

@AMATS

THE GREATER AKRON AREA'S TRANSPORTATION JOURNAL

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To learn more about how the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted AMATS, visit our YouTube channel - AMATSPanning - to view, *Planning In A Pandemic*, or just click [here](#).

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Planning in a Pandemic

As we continue to grapple with the COVID-19 outbreak, I am pleased to report that the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) has been fulfilling its mission as the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Greater Akron area. When Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine issued a stay-at-home order for all Ohioans in mid-March, our agency was in the midst of preparing a new four-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the AMATS region. I could not be more proud of how quickly that our entire agency and committee membership adapted to a new workplace reality.



BAKER

Our staff of engineering and planning professionals quickly established home-based offices so that the work of the agency could continue unabated. The staff continued to conduct data analyses and compile memoranda vital to the regional transportation planning process. As a result of the staff's dedication, many significant items in addition to the Draft TIP were ready for action by the Policy Committee during its regularly scheduled May meeting.

Shortly before the closing of our office, the staff realized that we would need to change our public outreach strategies for the development of the Draft TIP. Due to social distancing concerns, we scrubbed plans for a previously scheduled in-person meeting to present the Draft TIP and instead opted to host an April 2 virtual meeting using Facebook Live. We were delighted that this meeting attracted a solid number of participants and online viewings of the TIP presentation.

After conferring with the committee leadership, AMATS decided to host virtual meetings of its Technical Advisory Committee, CIC and Policy Committee in May. That month's Policy Committee meeting marked a first for our agency in its 58-year history when the committee voted to approve the TIP using Zoom, the cloud-based video conferencing service.

The new *TIP for Fiscal Years 2021 Through 2024* represents a more than \$993 million investment in regional infrastructure and may be the most expensive and comprehensive since the agency's founding. The fact that the new TIP could be approved in the midst of the challenges facing all of us should be a point of pride for our region. The new program also points to a promising future that – much like the development of the TIP itself – we must remain committed to achieving.

Sincerely,

Curtis Baker
Director

New TIP is most expensive, most comprehensive since 1962



 **TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**
FISCAL YEAR 2021-2024

LOOKING AHEAD:

The new Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) represents a more than \$993 million investment in Greater Akron area highways, public transit and bike and pedestrian systems over the next four years. While the TIP includes many significant improvements, the program emphasizes preservation of the existing system rather than costly expansions.

The AMATS Policy Committee unanimously approved a four-year, multi-million dollar program of new highway, public transit, and bike and pedestrian projects for the Greater Akron area during an online, virtual May 14 meeting of the committee.

The new *Transportation Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2021 Through 2024* (TIP) represents a more than \$993 million investment in regional infrastructure. AMATS Director Curtis Baker says that the new program may be the most expensive and comprehensive since the agency's beginnings as a metropolitan planning organization in 1962.

The new TIP includes many significant improvements which should be of interest to anyone living, travelling or doing business in the region. The program includes more than \$642.7 million for highway projects, \$338.7 million for public transit needs, and slightly less than \$12 million for bike and pedestrian projects. These projects are programmed to receive federal funds for fiscal years 2021 through 2024.

Communities and project sponsors throughout the Greater Akron area will benefit from the new program. Among the significant items in the TIP are two large-scale improvement projects in Akron: a \$164 million project to resurface portions of state Route 8 and Interstates 76 and 77 and a \$146 million state Route 8 bridge replacement over the Cuyahoga River Valley.

Other notable projects in the program include a more than \$17.5 million upgrade of East Main Street (state Route 59) in Kent through the university area and the construction of two new roundabouts on Massillon Road (state Route 241) in Green totaling more than \$10 million. Additional improvements include the construction of two-way left turn lanes on the Portage Trail Extension in Cuyahoga Falls totaling more than \$7.7 million while portions of Second Street and Wooster Road in Barberton will see resurfacing and upgrades totaling more than \$1 million.

"In keeping with our agency's goal of preserving the region's transportation network rather than pursuing costly expansions, our latest TIP has a record number of resurfacing projects

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that are programmed to use more than \$18.3 million in federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds,” Baker notes.

The new TIP addresses other needs beyond the area’s highways and roads. The region’s transit authorities, METRO in Summit County and PARTA in Portage County, will receive significant federal funds to supplement their fare box and countywide sales tax revenue and anticipated state funds during the four-year span of the program. The new TIP includes \$40.6 million in federal funds for capital projects and \$17.9 million in federal funds for preventive maintenance expenditures.

The Greater Akron area’s bike and pedestrian networks will continue their growth under the new TIP. More than \$1.2 million will go for the construction of the Brady’s Leap Section of The PORTAGE Hike and Bike Trail in Kent. Other upcoming projects include new portions of the Freedom Trail in Akron, Kent, Stow and Tallmadge and various new sidewalks throughout the region most notably on Cleveland Massillon Road in Bath Township, Darrow Road (state Route 91) in Stow, and Raber Road in Green.

Baker observes that one of the more unique aspects of the latest TIP is how quickly the agency embraced new public outreach strategies and technologies during its development and ultimate approval by the Policy Committee. “The COVID-19 outbreak impacted AMATS just like everyone else. We made the decision early on that public input was vital to this particular TIP’s development and so – along with updating our print ads and website - we extended our comment period to April 29 and launched far-reaching email and social media campaigns. We also made extensive use of Facebook Live and Zoom for our ‘virtual’ meetings,” Baker explains.

One of the earliest changes made by the agency was the decision to scrap an in-person meeting of its Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) due to social distancing concerns. The agency instead opted to host an April 2 virtual meeting of the committee using Facebook Live. Baker notes that the CIC posted a record number of meeting participants and online viewings of the TIP presentation.

“The more we delved into these platforms, the more confident that we became with regards to their use. We gained enough expertise to host a virtual meeting of our Policy Committee during which the TIP was approved in a roll call vote. That was a first for us,” Baker says. He adds that the agency’s virtual meetings were so successful that AMATS is considering hosting virtual meetings in tandem with its regularly scheduled in-person CIC meetings in the future.

The TIP is available for viewing by clicking [here](#).



Vehicle crash stats improving, but not for bike and pedestrian crashes

In December, AMATS completed *Traffic Crashes and Safety Performance Measures 2016-2018*, its latest three-year analysis of traffic crashes within the Greater Akron area. The report is divided into three sections concerning: roadway and intersection crashes; bicycle and pedestrian crashes; and a performance-oriented section.

The report's findings are based on the agency's analysis of 55,860 motor vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian-related crash records for the area's roadway sections and intersections provided by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). 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.

For this report, the agency identified 179 high-crash roadway sections and 311 high-crash intersections in the region. The report shows that the overall number of total area crashes decreased by 90 from 18,787 in 2017 to 18,697 in 2018 - a drop of .5 percent. Crashes that resulted in an injury also decreased during the report's three-year period - from 4,466 in 2016 to 4,261 in 2018. Crashes that resulted in serious injuries also marked a record low total in 2018 with 290. This final total capped off an ongoing three-year trend of declining serious injury crashes with 499 recorded in 2016 and 450 recorded in 2017. The report's three-year span of declining serious injury crashes is part of a larger overall decline for such crashes, which peaked with 693 in 2010 before showing a slight increase to 675 in 2012.



Photo courtesy of the Akron Police Dept.

Along with these promising crash totals, Greater Akron area fatalities decreased sharply from a 10-year peak of 60 in 2017 to a record low of 35 in 2018. Unfortunately, totals for bicycle and pedestrian-related crashes are not as promising. The report found that out of the 248 bicycle-related crashes that occurred between 2016 and 2018, 187 or 75 percent resulted in an injury and three in a fatality. Out of 477 pedestrian-related crashes during the period, 394 or 83 percent resulted in an injury and 17 in a fatality.

This report includes safety performance measures and targets for the Greater Akron area. Recent federal legislation requires the agency and ODOT to demonstrate fatal and serious injury reductions on all public roads. The required performance measures for safety are: number of fatalities; fatality rate; number of serious injuries; serious injury rate; and number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries.

In this report, AMATS endorsed the statewide goals set forth by ODOT rather than adopt separate targets and goals for the region. In 2019, following an extensive review in consultation with the state's metropolitan planning organizations including AMATS, the department opted to pursue a 2 percent annual reduction target across all five safety categories in place of its previous 1 percent reduction target.

To learn more, the *Traffic Crashes and Safety Performance Measures 2016-2018* report is available by clicking [here](#).

Project Updates

The following table lists significant projects that were awarded between July 1, 2019 and April 22, 2020.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	AMOUNT
Portage Lakes Drive - Resurfacing of Portage Lakes Drive, from state Route 93 to Cormany Drive, in Coventry Township. Project includes pavement and base repairs, shoulder reconstruction, pavement markings, drainage repairs, curbing, guardrail, loop detector replacement and driveway approaches.	6/30/2020	\$372,969
US 224 - Resurfacing portions of US 224 in Akron and Springfield Township. Project includes maintenance of four bridges.	9/30/2020	\$1,599,587
East Waterloo Road Phases 1 & 2 - Resurfacing of East Waterloo Road, from Manchester Road (state Route 93) to Kelly Avenue, in Akron.	6/30/2020	\$1,223,408
State Route 59 - Resurfacing of state Route 59, from the Summit County Line to South Mantua Street (state Route 43), in Kent.	8/31/2020	\$1,071,569
Massillon Road - Widening of Massillon Road (state Route 241) to five lanes in Green. Project includes construction of roundabouts at Raber, Stein and Turkeyfoot (state Route 619) roads.	11/30/2021	\$12,245,168

COVID-19 lockdowns drive down Greater Akron area traffic

The national lockdown due to the COVID-19 Pandemic has definitely chilled traffic in the Greater Akron area, according to data analyses conducted by AMATS. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) regularly compiles data using Automatic Traffic Recorders (ATRs) at various locations throughout the state. AMATS is sifting through this ODOT-compiled data to determine the impacts on area traffic since mid-March when stay-at-home orders were first issued across Ohio and the nation.

On March 11, 134,653 vehicles travelled through Interstate 77 just south of Akron’s Central Interchange, one of the region’s busiest areas in terms of traffic. A mere two weeks later, on March 25, traffic through the same location dropped to 78,616 vehicles. Such declines were not limited to Akron and Summit County.

Interstate 76, east of the state Route 43 in Portage County’s Brimfield Township near the city of Kent, recorded 45,890 vehicles on March 11 before hitting its nadir of 28,248 vehicles on April 1.



The ATR data also show another trend: Traffic totals have been gradually increasing as early as late March. A week after logging its steepest drops, traffic in the Central Interchange area began to rebound with 81,249 vehicles on April 1. Similarly, I-76 in Brimfield Township showed an increase in traffic to 31,838 vehicles on April 8. The overall trend in traffic across the region is upward as Ohio begins to reopen its economy.

Dates to Remember

Date	Time	Committee/Event	Location
June 18	1:30 p.m.	TAC	CANCELLED
June 18	6:30 p.m.	CIC	CANCELLED
June 25	1:30 p.m.	Policy	CANCELLED

July 4	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - July 4th Holiday
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September 7	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Labor Day
September 17	1:30 p.m.	TAC	To Be Determined
September 17	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Determined
September 24	1:30 p.m.	Policy	To Be Determined

October 9	8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Annual Meeting	CANCELLED
October 12	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Columbus Day

November 11	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Veterans Day
November 26-27	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Thanksgiving

December 10	1:30 p.m.	TAC	To Be Determined
December 10	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Determined
December 17	1:30 p.m.	Policy	To Be Determined
December 25	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Christmas Day

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.

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Please visit our web site at: 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.