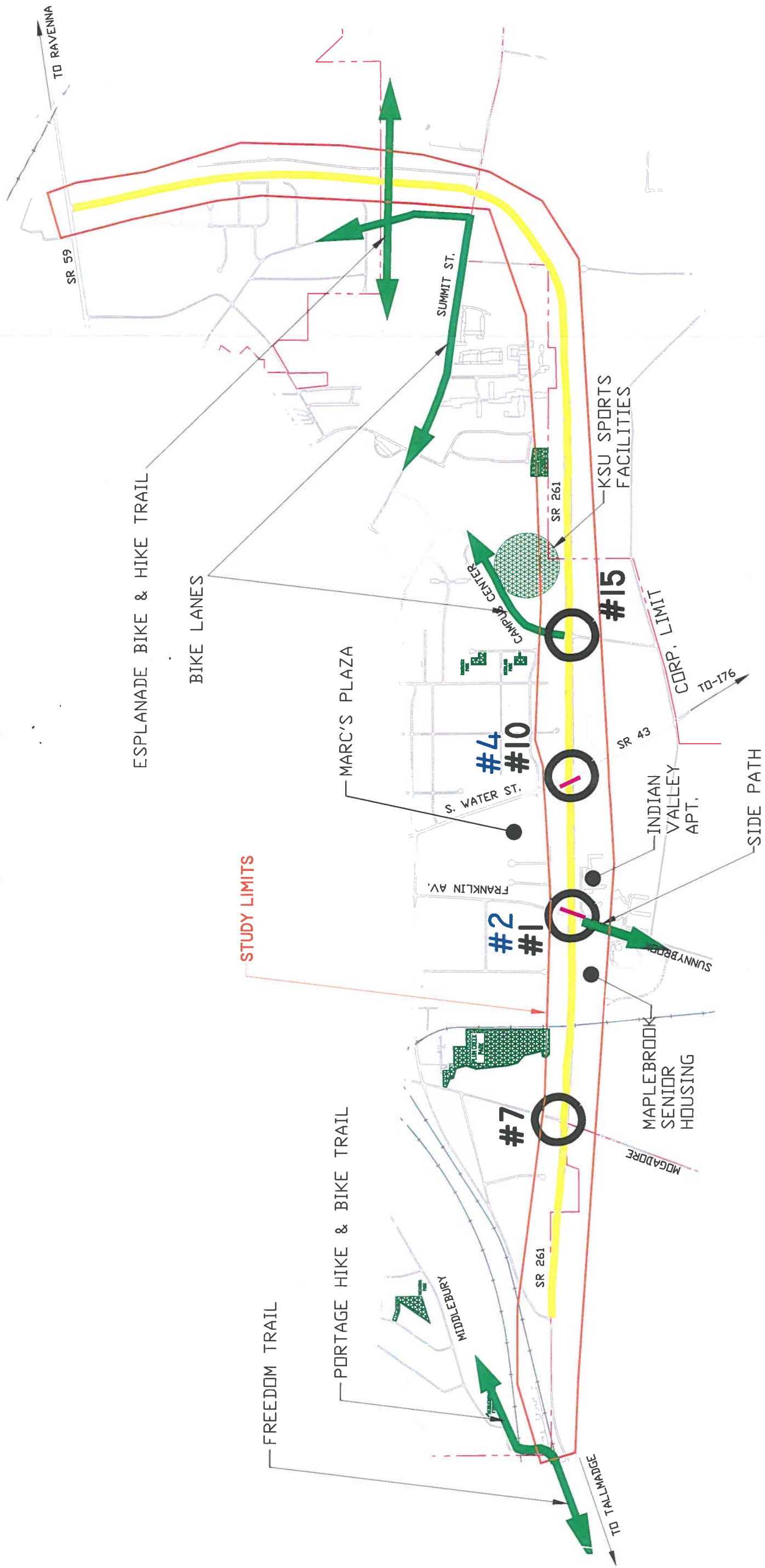
The study is an atypical, "Biggest Loser" version of a road diet. With over 220 feet of right-of-way width and a four lane divided highway section, the corridor is significantly overbuilt and auto-centric for current and future demands. The study will find the best use of the excess capacity and right-of-way to create a complete street, supporting all modes of transportation and permitting the development of new vibrant and healthy places for the community in the lands abutting the corridor. All the while solving the current traffic safety problems.

**4. Study Area & Map** - *Please describe in detail the study area, including physical boundaries and limits. Include a map of the proposed project planning area, with limits of the study area clearly visible.*

The **SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor....Planning the Future** Project's study area is along SR 261 from the intersection of Middlebury Road to SR 59. These limits are based on two factors, the location of the limited access portion of SR 261 and the location of bike infrastructure that abuts SR 261. Attached is a study area map depicting the limits of the study and key features along the corridor.

# S.R. 261 RE-VISIONING THE CORRIDOR.... PLANNING THE FUTURE STUDY AREA MAP

LEGEND	
#2	AMATS CRASH RATING
#1	CITY CRASH RATING
Yellow line	APPROX. L/A LIMITS
Green arrow	EX. BIKE FACILITIES
Pink line	PEDESTRIAN X-WALK
Green rectangle	PUBLIC PARKS. / DESTINATIONS



**5. Purpose & Need (20 points)**

*What are the transportation issues facing the area?*

The **SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor....Planning the Future Project** is needed to address several transportation issues caused by high-volume, high speed facilities that are not fully developed. These include vehicular safety problems, disconnected bike facilities and poor pedestrian facilities.

**Vehicular Safety:** The traffic safety problems are documented in AMATS' latest Traffic Crashes 2012-2014 Technical Memorandum and the City of Kent's Intersection Crash List. Currently, the intersections of SR 261 with Franklin/Sunnybrook and SR 43 rank **2nd** and **4th** respectively on the AMATS's list for Kent. Considering the 1st location is currently under construction and the 3rd was recently addressed these are the highest priority safety locations to be addressed in the City of Kent.

City of Kent Intersection Crash List - 2015	
1.	SR 261 & Franklin/Sunnybrook
7.	SR 261 & Mogadore
10.	SR 261 & S Water St (SR 43)
15.	SR 261 & Campus Center Dr.

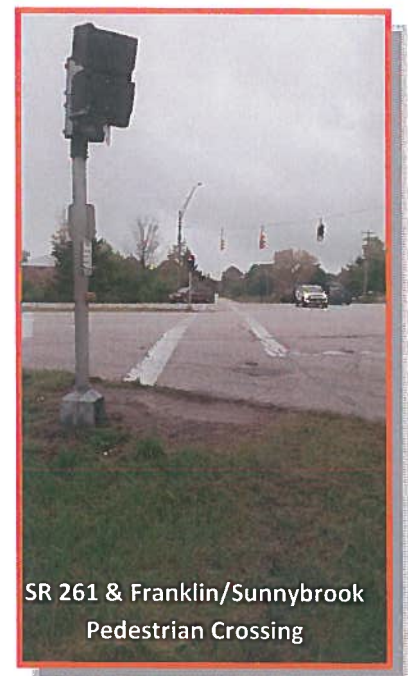
Table 2  
**HIGH CRASH INTERSECTIONS**  
RANKED BY COMPOSITE SCORE  
2012-2014

Location	Local Rank	Overall Rank	Street	Intersecting Street	Approach Ave. Daily Traffic	Total Crashes	Crash Rate	Severity Index
Kent	1	26	E Summit St	S Lincoln St	14,275	42	2.69	1.43
Kent	2	30	SR 261	Franklin Ave/Sunnybrook Dr	11,705	24	1.87	2.08
Kent	3	73	N Mantua St (SR 43)	Fairchild Ave	32,815	52	1.45	1.42
Kent	4	75	S Water St (SR 43)	SR0261	30,635	61	1.82	1.20
Kent	5	129	E Main St (SR 59)	S Lincoln St	21,380	35	1.50	1.29

**Disconnected Bike Facilities:** Numerous bike facilities end at or near SR 261. These facilities are shown on the **Study Area Map** and include the following:

- Freedom Hike and Bike Trail @ SR 261/Middlebury Road Intersection
- Portage Hike and Bike Trail @ SR 261/Middlebury Road Intersection
- Sunnybrook Road Side Path from Senior Housing facility Complexes
- Campus Center Drive Bike Lanes to Kent State Campus
- Summit Street Bike Lanes
- Horning Road Side Path connecting to Esplanade Trail at Bike/Ped Bridge over SR 261

**Poor Pedestrian Facilities:** There is nothing desirable about crossing a 4-lane divided highway with a 50 mph speed limit. Yet, there are two locations (Frankin/Sunnybrook) and S. Water Street (SR 43) where people do just that. With large housing complexes on Sunnybrook immediately south of SR 261 and downtown Kent a short mile away, SR 261 creates a physical barrier to people biking or walking to the popular destination.



*How will this project address these needs to improve the community?*

The re-visioning of SR 261 from a limited access highway to a complete street with strong bike, pedestrian and transit connections will solve the existing safety problems and allow for sustainable development of the last open land available in Kent.

*List any current projects that demonstrate prior commitment to addressing these issues.*

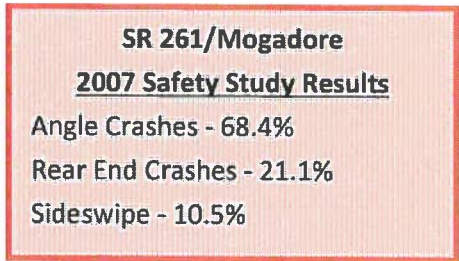
- 2007 Safety Study of the SR 261/Mogadore Road Intersection
- 2006 Sidewalk Extension on SR 43 to SR 261
- 2016 Bike lanes on Middlebury Road (adjacent to SR 261)
- 2017 SR 43 Signalization Project, which includes improvements to the SR 261/SR 43 intersection

## 6.Outcomes (15 points)

### What are the expected outcomes?

The **SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor...Planning the Future Project's** outcomes are immediate and yet long term in visioning the future of the City of Kent. The immediate and long term outcomes include:

*Elimination of Safety Problems:* As discussed in the Purpose and Need, vehicular safety improvements are key to success of the project. With the top two unaddressed safety intersections located in the corridor, improvements to those locations as well as the other two intersections on the City's Intersection Crash List is a critical outcome of the project. The 2007 Safety Study done for the SR 261/Mogadore Road intersection gives an indication to the types of crashes seen along the corridor (see inset).



The types of crashes along the corridor also show a significant amount of injury accidents leading to the high severity index (2.08) at the intersection of SR 261 & Sunnybrook/Franklin. Angle crashes at high speeds are the most dangerous. Fatalities have occurred at the intersection of SR 261 and Sunnybrook/Franklin (2004 & 2006) and at the intersection of SR 261 and Mogadore Road (2006) Therefore, a logical outcome to remedy the safety problems is to eliminate the divided highway (solve left turn sight problems) and reduce speeds along the roadway. These types of improvements would be eligible and rank highly for **ODOT Highway Safety Program (HSP)** funds as well as be eligible for **AMATS STP** funds.

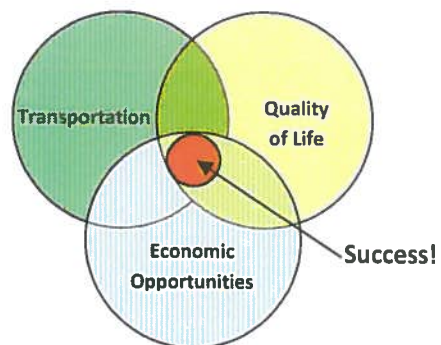
*Bike Connectivity Improvements:* With SR 261 reduced to two lanes and turn lanes and a **minimum right of way width of 220 feet**, the opportunities are endless on providing connections to the numerous bike facilities that abut to SR 261. A likely outcome would be utilizing one side of the divided highway as part of a bike trail that would connect the Portage/Freedom Trail at Middlebury Road to the Esplanade Trail located at Horning Road near Summit Street. This will effectively create a 4.0 mile long trail providing all the residents living in the south side of Kent and Kent State University a connection to two regional trail systems, two public parks and Kent State University's Sports Complex located at the intersection of SR 261 and Campus Center Drive. These types of improvements are eligible for **AMATS TAP** funds and potentially **ODOT HSP** funds for as part of the elimination of the divided highway.

*Pedestrian Improvements:* Elimination of the divided highway and reducing vehicular speeds not only improves vehicular safety, but will improve pedestrians ability to cross SR 261. This is accomplished primarily by significantly reducing the width of the crossing, slowing vehicular speeds and upgraded pedestrian signal systems with new signals installed along the corridor. These improvements would be eligible as part of the **ODOT Highway Safety Program (HSP)** project as well as be eligible for **AMATS TAP** funds.

*Land Use Zoning Changes and Transit Integration:* With the elimination of a limited access facility restricting sustainable connected development around SR 261, zoning changes along the corridor are necessary to provide a framework for long term sustainable development. With PARTA already operating four routes along the corridor, any future land use should be well connected to the local transit infrastructure.

### What does success look like?

Success will be a unique complete street facility (we do have 220 feet of right-of-way to work with!) that integrates a great transportation facility, future economic opportunities and improves the quality of life to those using the facilities.



## 7. Connecting Communities Principles (25 points)

*How does this project further the goals of Connecting Communities outlined below?*

As stated on Smart Growth America's web site, "There is no singular design prescription for Complete Streets; each one is unique and responds to its community context". The **SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor....Planning the Future Project's** core vision is to replace the 1960's transportation planning philosophy with a complete street facility as described below:

*Increase alternative transportation options to connect people and places:*

Currently the only transportation mode served by SR 261 is vehicles. While PARTA operates four routes along SR 261, none have stops in the corridor. The reason for the limited modes is in the type of facility, **limited access**. As discussed in the expected outcomes, the new facility is envisioned to include bike connectivity improvements, potentially to include creating a **4.0 mile long shared use trail** providing connections to two regional trail systems, a local bike trail, two bike lane facilities, two public parks and Kent State University's Sports Complex located at the intersection of SR 261 and Campus Center Drive. In addition to the shared use trail, the project will also provide other significant **pedestrian improvements at all streets crossing SR 261**. With the potential change in designation of the limited access facility, new zoning and development opportunities will be available along the corridor. The plan envisions that the new zoning and facility will integrate this area as a **transit oriented development**, especially with PARTA already operating four (4) routes along SR 261. Logical stops that already exist in the corridor are the two public parks and Kent State University's Sports Complex.

*Promote Complete Street principles to create vibrant and safe places for all users:*

While the **SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor....Planning the Future Project** will not create a vibrant place like downtown Kent, First and Main or Portage Crossings. What it **WILL DO** is **expand the vibrancy** of place from downtown Kent and Kent State University to include the City's south end. In order to create a healthy, transportation sustainable centric City you have to have a **network of different modes of transportation** in place. One or two regional trails, do not create a City based on active transportation. It requires a network of interconnected trails, which include arterial bike trails with strong local collectors that lead to neighborhoods. This then connects our population centers (neighborhoods) with the destinations (KSU, downtown Kent, parks, schools, etc.). Along the SR 261 project corridor there are large senior and low income population centers (Maplebrook and Indian Valley) and neighborhoods that were disconnected (S. Lincoln and Morris Streets) by SR 261. SR 261 also has destinations like public parks that are inaccessible without a car to all but a few because of SR 261. The completion of this project will be the next large step to move all of Kent to being a vibrant, safe place for all age users to live healthy active lives.

*Leverage transportation projects/funding to develop places which support alternative transportation and complete streets through land use and design:*

The **SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor....Planning the Future Project** has a unique convergence of transportation safety problems caused by overbuilding a facility with a surrounding area that needs the reconnection of other modes of transportation. This allows for the leveraging of several transportation funding sources as discussed in the **Outcomes** section of the application. These funding sources include, but are not limited to:

- ODOT HSP Funds
- AMATS STP Funds
- AMATS TAP Funds
- OPWC Funds

In addition, **Kent State University** is a large land owner abutting the project corridor, that is being charged with putting their land to it's highest and best use. The highest and best use of the properties abutting SR 261 would change once the **SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor....Planning the Future Project** was completed.

### 8. Level of Use (20 points)

*As a result of the project, what is the anticipated level of use/positive impact you expect to have? Please describe and include any data which supports how many people will be served by the project.*

The people served by the **SR 261 Re-visioning the Corridor....Planning the Future Project** needs to be viewed by all the different modes it is envisioned to serve.

*Vehicular Level of Use:* Average Daily Traffic Values (ADT) on SR 261 within the study limits vary from **7,620 to 13,160 vehicles per day (vpd)**. Also, traffic safety for the intersecting streets in the divided highway section is integral to the study goals. The following are the entrance ADT's for the divided highway intersections:

- SR 261/SR 43 Intersection - 28,035 vpd
- SR 261/Mogadore Intersection - 13,830 vpd
- SR 261/Franklin-Sunnybrook Intersection - 13,235 vpd
- SR 261/Campus Center Intersection - Data not available

*Bicycle Level of Use:* There are not any methods to calculate bike usage for a proposed facility. However, the construction of a bike facility to connect the six (6) abutting bike facilities including three regional trails would predicate a significant level of use for bicycles upon completion.

*Pedestrian Level of Use:* Pedestrian levels of use are best predicted by the presence of trip originations (residents) and destinations (commercial/recreation/etc.). While few would expect there to be significant trips near a limited access facility, there are some significant ones along this corridor. Indian Valley and Maple Brook housing facilities are current low-income and over-55 housing complexes located on Sunnybrook Road at SR 261. With nearby destinations like Plum Creek Park and Marc's Grocery (0.5 miles away) and downtown Kent approximately one-mile away, the conversion of this limited access facility to accommodate pedestrians will release a latent demand not currently seen along the corridor.

### 9. Project Cost (20 points)

Requested funding (up to \$50,000):	<b>\$44,400 (60%)</b>
Local match:	<b>\$29,600 (40%)</b>
Total project cost:	<b>\$74,000</b>

*Please explain why the total project cost is appropriate to the project scope.*

The study's budget is intended to provide the following services:

1. Establish a Stakeholder Group<sup>1</sup>
2. Traffic Analysis
  - a. Existing Conditions
  - b. Proposed Conditions (up to 2)
3. Safety Analysis
  - a. Crash analysis including crash diagram
  - b. Evaluation of safety improvements for proposed alternates
  - c. Rate of Return
4. Zoning Revision Evaluations (in conjunction with City and Townships)
5. Drawings of Alternates (up to 2)
  - a. Plan view
  - b. Typical Section
  - c. Zoning Revisions
6. Opinion of Probable Project Costs
7. Life Cycle Cost Analysis (optional)
8. Develop a Purpose and Need Statement for projects along the corridor

<sup>1</sup> - Stakeholder Group to be established by Owners and AMATS



**City of Kent**  
**Council Legislation**

ORDINANCE NO. 2016-45

**AN ORDINANCE ALLOWING THE CITY MANAGER, OR HIS DESIGNEE TO APPLY FOR \$44,400 FROM THE AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (AMATS) FOR A CONNECTING COMMUNITIES PLANNING GRANT TO DO A TRAFFIC, TRAFFIC SAFETY AND COMPLETE STREETS ANALYSIS OF THE SR 261 CORRIDOR FROM MIDDLEBURY ROAD TO SUMMIT STREET, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.**

**WHEREAS**, AMATS is offering grants for communities to look at specific areas to see how they can better connect people and places; promote Complete Street principles for vibrant and safe places for all users; and to leverage transportation projects to develop places which support alternative transportation and complete streets through land use and design; and

**WHEREAS**, the City assessed the City's current transportation needs, and found the SR 261 Corridor, from Middlebury Road to Summit Street, meets the criteria for the grant; and

**WHEREAS**, the City wishes to apply for a grant of \$44,400 (60%), and will contribute \$29,600 (40%), to analyze the traffic, traffic safety, and complete streets principles of the corridor, incorporate additional transportation modes, and establish a public stakeholder group to help guide the evaluation; and

**WHEREAS**, time is of the essence to allow this grant to be filed in a timely fashion.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Kent, Portage County, Ohio, at least three-fourths (3/4) of all members elected thereto concurring:

**SECTION 1.** That the City Manager, or his designee is hereby authorized to apply for a Connecting Communities Planning Grant from Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) to do a traffic, traffic safety, and complete streets analysis of the SR 261 Corridor from Middlebury Road to Summit Street.

**SECTION 2.** That it is found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating to the adoption of this Resolution were adopted in an open meeting of this Council and that all deliberations of this Council, and of any of its committees that resulted in such formal action, were in meetings open to the public in compliance with all legal requirements of Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.

**SECTION 4.** That this Resolution is hereby declared to be an emergency measure necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, safety, and welfare of the residents of this City, for which reason and other reasons manifest to this Council this Resolution is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force immediately after passage.

PASSED: 5-18-2016  
Date

Falk  
MAYOR & PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

ATTEST: [Signature]  
CLERK OF COUNCIL

I hereby certify that Resolution No. 2016 45 was duly enacted this 18 day of May, 2016 by the Council of the City of Kent, Ohio.

[Signature]  
CLERK OF COUNCIL