

@AMATS

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ABOVE:

The Greater Akron area completed another leg of its journey to 2050 with AMATS approval of three key items for use in the agency's update of *Transportation Outlook 2050 (TO2050)*, the area's long-range transportation plan. For details, turn to **page 4**.



**A Day of Review, Roundabouts
and Multi-modalism.....page 2.**

A Day of Review and Roundabouts!

The 2024 AMATS Annual Meeting spotlighted multi-modalism

The 2024 AMATS Annual Meeting was a day of review, roundabouts and a good bit of multi-modalism. Nearly 200 people gathered to celebrate the planning agency's accomplishments during the year and to enjoy a panel discussion regarding Greater Akron area roundabouts. A presentation by Kent State University Geography professor, Dr. David Kaplan, concerning the pursuit of multi-modalism in transportation planning capped off this year's meeting.

The day began with AMATS Director Curtis Baker hitting the campaign trail during his state of the agency address recounting the agency's achievements during 2024. In a humorous election year-themed address, Baker cited the agency's ongoing support of several major area projects such as the state Route 8 Bridge Replacement project, Barberton's Wooster Road West improvement, Summit Metro Parks' Middlebury Connector Trail, and Hudson's Smart Signalization program, as among the agency's milestones.

Baker's address segued smoothly into a panel discussion emceed by AMATS Planning Administrator Matt Stewart regarding the increasing use of roundabouts as a traffic control and safety measure by area communities. Panelists for the discussion included Akron Engineering Design Manager Christine Jonke, Green Planning Director Paul Pickett, and Kent Engineer Jim Bowling.

A roundabout is a type of circular intersection or junction in which road traffic is permitted to flow in one direction around a central island. Roundabouts reduce the likelihood and severity of collisions by lowering traffic speeds and minimizing crash impacts.

Stewart noted that, in May, the agency completed its *AMATS Areawide Roundabout Study*, a comprehensive safety evaluation of traffic roundabouts across the Greater Akron area. The study shows promising safety improvements at roundabout locations across the region, which led AMATS personnel to believe that roundabouts were a natural panel discussion topic for the annual meeting.

Since the construction of the Greater Akron area's first roundabout in Copley Township more than 18 years ago, the number of modern roundabouts in the area has soared to 30 with nine more being planned and funded for the region. Stewart's panelists were roundabout proponents of the highest order as the communities of Akron, Kent and Green have constructed 20 roundabouts in the last several years, with the lion's share of 12 located in Green.

Public attitudes toward roundabouts have evolved over the last 20 years from resistance to acceptance and, increasingly, to enthusiasm, according to the panelists. "We have a growing number of people who say, 'Well, could you build a roundabout here? We have a problem with this intersection,'" Pickett observed.

In his address, Kaplan urged meeting attendees to pursue multi-modalism in community planning and urban geography. Multi-modal planning considers various modes of transportation beyond motor vehicles and embraces cycling, public transit, and active transportation connections among modes. Kaplan stated that multi-modal cities that offer users a mix of transportation options are necessary, fair, and – perhaps most importantly – possible despite a largely auto-centric culture.



MULTI-MODALISM MOJO:

Dr. David Kaplan, at podium, was the featured speaker at the AMATS Annual Meeting. The KSU professor of geography said that a multi-modal approach to community planning is necessary, fair, and possible for all.



FALL BALL:

The 2024 AMATS Annual Meeting drew nearly 200 attendees to the main ballroom of the Akron Cuyahoga Falls Sheraton Suites in mid-October. Top, in his opening remarks, AMATS Director Curtis Baker summarized the agency's accomplishments as the Greater Akron area's metropolitan planning organization over the last year.



Bottom, a panel discussion was emceed by AMATS Planning Administrator Matt Stewart, far left, regarding the growing popularity of roundabouts in the Greater Akron area. Panelists for the discussion included from left, Akron Engineering Design Manager Christine Jonke, Green Planning Director Paul Pickett, and Kent Engineer Jim Bowling.

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This report was prepared by 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.

AMATS' journey to 2050 continued in September

The Greater Akron area completed another leg of its journey to 2050 with AMATS approval of three key items for use in the agency's update of *Transportation Outlook 2050 (TO2050)*, the area's long-range transportation plan.

The AMATS Policy Committee unanimously approved the *2050 Planning Data Forecast*, the *2024 Freight Plan*, and the *2024 Transit Plan* during its Sept. 26 meeting. Each item provides fresh planning data necessary for AMATS to craft *TO2050*, which will analyze the future of regional transportation in the Greater Akron area. *TO2050* will identify regional transportation needs and present funding recommendations for area highway, transit, and active transportation projects. Projects must be deemed consistent with the long-range plan to receive federal funding.

The *2050 Planning Data Forecast* projects socioeconomic data over a 30-year period spanning 2020 to 2050. This data is categorized into four broad variable categories of population, household characteristics, employment, and stand-alone considerations, such as school and university enrollment. Each of these variable categories has a direct impact on local traffic, which is examined by AMATS in 837 traffic analysis zones to determine traffic volumes and origins and destinations.

The latest forecast marks a first for the agency in that it addresses two potential population scenarios for the Greater Akron area. One scenario, prepared by the Ohio Department of Development, shows the region experiencing a drop in population as part of an overall statewide trend. In contrast, the AMATS-prepared scenario, based on past population trends compiled by the agency, shows the region's population remaining relatively flat. Under both scenarios, the Greater Akron area exhibits robust employment growth, which is projected to increase by 16.4 percent.

The *2050 Planning Data Forecast* is available by clicking [here](#).

The *2024 Freight Plan* is an analysis of the region's existing freight system and identifies elements of the transportation system that are critical for the transport of goods into, out of, and within the region. The plan addresses factors and trends that impact both railway and roadway freight and examines highway-rail grade crossings and freight corridors within the Greater Akron area. The plan also identifies regional job hubs and evaluates the freight network's efficiency in these hubs.

The plan recommends various strategies to improve the area's freight network, such as bridge replacements, roadway improvements, and grade separations for highway and rail crossings. The plan also endorses the continuation of several projects for inclusion in *TO2050*, including the \$193.3 million state Route 8 Bridge Replacement project, the \$160 million improvement project on the Interstate 76/Interstate 77/state Route 8 Akron Beltway, and the \$132.2 million widening of I-77 in northern Summit County.

The *2024 Freight Plan* is available by clicking [here](#).

The *2024 Transit Plan* was developed by AMATS in conjunction with the area's two local transit agencies, the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority of Portage County and the METRO Regional Transit Authority of Summit County. The transit plan contains an analysis of the region's existing transit system and offers recommendations for inclusion in *TO2050*.

The plan's recommendations are based on six goals and strategies that include investments in programs that support transit goals and in sustainable vehicle fleets and operations. Another goal is the integration of transit into regional transportation projects by project sponsors and transit agencies. Remaining goals urge transit as an integral component of land use planning, the optimization of transit service through system studies and new technologies, and providing safe and equitable access to bus stops, shelters and related infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists.

The *2024 Transit Plan* is available by clicking [here](#).



State Route 8, Interstate 76 and 77 segments among area's most congested

Just in time for the holiday season, the AMATS Policy Committee unwrapped the new *2024 Congestion Management Process (CMP) Report* during its Dec. 12 meeting.

Updated every four years, the CMP identifies existing congestion on roadways and congestion-related traffic incidents within the Greater Akron area of Portage and Summit counties and northeastern Wayne County. A key element of the upcoming long-range *Transportation Outlook 2050*, the CMP presents a mix of strategy recommendations to reduce traffic congestion.

To develop the CMP, the agency monitors the region's transportation network. AMATS Director Curtis Baker says that the agency conducts annual scans of the network using cell phone data aggregated by the Streetlight and INRIX analysis platforms. These scans provide summary data on roadway segment free flow speed, average speed, free flow factor, and percentage of traffic congestion.

"If a roadway has a peak period congestion of 35 percent or more during select times of the day, it is considered congested and included in our CMP recommendations," Baker explains.

AMATS analyzed the region's roadway system and identified congested freeway and arterial roadways. The agency's analysis included 108 freeway and arterial segments where congestion exceeds the 35 percent threshold.

Baker says that AMATS faced a challenge in compiling the latest CMP in that the area's freeways are in the midst of a major overhaul, especially near Akron's downtown where many freeways converge. The Ohio Department of Transportation's Beltway project has included multiple ramp closures and detours over the last two years. The state Route 8 Bridge Replacement project over the Cuyahoga Valley just north of downtown Akron is also under construction.

"These ongoing large-scale projects make it difficult to recommend improvements for the area's congested segments," Baker continues, "This is because projects under construction during the analysis year of 2022 and their commensurate changes in travel patterns could skew our analysis."

As part of the CMP development process, AMATS determines appropriate congestion mitigation strategies for the region. These strategies encompass five categories: demand management; traffic and roadway operational improvements;



public transportation and multi-modal improvements; intelligent transportation strategies (ITS); and capacity expansion.

Baker notes that, because of the area's construction situation, the majority of the latest report's 24 identified congested freeway segments are located in Akron. The CMP recommends ongoing monitoring of these segments before issuing new mitigation strategies.

The top five most congested freeway segments identified in the CMP are: state Route 8 southbound/Interstate 76; two segments of I-76/Interstate 77 eastbound at the Wolf Ledges Parkway/Exit 22; state Route 8 at state Route 18/East Market Street; and I-76/I-77 eastbound at Grant Street/Exit 22.

AMATS identified 84 congested segments of the area's arterial roadway network in the CMP. Interestingly, seven of the 10 most congested arterial segments were portions of the Tallmadge Circle. None of the identified congested arterial segments received a recommendation for added capacity as none had congestion that warranted major widenings. Baker says that the agency believes that a more prudent approach to arterial congestion is to focus on travel demand, operational improvements, alternative modes of transportation, and ITS.

The report also assesses previously congested traffic corridors that have undergone recent improvement projects, many of which have been funded by AMATS. Baker says that the CMP found that every corridor which underwent an improvement saw reduced congestion since 2020, but adds that travel behavior significantly changed during this time. "There was obviously a major push to work from home during the pandemic so there is a possibility that these reductions may be attributable to reduced traffic overall," Baker cautions.

To view the *2024 CMP Report*, please click [here](#).

Greater Akron area crash fatalities resume their climb, but overall crashes down

After dipping slightly in 2022, crash-related fatalities and fatal crashes in the Greater Akron area began climbing again in 2023. The latest three-year analysis released by AMATS spanning the years 2021 through 2023 shows that there were 69 crash-related fatalities and 68 fatal crashes in 2023, which marks the continuation of an upward trend for both categories that began in 2018.

The latest report is based on AMATS' analysis of more than 47,600 motor vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian-related crash records obtained from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). For the *2021-2023 Crash Report*, the agency identified 138 high-crash roadway sections and 245 high-crash intersections within Portage and Summit counties and northeastern Wayne County.

AMATS Planning Administrator Matt Stewart explains that the agency compiles crash data as part of the area's ongoing regional transportation planning process. This data is used by the agency to program and schedule safety improvement projects throughout the region.



A silver lining in the latest crash report is that the total number of area crashes continues its downward trend over the last several years, according to Stewart. The crashes reported during 2023 are nearly as low as the 2020 level of 15,005 crashes, which was an atypical time of reduced vehicular travel and fewer crashes due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown. The year-over-year change between 2022 and 2023 saw the number of crashes drop by 1,518 or 9.2 percent from 16,563 to 15,045 crashes.

Unfortunately, the report finds that crashes resulting in serious injuries and serious injury-related crashes increased despite notable decreases over the past five years. The number of crashes resulting in serious injuries jumped to 396 in 2023 from 333 in 2022 and the number of serious injury-related crashes increased to 324 from 302 during the same period.

"These trend lines for motor vehicle crashes are troubling, but the totals for pedestrian-related and bicycle-related crashes are worrisome too," Stewart adds. Total pedestrian-related crashes jumped to 170 in 2023 from 143 in 2022 and bicycle-related crashes increased to 87 in 2023 from 73 in 2022. Both crash types showed significant increases from their recorded lows in 2020 when 94 pedestrian-related crashes and 54 bicycle-related crashes occurred.

High-crash locations identified in the report may be used by communities as a starting point when seeking federal Highway Safety Program funds through ODOT for safety improvement projects. The report identifies state Route 59, from Alpha Drive to state Route 261, in Franklin Township, and North Main Street (state Route 261), from Olive Street to East Tallmadge Avenue (state Route 261) in Akron, as the two highest ranked high-crash roadway sections in Portage and Summit counties respectively. State Route 585, from Benner Road to state Route 57, in Milton Township ranks 69th in the listing, the highest appearance for a section within Wayne County.

The intersections of state Route 14 and state Route 44 (North Chestnut Street) in Ravenna and Ravenna Township and Riverview and Ira roads in Cuyahoga Falls rank first and second respectively for high-crash intersections in the region. The highest-ranking Wayne County intersection is located at state Routes 57 and 604 in Chippewa and Milton townships and places seventh in the agency's listing.

Additional data, such as those crashes resulting in minor injuries and property damage only, is available in the *2021-2023 Crash Report*. The report is available for viewing and downloading by clicking [here](#).

Project Updates

The following table lists significant projects that were awarded between May 23, 2024 and December 12, 2024.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	AMOUNT
Hines Hill Road - Resurfacing of Hines Hill Road, from Boston Mills Road and 0.77 miles east, in Boston Township.	9/1/2024	\$78,327
Ravenna Road - Crosswalk upgrades at various intersections along Ravenna Road, between Chamberlin Road and state Route 82, in Twinsburg.	6/2/2025	\$73,215
State Route 225 - Resurfacing of state Route 225. Project includes minor bridge work to one structure and pavement repair on three bridges.	7/1/2025	\$1,606,069
Interstates 76 and 277 - Resurfacing portions of I-76 and I-277. Project includes repairs to 18 bridges.	7/31/2025	\$8,208,000
Interstate 76 - Various concrete pavement repairs on I-76. Project includes minor rehabilitation work on 10 bridges.	9/30/2025	\$2,868,000
Interstate 77 - Construction of new noise walls along I-77, between Waterloo Road and Lovers Lane, in Akron.	9/30/2025	\$6,826,199
South Main Street - Construction of a pedestrian hybrid beacon and cross walk across South Main Street in Green.	10/31/2025	\$275,155
Bowery Street Bridge - Deck replacement of Bowery Street Bridge spanning the Ohio Canal in Akron. Project includes replacement of approach slabs.	4/10/2026	\$9,062,722



WOOSTER ROAD WORK!

Construction crews continue to work on the almost \$11 million Wooster Road West resurfacing and reconstruction project. AMATS programmed \$6 million in federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds for the project in 2018. The project extends from 31st Street to Second Street NW in Barberton and should be completed in September 2025. This slideshow presents snapshots of the project's progress in late summer.

Dates to Remember

Date	Time	Committee/Event	Location
January 1	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - New Year's Day
January 20	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Martin Luther King Day
February 6	1:30 p.m.	TAC	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
February 6	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
February 13	1:30 p.m.	Policy	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
February 17	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Presidents Day
March 20	1:30 p.m.	TAC	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
March 20	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
March 27	1:30 p.m.	Policy	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
May 8	1:30 p.m.	TAC	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
May 8	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
May 15	1:30 p.m.	Policy	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
May 26	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Memorial Day
June 19	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Juneteenth Holiday
July 4	1:30 p.m.	*	AMATS Offices Closed - July 4th Holiday
August 7	1:30 p.m.	TAC	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
August 7	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
August 14	1:30 p.m.	Policy	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
September 1	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Labor Day
September 18	1:30 p.m.	TAC	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
September 18	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
September 25	1:30 p.m.	Policy	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
October 10	8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Annual Meeting	Sheraton Suites Akron Cuyahoga Falls
October 13	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Columbus Day
November 11	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Veterans Day
November 27-28	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Thanksgiving
December 4	1:30 p.m.	TAC	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
December 4	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
December 11	1:30 p.m.	Policy	ODOT District 4 office @ 2088 S. Arlington Rd. in Akron
December 25	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Christmas

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