

# @AMATS

THE GREATER AKRON AREA'S TRANSPORTATION JOURNAL

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**COVER:**

Above, the AMATS Policy Committee committed the Greater Akron area to the national *Vision Zero* initiative during its Aug. 11 meeting. If the initiative's goals become a reality, traffic deaths and severe injuries may one day become a memory. For more turn to **page 6**.

At right, the speaker's podium stands at the ready for October's AMATS Annual Meeting. The meeting marked the agency's 60th Anniversary as the Greater Akron area's metropolitan planning organization. For more, turn to **pages 2 and 3**.



**Four Pillars and a Turnpike:  
The AMATS Annual Meeting 2022**  
.....pages 2 & 3.

# AMATS celebrates its first 60 years at Annual Meeting

After a two-year postponement due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, AMATS Director Curtis Baker was ready to welcome people back to his agency's annual meeting. Baker wanted to celebrate with the crowd at the Sheraton Suites - Akron/Cuyahoga Falls all that AMATS had accomplished since its last annual meeting in the same ballroom in 2019.

The director's audience also wasn't just there to enjoy the day's fare of fine food: They wanted to mark AMATS' 60th anniversary as the Greater Akron area's metropolitan planning organization. Attendees also wanted to learn what lies ahead, not only for the area, but for two other key players in the regional planning process: the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) District 4 office and the Ohio Turnpike.

Baker detailed the AMATS perspective in a sometimes-lighthearted presentation while ODOT District 4 Deputy Director Gery Noirot and Ohio Turnpike Executive Director Ferzan M. Ahmed spoke on behalf of their respective employers.

AMATS' accomplishments since the onset of the pandemic include the completion of a new four-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and an update of the area's long-range transportation plan, *Transportation Outlook*. More recently, the agency programmed \$12.3 million in Surface Transportation Block Grant, \$1.3 million in Transportation Alternative Set-Aside, and \$7.2 million in Congestion Mitigation Air Quality funds for various area projects in Fiscal Year 2022.

A host of area projects also proceeded with AMATS support, according to Baker. The Massillon Road Roundabout in Green, the Interstate 76/Tallmadge Road Interchange in Brimfield Township, and the Main Street Improvement Project in Akron are among the notable projects that benefitted from AMATS' programming of funds.

AMATS achieved these accomplishments despite agency staff working remotely from their homes for roughly 15 months and an unexpected move to new offices in the PNC Building in Akron upon their return to work. Looking ahead to 2023, AMATS will prepare a new TIP, begin work on an area Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure plan, craft a Safe Streets for All Plan, and launch the next update of *Transportation Outlook*.

AMATS won't be the only agency busy planning in the coming months.

Noirot said that ODOT is pursuing several initiatives simultaneously including the development of the state's EV infrastructure, an 18-month study to explore alternative user-based revenue enhancement programs, and several major projects in the Greater Akron area including the state Route 8 reconstruction and the widening of Interstate 77 in Coventry Township. Noirot said that ODOT will rely on its "four pillars" of planning – safety, maintenance, accessibility, and positioning for the future – throughout its pursuit of these initiatives.

Positioning for the future is a goal shared by the department with the Ohio Turnpike. After recounting the history of the state's "first superhighway" since its launch in 1949, Ahmed described the work that the turnpike commission is undertaking to modernize the 241-mile toll road.

Four new high-speed, open road tolling plazas have been constructed on the mainline of the Ohio Turnpike along with improvements to its fiber optic, cell tower, and 5G networks. When finished, the turnpike will be a hybrid of open road and gated collection points with non-stop travel for E-Z Pass customers at every turnpike interchange.



**NOIROT**



**AHMED**



## WELCOME BACK!

The AMATS Annual Meeting returned in full force. The Oct. 7 meeting drew 136 attendees to the ballroom of the Sheraton Suites - Akron/Cuyahoga Falls.

**PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE:**

Top, at right, AMATS Director Curtis Baker welcomes attendees to the 2022 AMATS Annual Meeting. The October meeting marked the resumption of the agency's annual meetings following a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. In his opening remarks, Baker recounted the planning challenges faced by AMATS during the pandemic and touted the agency's recent accomplishments in 2022.



Middle, ODOT District 4 Deputy Director Gery Noirot described the district's "four pillar" approach to planning within Ashtabula, Mahoning, Portage, Stark, Summit and Trumbull counties. Noirot said that District 4 is uniquely positioned to meet future challenges such as the establishment of an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure and the pursuit of significant safety improvements.



Bottom, Ohio Turnpike Executive Director Ferzan M. Ahmed presented the past, present, and future of the Ohio Turnpike. Ahmed said that the ongoing modernization of the toll road will eliminate inefficient tolling points and offer a hybrid of open road and gated systems.



To view Noirot and Ahmed's presentations, please visit the AMATS YouTube channel - [AMATSPlanning](#).

# One programming change by AMATS helps nine projects

In September, nine resurfacing projects throughout the Greater Akron area received much-needed boosts when millions of dollars in federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds became available. These funding increases mean that projects in Akron, Barberton, Green, New Franklin, Ravenna, Streetsboro, and other communities will get underway sooner than previously expected.

The AMATS Policy Committee approved a funding change to the area’s four-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) during its Sept. 22 meeting. This programming change freed up slightly more than \$4.1 million in STBG funds for projects throughout Portage and Summit counties. These funds may be used for preservation, reconstruction or construction of any eligible highway, pedestrian, or bicycle facility. The Policy Committee administers the STBG Program in the Greater Akron area and agreed to use the funds for resurfacing projects.

AMATS TIP Coordinator David Pulay says that the agency quickly identified projects to put the newly freed funds to use rather than risk the loss of federal funding for regional needs.

“There was no shortage of projects in our four-year TIP that could benefit from these funds. We were fortunate that the STBG Program allows flexibility in meeting needs identified by local and state planning officials such as AMATS,” Pulay continues, “The projects chosen were the ones that had the worst pavement ratings.”



PULAY

The nine newly rescheduled projects will commence roughly three years earlier than originally programmed in the agency’s TIP. Over the next 12 months, resurfacing crews will be at work at various locations throughout the region including Cleveland-Massillon Road in Norton, South Main Street in Green and New Franklin, and Frost Road in Streetsboro. Descriptions of these projects and their awarded STBG funding amounts are summarized in the table below:

Project	STBG Funding
<b>Frost Road Phase 2 in Streetsboro</b> Project area extends from 240 feet east of state Route 43 to Page Road.	\$461,835
<b>South Prospect Street in Ravenna</b> Project area extends from the Ravenna South Corporate Limit to Main Street (state Route 59).	\$247,500
<b>Cleveland Massillon Road in Norton</b> Project area extends from Interstate 76 to the Norton North Corporate Limit.	\$787,500
<b>Highland Road in Twinsburg</b> Project area extends from Hadden Road to Darrow Road (state Route 91).	\$522,000
<b>South Main Street in Green and New Franklin</b> Project area extends from West Caston Road to East Turkeyfoot Road (state Route 619).	\$787,500
<b>Miller Road in Akron and Fairlawn</b> Project area extends from Ridgewood Road to West Market Street (state Route 18).	\$409,500
<b>Norton Avenue in Barberton</b> Project area extends from the Barberton West Corporate Limit to Barber Road.	\$499,662
<b>Valleyview Road in Hudson</b> Project area extends from Darrow Road (state Route 91) to the Hudson North Corporate Limit.	\$787,500
<b>Valleyview Road in Macedonia</b> Project area extends from the Macedonia South Corporate Limit to Twinsburg Road.	\$291,240

# Project Updates

The following table lists significant projects that were awarded between June 2, 2022 and Nov. 7, 2022.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	AMOUNT
<b>State Route 43</b> - Improvement project on state Route 43 to add a center two-way, left-turn lane, from the Ohio Turnpike (Interstate 80) to south of Frost Road, and a southbound through lane and left-turn lane, from Evergreen Drive to I-80. Project will also convert northbound outside through lane to right-turn lane at Evergreen Drive in Streetsboro.	8/31/2024	\$5,902,535
<b>State Route 88</b> - Resurfacing of state Route 88, from state Route 305 to Portage-Geauga County Line, in Nelson Township. Project includes bridge repairs.	7/31/2023	\$878,716
<b>State Route 43</b> - Resurfacing portions of state Route 43 (North Mantua Street), from West Main Street to the Kent North Corporate Limit, and Gougler Avenue, from West Main Street to Rockwell Street, in Kent. Project includes repairs to two bridges.	8/31/2023	\$1,969,316
<b>Interstate 76</b> - Resurfacing and pavement repairs to portions of I-76 from Tallmadge Road to New Milford Road. Project includes repair of 14 bridges, removal of existing turnaround, and construction of a new turnaround west of South Munroe Road, in Portage County.	8/31/2023	\$8,260,522
<b>State Route 91</b> - Improvement project on state Route 91 to construct a two-way, left-turn lane and add a bicycle lane and sidewalk improvements, from Barlow Road to Stoney Hill Road, in Hudson.	11/30/2023	\$3,488,000
<b>Akron-Cleveland Road Part 1</b> - Resurfacing of Akron-Cleveland Road, from the Cuyahoga Falls North Corporate Limit to the Boston Heights South Corporate Limit, in Boston Township.	10/14/2023	\$1,452,027
<b>North Cleveland-Massillon Road</b> - Resurfacing of North Cleveland-Massillon Road, from railroad tracks to North Corporate Limit, in Clinton.	10/15/2022	\$810,244
<b>Fishcreek and Graham Road</b> - Intersection improvement at Fishcreek and Graham roads in Stow.	10/30/2023	\$1,280,100
<b>Cleveland-Massillon Road Part 1</b> - Resurfacing of Cleveland-Massillon Road, from the Norton North Corporate Limit to Ridgewood Road, in Copley Township.	6/30/2023	\$3,371,940
<b>Gilchrist Road Phase 1</b> - Resurfacing Gilchrist Road, from Akron East Corporate Limit to Mogadore Road, in Mogadore.	10/30/2022	\$699,102
<b>Goodyear Boulevard Bridge</b> - Replacement of Goodyear Boulevard Bridge spanning the Wheeling and Lake Erie railroad line in Akron.	10/31/2023	\$3,171,498
<b>Big Bend Trailhead</b> - Resurfacing the Big Bend Trailhead driveway and parking lot in the Summit MetroParks District.	10/31/2022	\$321,381
<b>Olde Eight Road</b> - Resurfacing of Olde Eight Road, from the Boston Heights North Corporate Limit to the Highland Road intersection, in Northfield Center Township. Project will add left-turn lanes.	6/30/2023	\$1,379,306
<b>Ravenna Road Part 1</b> - Resurfacing of Ravenna Road, from Twinsburg South Corporate Limit to north of Old Mill Road, in Twinsburg Township.	6/30/2023	\$1,142,560
<b>State Routes 176 and 303</b> - Resurfacing portions of state Route 176, from Interstate 77 to Boston Road, and from state Route 303, from the Medina County Line to the Peninsula West Corporate Limit, in Summit County. Project includes repairs to five bridges.	6/30/2023	\$2,381,589
<b>State Routes 241 and 764</b> - Resurfacing of state Route 241 (Massillon Road/George Washington Boulevard), from Akron South Corporate Limit to Triplett Boulevard, and state Route 764 (Wilbeth Road/Triplett Road), from Interstate 77 to state Route 241, in Akron. Project includes repair of a bridge.	8/30/2023	\$3,663,806
<b>Black Diamond Road</b> - Bridge replacement on Black Diamond Road, north of Bieri Road, in Chippewa Township.	9/1/2023	\$1,158,438

# The Greater Akron area embarks on a journey to "zero"

The AMATS Policy Committee committed the Greater Akron area to the national *Vision Zero* initiative during its Aug. 11 meeting. If the goals of *Vision Zero* become a reality, traffic deaths and severe injuries may one day become a memory.

*Vision Zero* is a road traffic safety program promoted by the U.S. Department of Transportation that aims to achieve the ambitious goal of zero road traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries across the nation. In its approval of Resolution 2022-16, the AMATS Policy Committee also promised to increase safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all over the next 28 years.

David Pulay, the AMATS Transportation Improvement Program coordinator, explains that the agency's *Vision Zero* concept will establish realistic timelines to ensure safety for all people as they move about their communities. The agency's *Vision Zero* goal within the Greater Akron area is to reduce the number of crashes resulting in fatalities and severe injuries on a consistent basis until reaching a goal of no area roadway deaths by 2050.

"Previous approaches to transportation planning were largely based on the assumption that most road users are responsible for their own safety. While users will continue to bear a significant amount of responsibility for their actions, *Vision Zero* recognizes that responsibility and safety are shared by transportation system designers as well as road users," Pulay observes.

How will the agency reach the goal of zero fatalities? *Vision Zero* advocates argue that collisions resulting in death and severe injury are not inevitable, but can be prevented through changes in behavior, technology, and traffic designs that accommodate multimodal transportation uses. Pulay says that one of AMATS' strengths in its *Vision Zero* approach is that the agency has a strong record of prioritizing and compiling crash studies for all transportation modes. He adds that, in recent years, the agency and the area have made demonstrable progress in improving motor vehicle, pedestrian, and cyclist safety by making systemic changes in how the area's transportation network is planned, built, and operated. That progress will continue with the adoption of the *Vision Zero* resolution, according to Pulay.

The resolution's passage is the first step necessary for AMATS to begin developing a regional Safety Action Plan as required by the federal grant program, Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A). AMATS has established a taskforce of its membership to guide development of the area's Safety Action Plan, which the agency and its committee members will follow as they pursue AMATS' *Vision Zero* goals (See [PLANNING FOR ACTION, Page 7](#)).

To view the *Vision Zero* resolution, please click [here](#).



# ZERO

**PLANNING FOR ACTION!**

The AMATS Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Taskforce, shown at right, met for the first time Oct. 19. The taskforce will craft an action plan for the Greater Akron area to identify common causes of fatal and serious crashes and offer possible solutions for unsafe locations.

The national SS4A Program was created through the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The multibillion-dollar program's focus is to prevent fatalities and injuries on roadways. SS4A grants may be used to develop action plans or projects.

At the suggestion of Akron officials, AMATS opted to craft a systemic, action plan for the entire region rather than a piecemeal approach with separate communities developing their own individual plans. Agency officials agree that developing a plan now - without using SS4A funds - will allow the region to prepare a list of potential projects that will be eligible for future program implementation grants.

The upcoming action plan will emphasize *Complete Street* principles while encompassing various transportation modes including walking, biking, and transit. The plan will also advance social equity ideals and speed management strategies in planning. The taskforce agreed that the initial steps in the plan's development should be forming a Stakeholders Committee, conducting public surveys, and analyses of available crash and safety data.

Among AMATS' first steps in the plan's development is the scheduling of a series of in-person and virtual focus group meetings with various transportation stakeholders in November. Among the stakeholders invited to participate are transit providers, active transportation advocates, first responders, and social service agencies.

AMATS expects to complete the plan by May 2023.



Photos by Seth Bush - AMATS.

## Dates to Remember

Date	Time	Committee/Event	Location
January 2	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - New Year's Day
January 16	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Martin Luther King Day
January 19	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom C
January 19	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
January 26	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom A
February 20	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Presidents' Day
March 16	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom C
March 16	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
March 23	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom A
May 11	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom C
May 11	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Virtual Meeting
May 18	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Hilton Garden Inn, Ballroom C
May 29	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Memorial Day
June 19	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Juneteenth Holiday
July 4	1:30 p.m.	*	AMATS Offices Closed - July 4th Holiday

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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.