

2023 REGIONAL COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN



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Executive Summary

The Akron metropolitan region is home to a significant number of individuals who depend on public transportation to meet their most basic needs – trips to work, medical facilities, shopping, and so on. Three groups comprise the majority of people who depend on public transportation: persons aged 65 and over, persons with disabilities and those of low income. The AMATS Area Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) is a joint effort between AMATS, the region’s public transit agencies (METRO and *PARTA*) and many social and human services agencies and organizations to identify the location and needs of these groups, to identify available transportation assets, to determine key gaps, and most importantly, to establish a set of regional priorities and recommendations to help bridge these transportation gaps.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 16% of the region’s population has some form of disability, 12% of the population is low-income, and nearly 18% of the region is above the age of 65. The Ohio Department of Aging predicts that by 2040, the state’s senior citizen population will double. Approximately 8% of the region’s households have no vehicle available – a number that is substantially higher in our larger cities. In a region of over 700,000 people, these percentages translate to large numbers of residents who depend on a convenient, reliable system of public transportation.



Within our region, METRO and *PARTA* provide very good levels of service, particularly in densely populated communities with pedestrian and transit safety and accessibility amenities such as curb cuts, slower speed limits, sidewalks, crosswalks, on-street bus boarding, and waiting areas for protection during inclement weather. However, areas lacking dedicated, fixed route service may not offer alternative transportation

safety and accessibility amenities or may present challenges due to their location or distance for connecting people with destinations. Because of these constraints, fixed-route bus coverage is limited or entirely absent in some communities with retail, medical, and employment centers, such as:

- Summit County: Copley Township, the city of Green
- Portage County: the city of Aurora and Rootstown Township. *PARTA* provides express route service through Brimfield Township and the city of Streetsboro, via the Akron Express and Cleveland Express, respectively
- Wayne County Portion: Fixed route public transportation is entirely absent from the AMATS portion of Wayne County

The region’s public transit agencies are constantly re-evaluating their service and are taking steps to address many of the gaps identified above. METRO RTA completed a 10-year Strategic Plan calling for the agency to take advantage of the opportunities offered by new



technology and new approaches to providing mobility to meet the needs of today and anticipating the needs of tomorrow. The first step in implementing the strategic plan was a redesign of METRO RTA’s fixed route network. They now offer 24 fixed routes with the following key features: 1) five new high-frequency 15-minute corridors and three new 30-minute routes, 2) streamlined service with increased route directness and more consistent weekend service, and 3) additional regional connections to Portage County (Brimfield) and Cuyahoga County (cities of Bedford and Maple Heights). METRO’s demand response services operate a multitude of programs, including 1) complementary Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) service for eligible persons with disabilities, 2) SCAT service for seniors and persons with disabilities who live outside the ADA-zone, 3) coordination and provision of transportation services for Medicaid eligible residents, i.e., Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) to Medicaid eligible medical facilities, 4) Title III trips for eligible Direction Home (Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities) participants, and 5) two Call-A-Bus zones and a workforce development program for making suburban connections that are difficult for fixed-routes to adequately serve.



PARTA’s Kent Central Gateway, a multi-modal transportation facility in the heart of downtown Kent, offers a central point of operations for transportation in Portage County, in addition to a secondary hub at University Hospitals in Ravenna. Fixed routes run on coordinated timing for easier transfers and reduced wait times. *PARTA* consistently monitors routes to identify gaps in services and makes changes as necessary. *PARTA*

provides an accessible waiting room with amenities for customers. In addition, *PARTA* offers its “Dial-A-Ride” demand-response bus service county-wide to everyone, regardless of qualifications. This service effectively addresses most of the geographical gaps found in Portage County.

In Wayne County, Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) operates WCT (Wayne County Transit) in partnership with Community Action Wayne/Medina. WCT provides countywide service Monday through Saturday from 6:00 a.m. to Midnight. WCT is a reservation only, demand response service. No fixed route services are offered.



The AMATS Area Coordinated Plan presents eight recommendations for potential transit-dedicated funding. The purchase of additional accessible vehicles, promoting and increasing travel training, connecting transit stops to passenger destinations, expanding the reach and hours of fixed route transit, funding innovative new public transit service to key employment areas, providing same day reservations for demand response trips, continuing to invest in technology through fare reimbursement solutions/smart technology, and ITS systems are all top regional priorities. In addition to these recommendations, the Coordinated Plan proposes three recommendations unlikely to receive transit-dedicated funding, but that AMATS would strongly support and offer facilitation or technical support as necessary. These include increasing dialogue between transportation providers and significant regional employers/medical centers, continuing to increase public transit travel training, and promoting ridesharing.

Our goal is that through the implementation of the recommendations proposed within the AMATS Area Coordinated Plan, all parties involved in the transportation of the elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income individuals will work to develop transportation opportunities for the region. The plan will lay the groundwork for the most efficient use of the region’s transportation funding, vastly increased communication between partner agencies, organizations, and their clients, and as a result, maximizing the effectiveness of the many assets available to our region to provide seamless transportation to those who rely on it the most.

1 Purpose/Background

The AMATS region is home to a wealth of agencies and organizations that provide services for persons with disabilities, older persons, and low-income individuals and families. One of the greatest needs for individuals within any of these circumstantial profiles is convenient, affordable, and reliable transportation. Of the dozens of regional transportation and human services organizations that serve these individuals and families, many are connected (directly or indirectly) to the transportation needs of their clients. Some operate actual transportation assets, such as buses or accessible vans. Others subsidize the transportation expenses of their clients. Still others provide vital services for those who depend on some form of transportation – and have a vested interest in ensuring that potential clients have access to these services.

As the regional transportation planning agency for the Akron metropolitan area – including Summit and Portage counties, as well as a portion of Wayne County – AMATS is responsible for facilitating a cooperative planning process among the region’s various transportation and human services providers. By working with key stakeholders and through our public outreach efforts, it is AMATS’ goal to ensure the best possible regional transportation network and the most efficient use of the transportation assets are available within our region.

Especially in today’s volatile economy, most organizations are operating with skeleton crews and doing the best they can with the resources they have. While this arrangement fosters efficiency from a staffing perspective, heavy workloads might prohibit organizations from being able to “look up” at the big picture and recognize opportunities and partnerships which could benefit all involved parties. The over-arching purpose of this plan is to bring any transportation service gaps and inefficiencies to light, and the proposed recommendations are intended to address and overcome any issues unearthed during the planning process.

To help implement this plan’s recommendations, the federal and state governments have created specialized funding programs, which dedicate funding to projects improving transportation and mobility for persons with disabilities, senior citizens, or low-income individuals/households. These programs generally require that all funded projects are included within a locally developed, coordinated public transit – human services transportation plan. The following plan, approved by the Policy Committee, is the result of AMATS’ adherence to this requirement and will guide the future allocation of the funding programs described within.

1.1 Goals of the Coordinated Planning Process

The primary goals of this plan are to identify the needs of key populations with special transportation needs, to identify agencies and organizations capable of providing needed transportation services, to identify service gaps, and finally, to provide recommendations to address those gaps. The overarching goal is to create an environment where all stakeholders are on the same page and working together to provide the simplest, most efficient, and comprehensive human services and transportation network possible.

1.2 Stated Planning Process

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Office of Transit requires that all locally adopted coordinated public transit – human services transportation plans be developed according to a stated planning process. The previous version (2018) of the AMATS Area Coordinated Plan was developed collaboratively between AMATS, METRO, *PARTA* and in cooperation with area social/human services agencies. This plan was developed in a similar manner. The process for this version of the regional coordinated plan will be as follows:

- 1. Gather Background Information:** Review existing federal and state coordinated planning requirements, the previous AMATS Area Coordinated Plan, other existing coordinated plans, federal grant program requirements, and related literature and guidance. This will allow AMATS to develop an outline and structure to ensure that all required plan elements have been addressed, as well as to incorporate “best practices” into the forthcoming plan, tailoring them to the specific needs of the greater Akron region.
- 2. Identify Key Partners and Stakeholders:** Research the key stakeholders in the fields of transportation, social/human services agencies and organizations, non-profit organizations and advocacy groups, major employers, and medical services. Develop a list of contacts within key organizations.
- 3. Establish The Planning Committee:** A Planning Committee consisting of a group of stakeholders that actively participates in the planning process will be created. The committee will assist in gathering input from stakeholders and meet regularly to ensure the implementation of the plan’s goals and strategies.
- 4. Gather Demographic and Statistical Data:** Assemble data from the U.S. Census Bureau, state agencies, local regional transit authorities, and any other available sources. Perform initial analysis and identify preliminary gaps, regional strengths, potential concerns, etc.
- 5. Agency and Public Outreach Efforts:** Through a variety of methods, engage in conversations with transportation disadvantaged citizens, various providers of transportation, area non-profits and advocacy groups, and social/human services agencies all throughout the AMATS region (and potentially beyond).
- 6. Synthesize Information into Prioritized Regional Recommendations:** Compile all data, comments, and concerns from prior planning phases. Perform analysis to determine gaps and needs. Match these needs with eligible activities/projects from key federal and state funding programs to determine feasible recommendations. Prioritize these recommended strategies based on anticipated funding availability, outreach information, and regional priorities as stated in *Transportation Outlook 2045 and the 2020 AMATS Transit Plan* – the long-term regional transportation plan.

- 7. Circulate Draft Plan and Recommendations for Comment:** Engage in an inclusive process to ensure that stakeholders have sufficient time to review and comment on the draft plan and proposed recommendations.
- 8. Incorporate Comments into Final Draft:** Ensure that all meaningful comments are properly incorporated into the draft plan and reorganize as necessary to create a final draft of the document.
- 9. Planning Committee Approval:** Present the plan and proposed strategies to the Planning Committee for comment. Seek final approval of the document from the Planning Committee.
- 10. AMATS Committee Approval:** Present the plan and proposed strategies to the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC) for comment. Seek final approval of the document from the AMATS Policy Committee.
- 11. Submit Approved Coordinated Plan:** Officially file the locally adopted, Coordinated Plan with the Federal Transit Administration’s regional office and ODOT’s Office of Transit.

2 Geographic Area

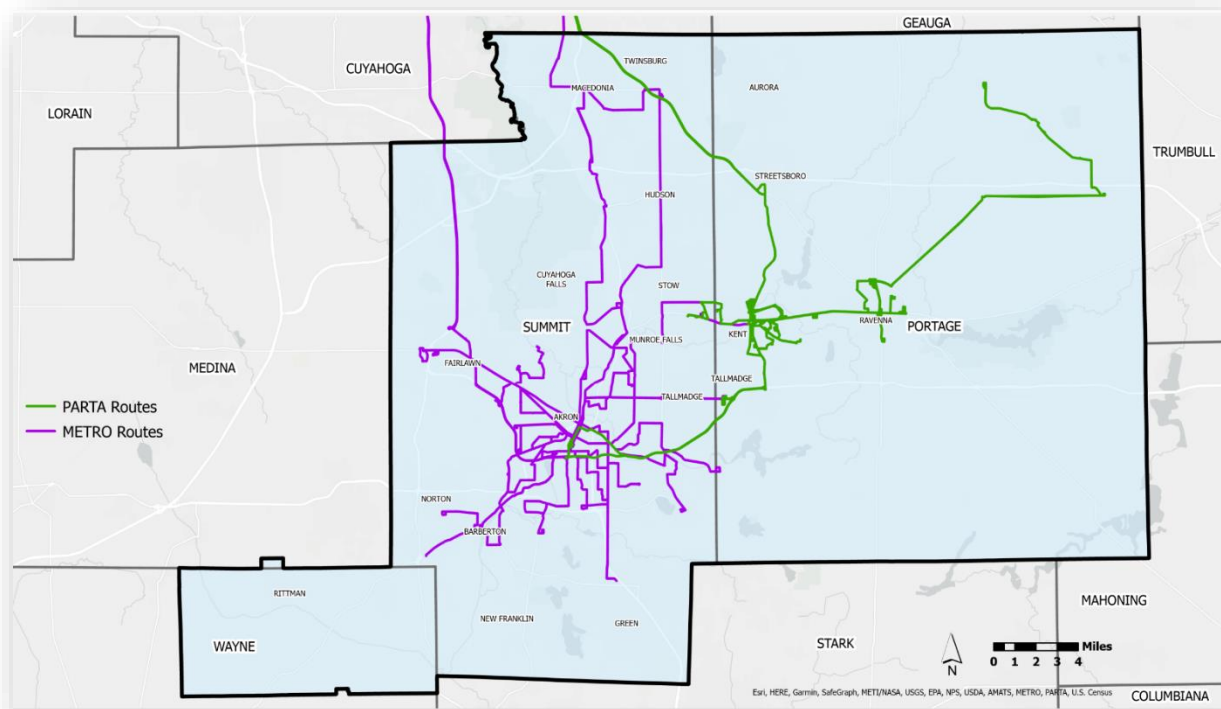
2.1 Overview of the Region

This Coordinated Plan covers all areas served by the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS). The AMATS planning area, located in Northeastern Ohio as shown to the right, is comprised of the city of Akron and the communities that are part of its regional economy. More specifically, this encompasses Summit County, Portage County, and the northeastern portion of Wayne County. This region can also be thought of as a component of the greater Northeastern Ohio economy, which includes the adjoining metropolitan areas of Cleveland, Canton, and Youngstown.



The map below shows the AMATS planning area, including the fixed routes of the region’s two transit providers, METRO (Summit County) and *PARTA* (Portage County). A brief geographical overview of each county is described in the paragraphs below.

Most of Summit County is urbanized, with the core communities of Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, and Barberton encompassing most of the older housing stock and legacy industries. Larger suburban communities, such



as the cities of Stow, Green, and Hudson, play an important role in the regional economy as well. Numerous mid-sized suburban cities, small villages, and eight townships of varying size and land use comprise the remainder of the county.

Portage County is much more rural than Summit County overall. The western portion of Portage County, closer to the cities of Akron and Cleveland, contains two cities—Kent and Ravenna— with walkable downtowns, transit and pedestrian amenities, and destination centers traditionally connected to fixed route transit services. Other portions of Portage County are mostly unincorporated, rural townships, joined by a few small villages and cities with medical and employment centers that, to date, have not been feasible to service with the current fixed route transit lines.

Although the portion of Wayne County under AMATS’ jurisdiction does not have any transit services, it is still described within this report. Much like Portage County, the northeastern portion of Wayne County is rural to suburban in nature, composed specifically of two lower-density townships, a village, and one small city (Rittman).

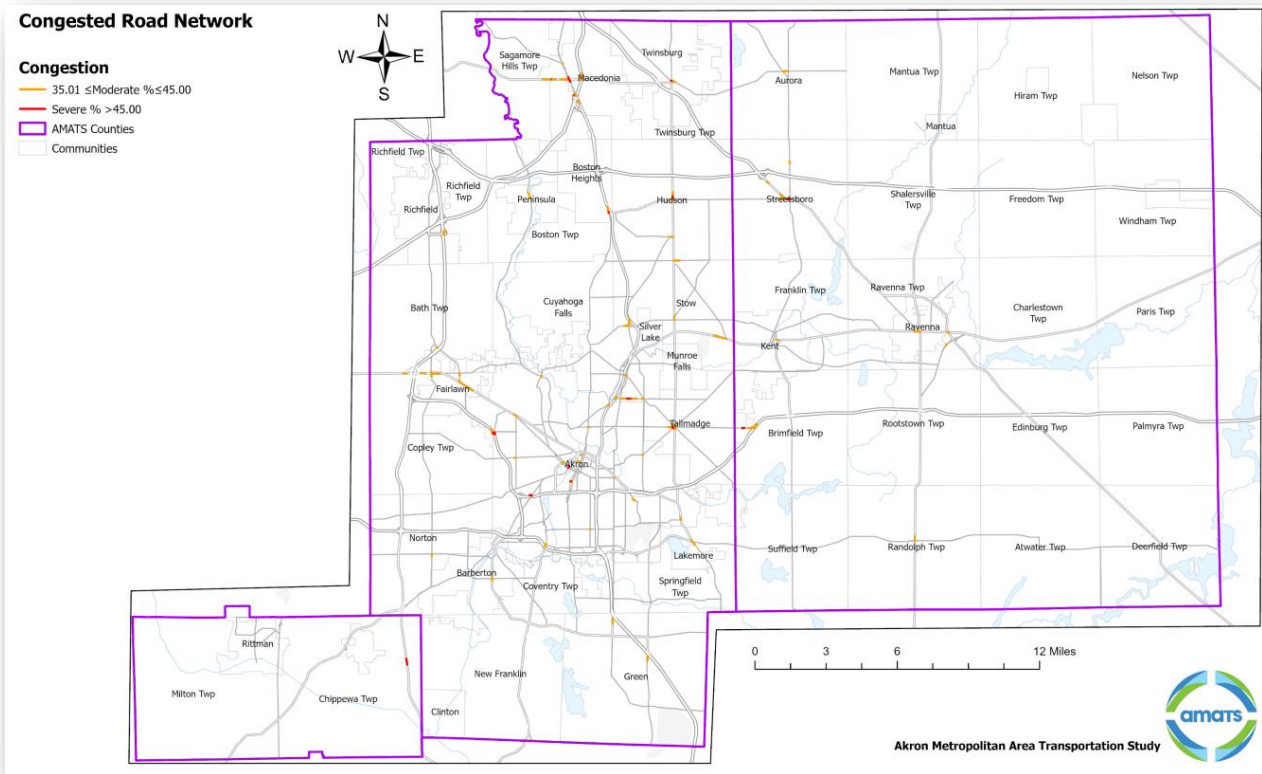
2.2 Major Trip Generators in the Geographic Area

There are numerous major trip generators throughout the greater Akron area. AMATS is responsible for developing and managing a travel-demand model network, which breaks up the region into over 800 traffic analysis zones (TAZs). According to AMATS’ most recent analysis, the following areas are defined as major activity centers, containing major commercial, industrial, medical, educational, transportation, and recreational facilities:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Akron-Canton Airport | 8) Northeast Ohio Medical University |
| 2) Downtown Akron Transit Center | 9) Chapel Hill Shopping Area |
| 3) Akron Downtown Library | 10) Summit Mall |
| 4) Akron City Hospital | 11) Montrose Shopping Area |
| 5) Akron General Hospital | 12) Macedonia Commons |
| 6) Akron Children’s Hospital | 13) The University of Akron |
| 7) Goodyear | 14) Kent State University |

Several other notable centers of activity include Streetsboro’s SR 14 corridor, the city of Green’s Massillon Rd./I-77 area, the Stow-Kent commercial area (SR 59), the Portage Crossing/State Road area of Cuyahoga Falls, the Merriman Valley section of Akron, and the central business districts of several cities within the region, such as Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Hudson, Kent, and Ravenna.

AMATS also measures and monitors congestion within the region through its Congestion Management Processes (CMP) work. Although congestion is not a measure of an area’s total level of activity, it does provide an overview of where traffic issues exist. High traffic volumes that approach or exceed a roadway’s natural capacity typically occur on roadways with higher volumes and can be an indirect indicator of an area’s overall “busyness” or level of activity. AMATS’ most recent [Annual Report on Roadway Congestion](#) notes 129 road segments with moderate congestion and 23 segments with severe congestion throughout the region. Indeed, many of these segments, as illustrated in the map below, correspond with the major activity centers listed above.



3 Population Demographics

The AMATS planning area, like any other metropolitan area, contains an assortment of communities with varying densities, land uses, and many other physical and human geographical characteristics. An important part of this plan is to analyze these demographic characteristics so that the population’s needs and any transportation gaps can be better understood. This ultimately can lead to more tailored recommendations and can help transportation providers and other agencies prioritize the implementation of such recommendations.

The data described below is analyzed at a Block Group (BG) level of geography. The analysis includes the population characteristics based on the following demographics:

Total Population	Current population and future population projections
Age	Number and percentage of elderly (65+) population
Race	Number and percentage of racial minority groups
Disability	Number and percentage of people with disabilities
Income	Number and percentage of both individuals and households with incomes below the federal poverty level
Limited-English Proficiency	Number and percentage of population that speaks English “less than very well”
Carless Households	Number and percentage of households that do not own a vehicle

A summary table for each of the aforementioned demographic characteristics is shown below. Each category will be described in greater detail in the following sections. It is important to note that the percentage of the regional total’s calculation methods vary. Data for most demographic analysis comes from the 2017-2021 five-year American Community Service (ACS) estimates, which is the most recent ACS data available. Total population data and racial data were collected from the 2020 U.S. Census because it was available, very recent, and has a much higher rate of accuracy.

Population Statistics										
Current Data	Summit County			Portage County			Wayne County *			Total AMATS Region
	2010	2020	Change	2010	2020	Change	2010	2020	Change	
Total Population	541,781	540,428	-0.25%	161,419	161,791	0.23%	20,333	19,734	-2.95%	723,549
Minority Population	105,294	139,610	32.59%	12,483	22,013	76.34%	497	1,245	150.50%	162,929
Minority Percentage	19.43%	25.83%	32.91%	7.73%	13.61%	75.99%	2.44%	6.31%	158.15%	22.52%
LEP Population	9,844	14,015	42.37%	1,519	1,907	25.54%	141	74	-47.52%	15,996
LEP Percentage	2%	2.74%	42.25%	1%	1.23%	22.80%	1%	0.39%	-46.27%	2.33%
Elderly Population	77,697	97,087	24.96%	19,544	26,995	38.12%	2,914	3,857	32.36%	128,430
Elderly Percentage	14%	17.96%	25.55%	12%	16.67%	36.42%	14%	19.28%	35.07%	17.74%
Low Income Population	73,719	67,135	-8.93%	20,494	17,159	-16.27%	1,553	1,752	12.81%	86,151
Low Income Percentage	14%	12.64%	-8.15%	13%	11.15%	-17.23%	8%	8.87%	15.24%	12.20%
Disability Population	68,909	66,003	-4.22%	18,948	18,666	-1.49%	Not Available	2,500	-	87,385
Disability Percentage	13%	15.77%	22.34%	12%	15.04%	27.12%	Not Available	0.60%	-	15.62%
Zero Vehicle Households	18,283	18,119	-0.90%	2,924	4,436	51.71%	301	426	41.53%	22,981
Zero Vehicle Percentage	8%	7.94%	-3.10%	5%	7.00%	47.99%	4%	5.26%	36.32%	7.65%

2010 Data = 2010 U.S. Census OR 2006-2010 5-year ACS

2020 Data = 2020 U.S. Census OR 2017-2021 5-year ACS

LEP = Limited English Proficiency

* AMATS portion of Wayne

Differing data sources (U.S. Census vs. ACS data) and universe size prevents a true cross-comparison; these are just the limitations of the data available but should be noted. For example, while the total regional population is listed as 723,549 in the census, it is listed as 724,055 in the ACS. Furthermore, the Disabled population only counts adults (18 years of age and older), further reducing its universe size to 559,930 (i.e., the total estimated 18+ regional population).

Further complicating a true cross comparison is that there are some Block Groups (BGs) that are only partially within the AMATS service area. In other words, BGs do not always correspond to the AMATS region’s boundaries. Two notable examples are (1.) the BGs in southern Chippewa Township, Wayne County, extending into Marshallville Village and Baughman Township—both outside the AMATS service area—and (2.) the BG covering the northern portion of the City of Rittman, Wayne County, also covers Guilford Township in Medina County, again, outside the AMATS service area. The data analyzed in the following sections is available at a BG level of geography and, unfortunately, there is no way to separate the AMATS-only portions of those block groups. Therefore, on the following charts, the numbers Total Region cells do not add up to the total of County-specific numbers.

Each of these populations were broken into five classes and mapped as different colors in the following sections. The values for each layer vary as noted in the table below:

POPULATION	CATEGORY 1	CATEGORY 2	CATEGORY 3	CATEGORY 4	CATEGORY 5
	Percentages below are of the regional avg. for each population				
Minority	Less than 50%	50% - 99%	100% - 149%	150% - 299%	At least 300%
Elderly	Less than 50%	50% - 99%	100% - 149%	150% - 199%	At least 200%
Low Income	Less than 50%	50% - 99%	100% - 249%	250% - 499%	At least 500%
Disabled	Less than 50%	50% - 99%	100% - 149%	150% - 299%	At least 300%
Carless HHs	Less than 50%	50% - 99%	100% - 249%	250% - 499%	At least 500%

3.1 Total Population

The region’s population generally follows a typical pattern for midwestern places with a rich industrial heritage: a large center-city declining in population, surrounding cities either shrinking or holding steady in population, and most growth occurring in the suburban areas further from the city center.

As of 2020, the city of Akron is Ohio’s fifth largest city, containing a population of 190,469. The city’s population peaked in 1960 at 290,351, subsequently declining in population as deindustrialization and suburbanization negatively affected most midwestern population centers. Although the city of Akron has lost about one-third of its population since its peak, the surrounding Summit County has grown modestly during this same period: 513,569 to 540,428 (1960 to 2020). However, Summit County is modestly down from its peak population (1970) of 553,371.

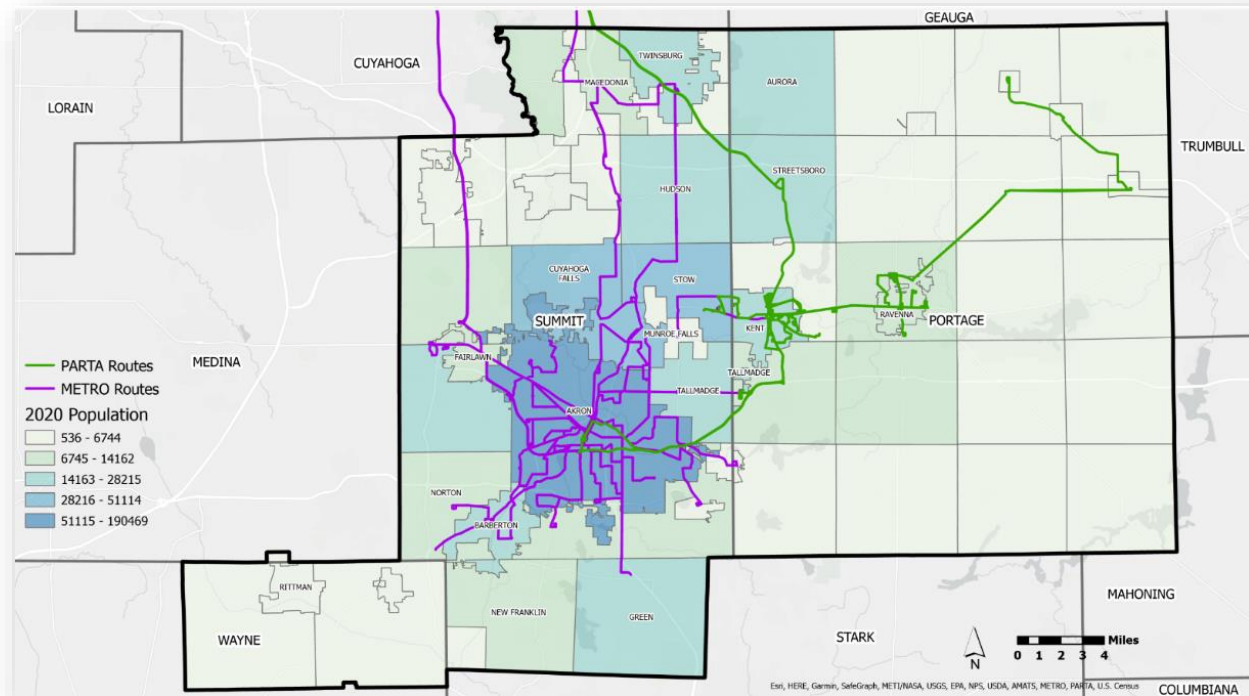
Portage County grew much more rapidly during the last half of the twentieth century and, in fact, is at its population peak in 2020. For comparison, Portage County had a population of 91,798 in 1960 compared

to a 2020 population of 161,791. Although still growing, the 2020 census indicates that this growth appears to have leveled-off; the county only grew 0.2% between 2010 and 2020.

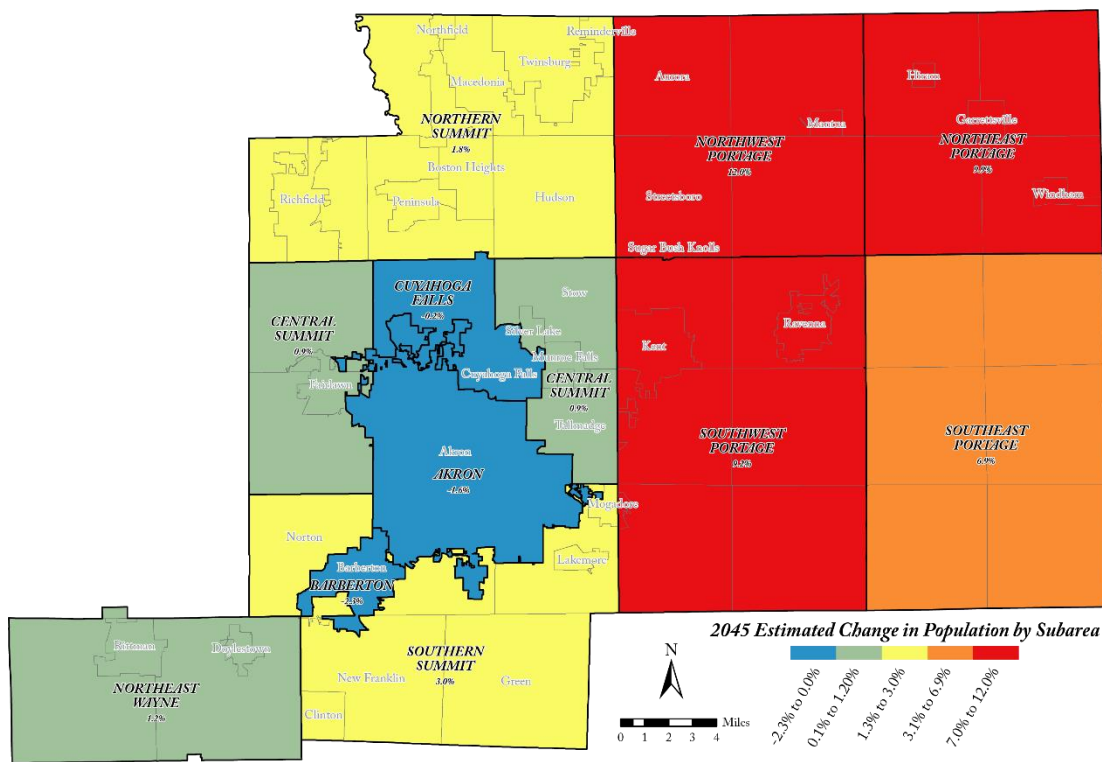
	Summit	Portage	Wayne (AMATS Portion)	Total Region
Total Population	540,428	161,791	19,734	723,549

The map below illustrates how the present-day regional population is distributed throughout the entire AMATS planning area, displaying how the populous center-city (Akron) relates to its surrounding communities and the rural environs.

Coordinated plans should also note population trends and provide projections on what will happen in the future. While short-term change is likely to be relatively minor, trends become more significant as a longer horizon is utilized.



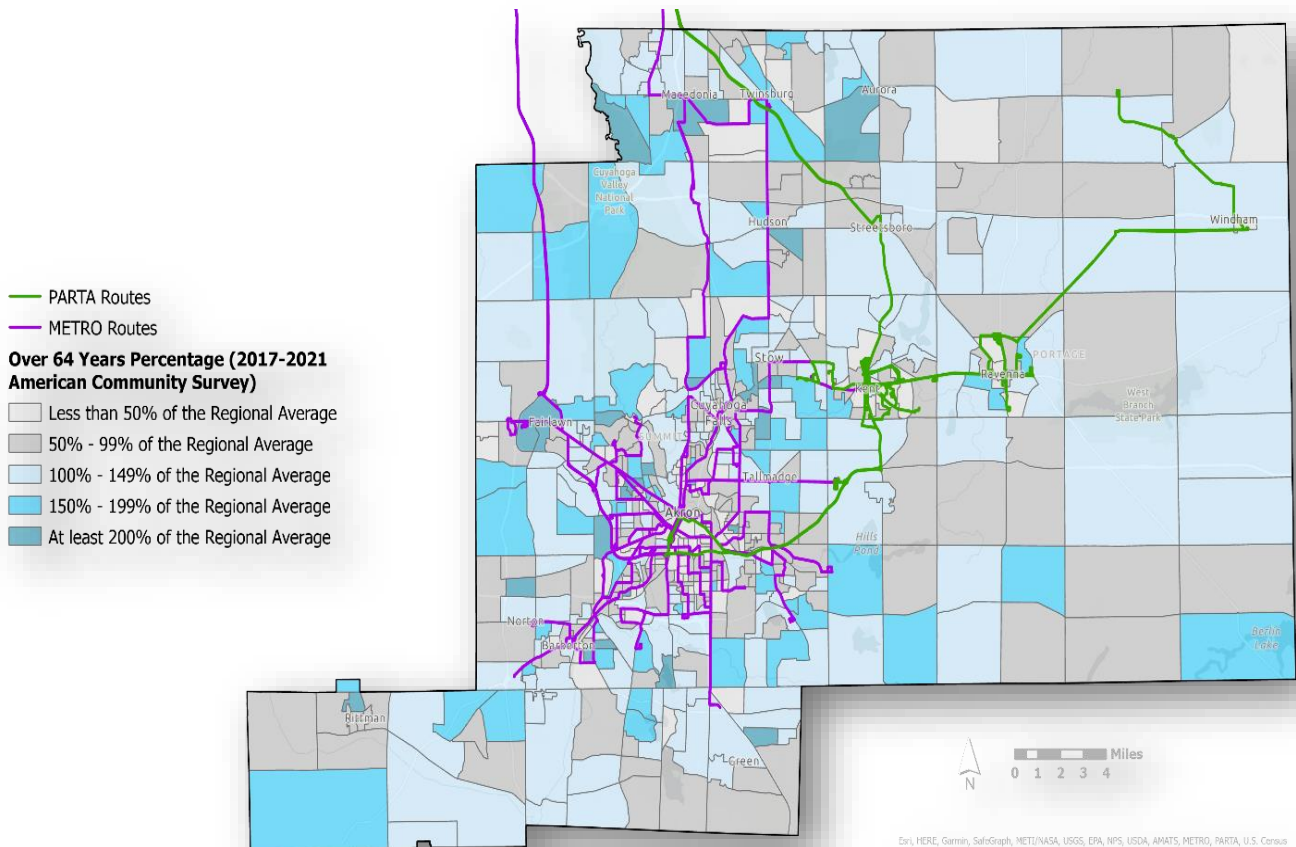
To understand these longer-term trends and their implications, AMATS prepares a *Planning Data Forecast* every five years. AMATS is currently working on an update to this report, but the current report, [AMATS 2045 Planning Data Forecast](#), shows a continuation of the population and employment trends that have occurred for several decades. The methodology used to forecast the horizon year's population results in a prediction of a modest decline in Akron's population, very modest increases in much of Summit County's population as well as Northeastern Wayne County's population, and a slightly greater increase in Portage County's population. Estimates of population change by subarea are shown in the image below. However, this *Planning Data Forecast* was prepared prior to the release of 2020 U.S. Census data population statistics which, overall, showed much slower growth in Portage County than expected, as well as greater decreases in Akron's population than expected. Therefore, the 2045 forecast's numbers may well be considered slightly optimistic compared to the current trends.



3.2 Age

Elderly populations are defined as being aged 65 and older. Within the AMATS planning area, many of the areas of high elderly populations are outside of the high-density urban core—cities like Akron, Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, and Kent—though higher elderly populations can be found throughout the region, even within portions of those cities. Some of the highest percentages of elderly populations are in BGs that are suburban in nature, containing either large condominium developments or senior-specific apartment complexes. Many rural BGs, such as those in Eastern Portage County and in Wayne County also contain elderly populations above the regional average.

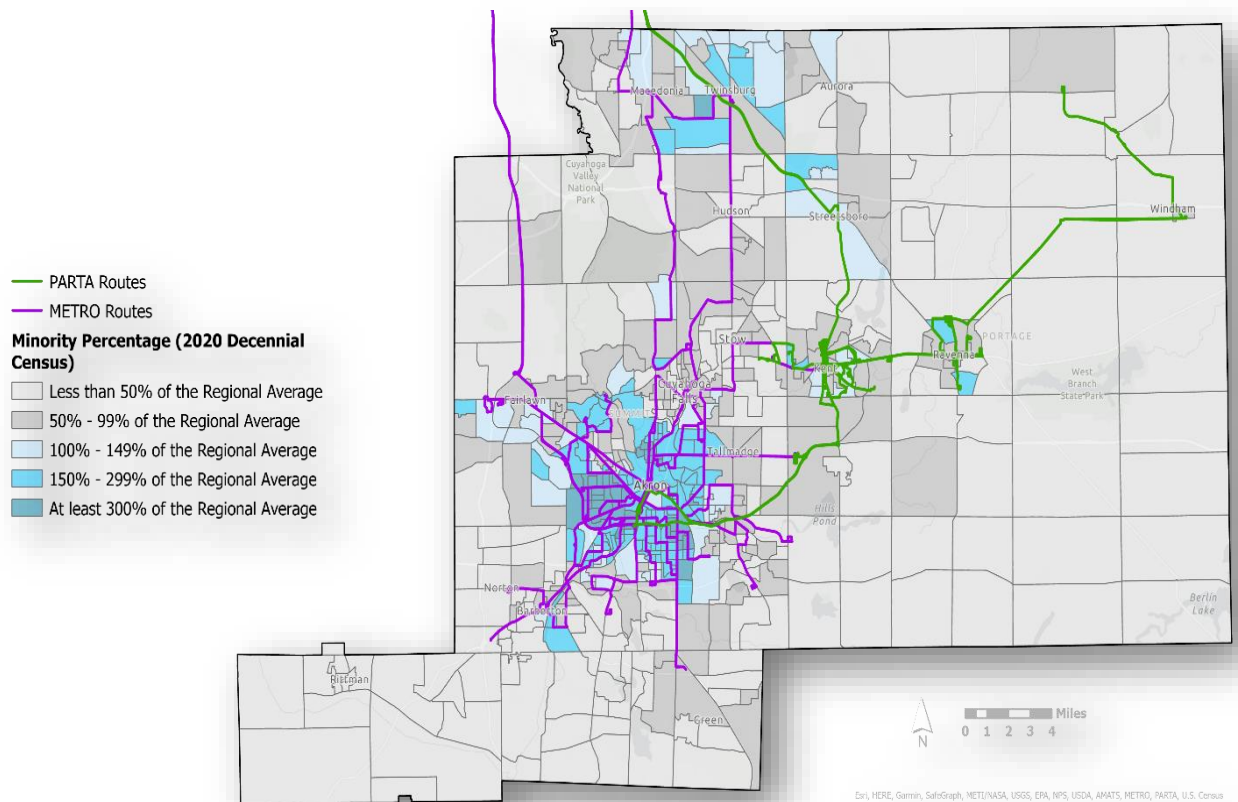
	Summit	Portage	Wayne (AMATS Portion)	Total Region
Elderly Population	97,087	26,995	3,857	128,430
Elderly Percentage	17.96%	16.67%	19.28%	17.74%



3.3 Race

Minorities are defined as non-white populations. Within the Greater Akron area, black populations are by far the most common minority group, though several other minority populations exist throughout the area. The highest concentrations of minority populations are in the city of Akron, particularly in West Akron and, to a slightly lesser extent, in the Middlebury, East Akron, and North Hill sections of the city. There is also a high minority population in the Twinsburg Heights section of Twinsburg Township. Other notable concentrations of minority populations can be found in portions of the cities of Barberton, Kent, Ravenna, Streetsboro, and Twinsburg and Copley and Twinsburg townships. Summit County has far more racial diversity than the balance of the planning region.

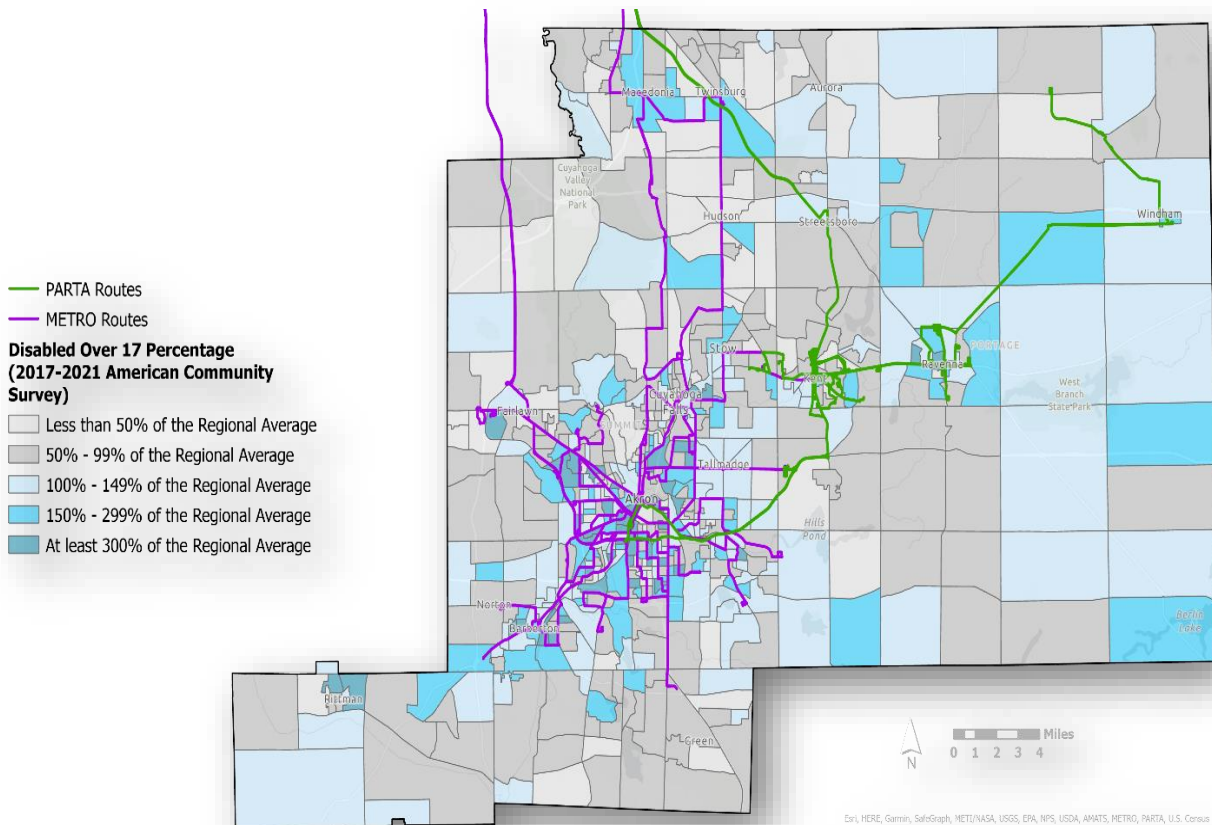
	Summit	Portage	Wayne (AMATS Portion)	Total Region
Minority Population	139,610	22,013	1,245	162,929
Minority Percentage	25.83%	13.61%	6.31%	22.52%



3.4 Disability

Disabled populations are adults—over the age of 17—who have hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, or independent living difficulties. The disabled population is more geographically scattered than the other groups analyzed. Some of the areas with the highest percentage of disabled population are within the cities of Akron and Barberton, although both have many areas of below-average disabled populations, often in adjoining BGs. Other areas of above-average disabled populations can be found throughout all portions of the planning area.

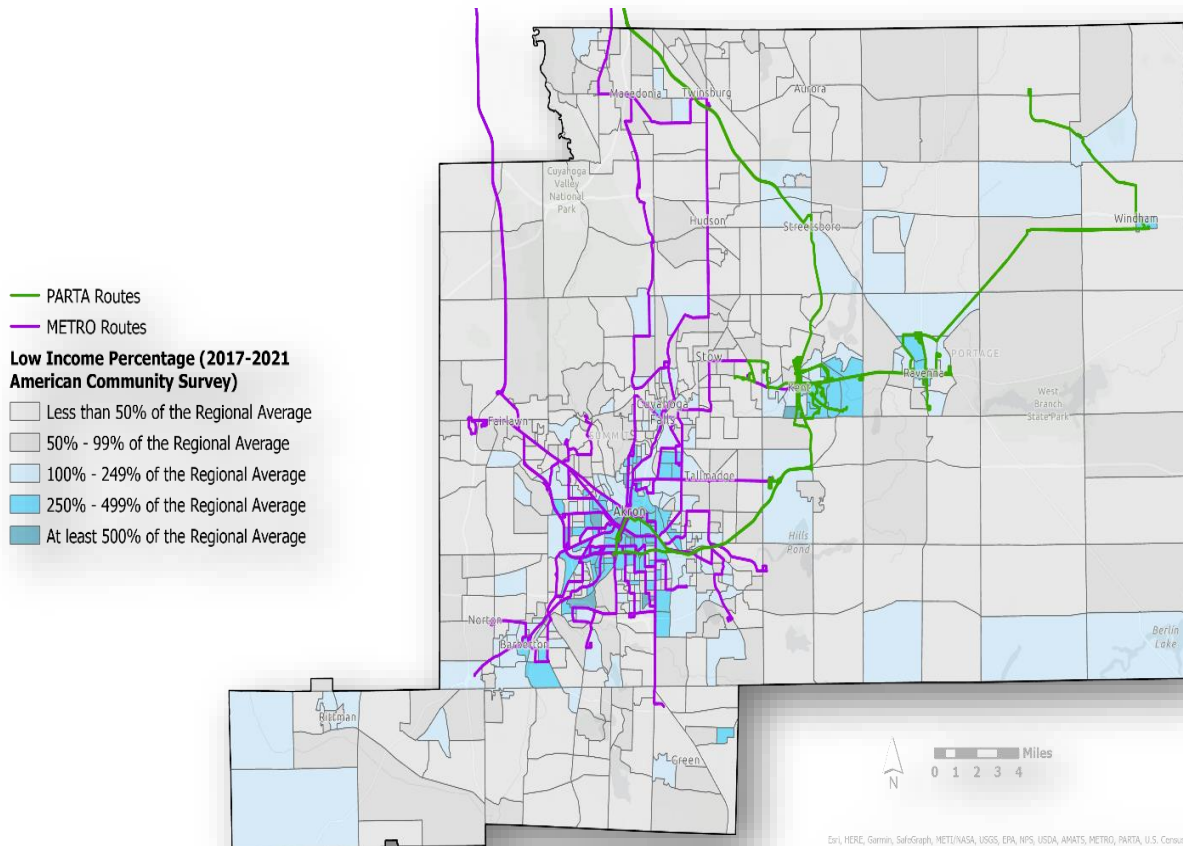
	Summit	Portage	Wayne (AMATS Portion)	Total Region
Disability Population	66,003	18,666	2,500	87,385
Disability Percentage	15.77%	15.04%	0.60%	15.62%

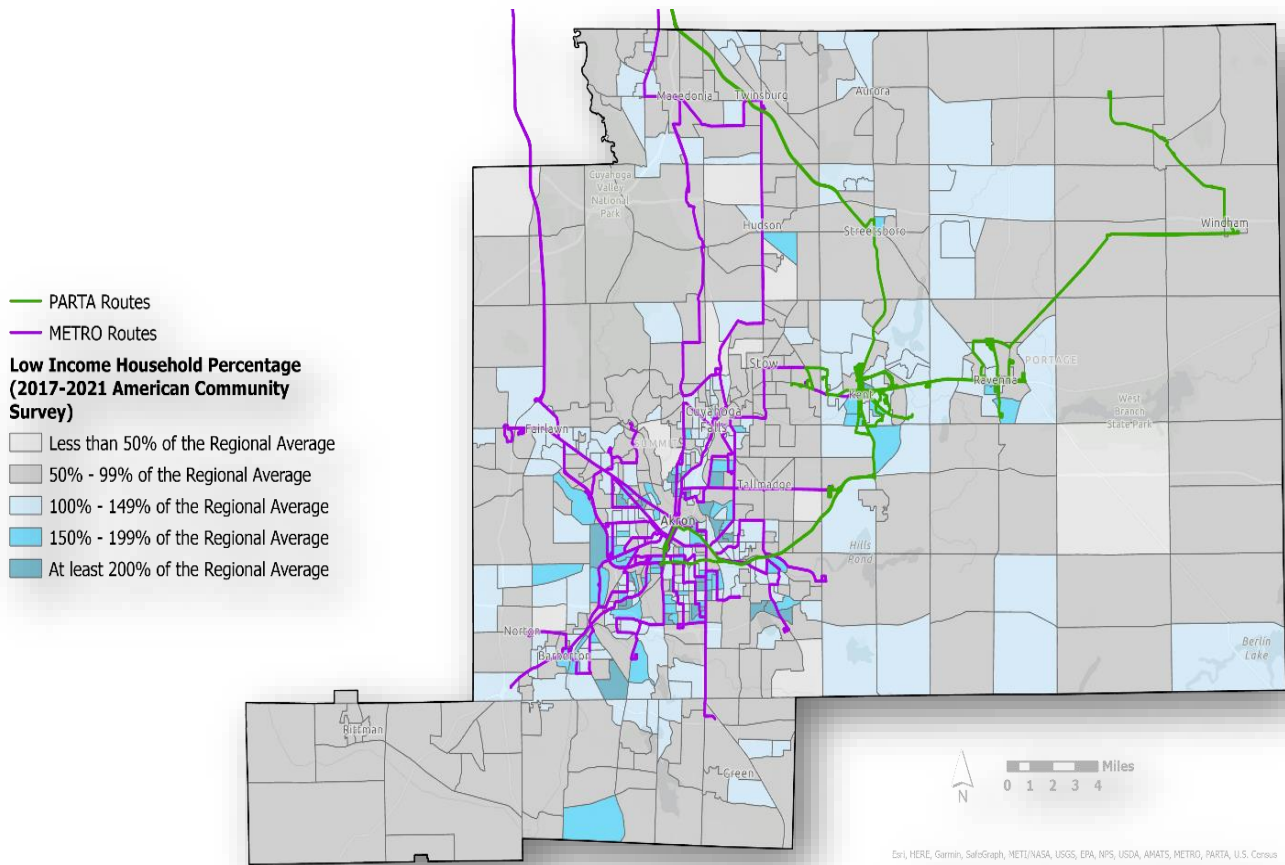


3.5 Income

Low-income is defined as the population receiving less annual income than the regional average. For this Coordinated Plan, both *household* and *individual* incomes were considered and are mapped separately (individual income is below on pages 19 and 20). In the Greater Akron area, many of the areas with the lowest income are within the city of Akron. Areas of significant low-income population are spread throughout the city, but generally are closer to the city’s center. Additionally, some sections of the cities of Kent, Ravenna, Barberton, Green, and Cuyahoga Falls contain significant low-income populations, as does the Village of Windham. There are also BGs throughout the region with above-average low-income populations, particularly in rural areas.

	Summit	Portage	Wayne (AMATS Portion)	Total Region
Low Income Population	67,135	17,159	1,752	86,151
Low Income Percentage	12.64%	11.15%	8.87%	12.20%



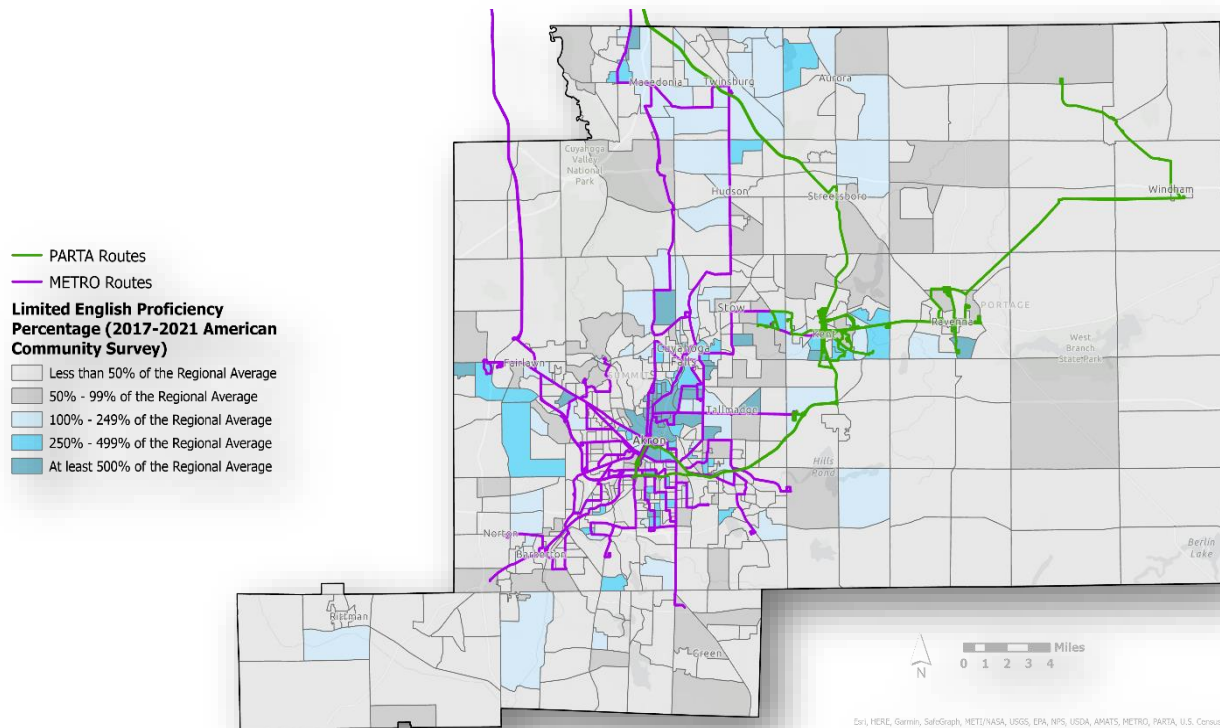


3.6 Limited-English Proficiency

Limited-English Proficiency (LEP) is defined as any person who speaks English “less than very well.” It encompasses both those who speak no or very little English, as well as those who have a decent mastery of the English language but may not be comfortable or fluent in all situations.

Within the AMATS planning area, the largest LEP groups are “Other Indo-European” languages (2.3%), “Asian-Pacific Islander” languages (1.4%), and “Spanish” Language (1.1%). The areas of highest LEP populations are located within the city of Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, and Kent. Particularly notable is the North Hill area of Akron and the southern portions of Cuyahoga Falls. The relatively recent influx of Nepali and Bhutanese populations into this portion of the planning area is a significant contributor. Additionally, the region’s two large universities—Kent State University and The University of Akron—attract a significant foreign population, at least some of whom speak English “less than very well.”

	Summit	Portage	Wayne (AMATS Portion)	Total Region
LEP Population	14,015	1,907	74	15,996
LEP Percentage	2.74%	1.23%	0.39%	2.33%

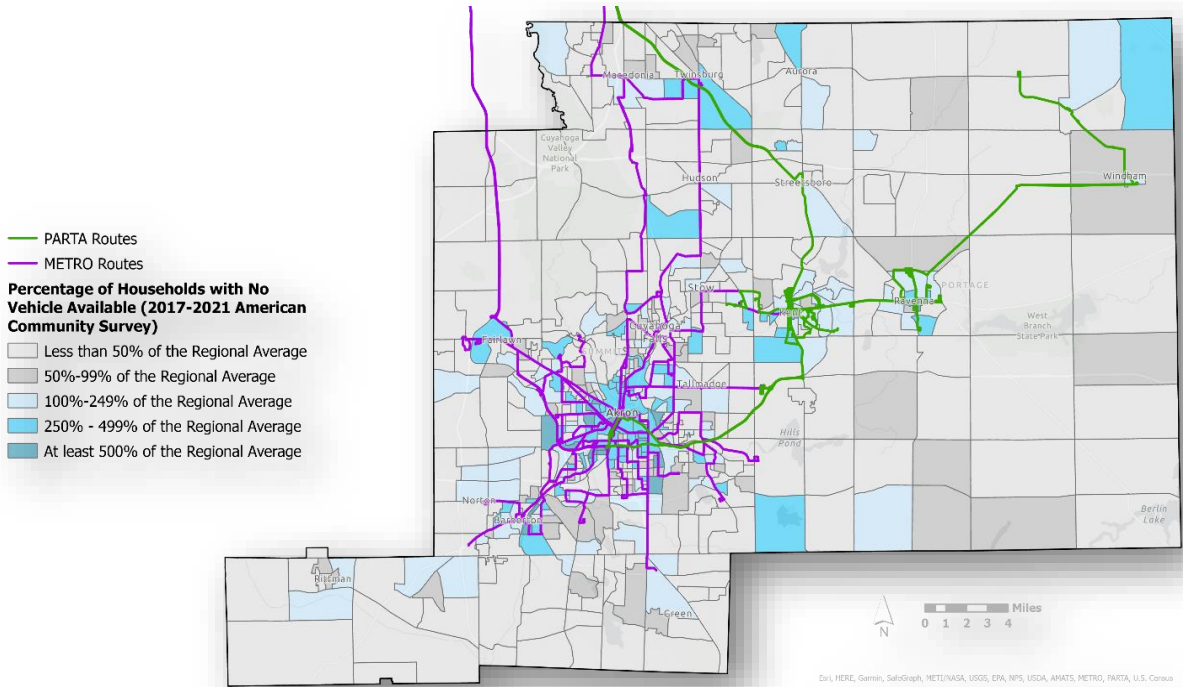


3.7 Carless Households

This data is collected at a household level rather than at an individual level and is a percentage of the households within each BG with no car available. It is important to note that the reasons for this vary. Age, presence of disabilities, lack of affordability, and personal choice are contributing factors as to why some families and individuals do not own a vehicle. Some households choose not to have a vehicle either because they don't require one or because they prefer to utilize other modes of transportation (e.g., walking, public transit). Amish populations in the region also choose not to drive because of religious and cultural edicts. Regardless of reason, it is likely that alternative modes of transportation are comparatively high in BGs with high carless households.

A strong concentration of the region's carless households can be found within the city of Akron. There is a correlation with many of the lower income BGs within the city. Other areas of carless households can be found within the planning region. Most of these tend to be in more walkable communities, BGs where large senior housing facilities exist, or, as in Northeastern Portage County, where Amish populations exist.

	Summit	Portage	Wayne (AMATS Portion)	Total Region
Zero Vehicle Households	18,119	4,436	426	22,981
Zero Vehicle Percentage	7.94%	7.00%	5.26%	7.65%



4 Transportation Partners & Their Assets

A variety of assets are available within our region to assist in the transportation of individuals with special needs. In fact, there are so many agencies and programs dedicated to transportation - transit agencies, human services agencies, non-profit providers, faith-based organizations, volunteer programs, and for-profit transportation providers – that providing an all-inclusive list of these organizations, including their clients and assets, needs to be a living document updated year-by-year. This section will provide a general summary of the transportation assets currently available to our region. *A more complete list of agencies/organizations may be found in Appendix A.*

4.1 METRO and PARTA

Public transportation agencies operate a variety of bus services (and rail services in some large metropolitan areas, such as Cleveland), typically offering standard fixed-route service, door-to-



door/demand-response service, and express bus services. Two RTAs operate within the AMATS region: METRO in Summit County and the Portage Area RTA (PARTA) in Portage County. In Ohio, RTAs are primarily funded through transit dedicated portions of the county sales tax. For this reason, they generally keep service within their home counties. However, cross-county express services illustrate that exceptions to this rule *are* possible. METRO makes connections with GCRTA in downtown Cleveland via the Northcoast Express commuter service and Southgate Transit Center using local fixed routes. Additionally, METRO provides a fixed route connection to Brimfield, which is just over the Portage County line. PARTA runs express services to both Akron and Cleveland. PARTA also offers a fixed bus route (the Interurban) that crosses into Summit County and provides connecting service with METRO at the Stow/Kent Shopping Center.

METRO provides fixed route and demand response services for Summit County, Ohio. Summit County, located in Northeast Ohio, has a population of 537,633 and is made up of 31 communities. METRO operates a fleet of 229 vehicles and is headquartered at 416 Kenmore Boulevard in Akron, Ohio. All vehicles are ADA accessible, and METRO has recently introduced fare capping as an equitable measure.

In 2020, METRO RTA completed a 10-year Strategic Plan calling for the agency to take advantage of the opportunities offered by new technology and new approaches to providing mobility to meet the needs of today, anticipating the needs of tomorrow. The first step in implementing the strategic plan was a redesign of METRO RTA's fixed route network. They now offer 24 fixed routes with the following key features: 1) five new



high-frequency 15-minute corridors and three new 30-minute routes, 2) streamlined service with increased route directness and more consistent weekend service, and 3) additional regional connections to Portage County (Brimfield) and Cuyahoga County (cities of Bedford and Maple Heights).

METRO's demand response services operate a multitude of programs, including 1) complementary ADA service for eligible persons with disabilities, 2) SCAT service for medical, work, and grocery trips for seniors and persons with disabilities who live outside the ADA-zone, 3) coordination and provision of transportation services for Medicaid eligible residents, i.e., NET to Medicaid eligible medical facilities, 4) Title III trips for eligible Direction Home (Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities) participants, and 5) two Call-A-Bus zones and a workforce development program for making suburban connections that are difficult for fixed-routes to adequately serve. In general, these programs offer shared ride services on accessible vehicles and some trips require pre-registration and advanced trip booking. ADA fare is \$2.50, SCAT fare is \$2.00, and Call-A-Bus fare is \$4.00 per one-way trip.



While SCAT was a robust demand response service for seniors, older adults, and persons with disabilities within Summit County prior to the changes brought forth due to the pandemic, the needs of the community have not diminished. Rather, data collected during the age friendly process has actually shown an increase in transportation needs to aid people in thriving in their own homes longer, thereby delaying or bypassing the need to move into a facility. The potential reduction of pressure of Medicare and Medicaid funding in having services available within the community, such as availability to access same-day

transportation services, also increases the likelihood of seniors thriving within their own homes in their known neighborhoods. The data also shows that community engagement and socialization is important to seniors, mental health professionals also tout the importance of socialization, having seen the negative effects of isolation during the pandemic.

PARTA provides fixed routes and demand response services for Portage County, Ohio. Portage County, located in Northeast Ohio, has a population of 162,382 and is made up of 30 cities, villages, and townships. PARTA operates a fleet of 62 revenue vehicles, all of which are accessible for individuals with disabilities. PARTA's administrative offices and maintenance garage are located at 2000 Summit Road in Kent, Ohio.



PARTA's fixed route service operates two divisions—county and campus. County service offers 10 fixed routes with the highest frequency route operating every 30 minutes. County routes operate Monday through Saturday with express service to Akron and Cleveland operating Monday through Friday. PARTA also has a contract with Kent State University to operate campus service. Campus service consists of five fixed routes with frequencies ranging between 9 and 15 minutes, Monday through Friday, and reduced service on Saturday and Sunday. PARTA offers complementary ADA paratransit service for individuals with disabilities whose pick-up location and destinations are no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from a fixed route. PARTA introduced fare capping in the summer of 2023, making fixed route services equitable for all riders, while maintaining cash as a payment option.



PARTA's demand response service operates Monday through Friday, 5:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m., and Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Demand response service covers all of Portage County; however, some townships are limited to certain days of the week. For those who qualify, PARTA provides Title III trips for Direction Home (Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities) participants; and, in addition, free transportation to medical appointments is available through the NET program. PARTA's ADA fare is \$2.00, reduced fare for the elderly and disabled is \$3.00, and the general public fare is \$6.00 per one-way trip.

The COVID-19 pandemic had an immediate and significant impact on public transportation ridership. Ridership declines began in mid-March 2020, coinciding with stay-at-home emergency orders in certain areas of the state and country.



After a rapid decline in March and April 2020, public transit ridership recovered quickly to approximately 37 percent of pre-pandemic ridership as of July 2020 nationwide. National transit ridership remained at that approximate level until early 2021, rising to 42 percent of pre-pandemic levels by April 2021 and has been steadily rising back towards pre-pandemic levels. METRO and *PARTA* have experienced similar trends in ridership, and both have recovered but are still short of pre-pandemic levels of ridership.

Key Transit Statistics

		
Large Buses	131	32
Small Buses/Vans	91	30
Transit Center	Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center 631 S. Broadway St., Akron	Kent Central Gateway 201 E. Erie St., Kent
# of Fixed Routes	24	8 County, 2 Express, 5 Campus
# of Fixed Route Passengers (2022)	3,470,765	718,850
# Demand Response Passengers (2022)	187,405	43,554
Central Office	416 Kenmore Blvd., Akron	2000 Summit Rd., Kent
Contact	https://www.yourmetrobus.org/	https://www.partaonline.org/

4.2 Other Northeast Ohio RTAs

In addition to METRO and *PARTA*, Northeast Ohio is home to several other RTAs. While only SARTA (see below) currently provides service directly to the AMATS region, partnerships with the RTAs would be mutually beneficial to the residents and businesses of all surrounding counties. These RTAs include:

Geauga Transit (GT) – Operated by Laketran, GT provides door-to-door, demand-response service throughout Geauga County. Because the county is primarily rural, urban fixed-route service is not feasible, and is, therefore, not available. Trips can be scheduled up to one week in advance or there are a limited number of same day trips available. Transportation is available throughout Geauga County and to limited destinations across the county line into Cuyahoga and Lake counties.

Greater Cleveland RTA (GCRTA) – Cleveland/Cuyahoga County’s transit agency has a comprehensive network of many different types of services. It offers a fixed-route bus network, the nation’s preeminent bus rapid transit (BRT) route, light and heavy rail service, as well as demand-response paratransit services. GCRTA operates many park-and-ride stations throughout Cuyahoga County, greatly increasing the appeal of commuting from suburban cities into downtown Cleveland. Currently, GCRTA offers no service beyond the Cuyahoga County border.

Laketran—Lake County’s public transportation system offers nine local routes, door-to-door Dial-A-Ride, and three commuter Park-n-Ride routes with service between Lake County and Downtown Cleveland. Laketran provides public transportation services to all Lake County residents with a special emphasis on meeting the transportation needs of senior citizens and people with disabilities. Dial-A-Ride provides service anywhere within Lake County, as well as major medical facilities in the Greater Cleveland area. It is available to all residents of Lake County, and vehicles are equipped to meet the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities.

Lorain County Transit (LCT) – LCT serves the cities of Elyria and Lorain with four fixed-route bus lines, ADA service, and Dial-A-Ride service within Lorain County. LCT currently does not provide service to Cleveland. Lorain County veterans ride for free.

Medina County Public Transit (MCPT) – Serving Medina County, this RTA provides “loop” routes in the cities of Medina and Brunswick, as well as demand-response service throughout the entire county. Depending on availability, MCPT may also be able to provide demand response service to Summit and Cuyahoga counties. The “loop” routes are semi-fixed, in that they follow a sequence of scheduled stop locations but can deviate from the route by one mile upon request. For a small additional charge, MCPT will transport passengers beyond the county border to meet up with other RTAs, such as Summit County’s METRO or Cuyahoga County’s GCRTA.

Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) – As the RTA for Stark County, SARTA operates 34 total fixed routes (including late night loops and specialty routes) and serves Canton, Massillon, Alliance, and several smaller communities. SARTA provides valuable express service from downtown Canton to the Akron-Canton Airport, METRO’s RKP Transit Center in Akron, as well as weekday trips to the Cleveland VA. In addition to fixed-route bus service, SARTA provides Proline, a shared-ride, origin-to-destination transportation service for individuals whose disabilities prevent them from independently utilizing SARTA’s fixed routes.

SARTA also operates **WCT with Community Action Wayne/Medina**. WCT provides countywide service Monday through Saturday from 6:00 a.m. to Midnight. WCT is a reservation, demand response service.

Western Reserve Transit Authority (WRTA) – As Youngstown/Mahoning County’s public transit provider, WRTA operates several fixed-route bus lines, as well as an origin-destination service for any Mahoning County resident. The agency runs an express route into Trumbull County and provides fixed route service in the city of Warren.

4.3 NEORide

Stemming from a recommendation from the 2014 Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan, NEORide was established as a Council of Governments (COG) in 2014, under Ohio law Chapter 167 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC). The first three members of this regional *Council of Governments* were METRO, *PARTA*, and SARTA. As of August 2023, NEORide now includes 29 members across Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, and is growing each year.

The purpose of NEORide is to plan, promote, further, and enhance transportation options within and around the jurisdictions of members and in the state of Ohio by encouraging cooperative arrangements and coordination action among the members and between the members and other governmental agencies, private persons, corporations, or agencies.

4.4 Government Agencies

Several government agencies provide direct transportation services for the clients that they serve. Other government agencies may not provide much, if any, transportation service but are actively engaged in identifying the senior and developmentally disabled population. The following table (based on survey data) illustrates the major government agencies serving the population focused in the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan within the AMATS region: County Department of Job and Family Services schedule and, in some cases, provide NET, which is a statewide program administered by the Summit County Department of Job and Family Services (SCDJFS) for Medicaid-eligible residents. NET provides transportation to and from any Medicaid-covered appointments. Authorization for transportation may be in the form of bus passes or curb-to-curb service.

Table - Government Agencies Providing Transportation Services

Summit County			
Name	Clients Served	Destinations Served	Fleet Size
Summit County Dept. of Job and Family Services	Low-Income, Senior Citizens, Persons with Disabilities		No fleet. NET Trips Contracted to other providers
State of Ohio Department on Aging	Senior Citizens		No Fleet. Supports coordination of service
Summit Co. Development Disabilities Board	Persons with Disabilities		
Summit County Veterans Service Commission	Veterans	VA Medical Centers	Fleet size N/A
Portage County			
Name	Clients Served	Destinations Served	Fleet Size
Portage County Dept. of Job and Family Services	Low-Income, Senior Citizens, Persons with Disabilities	Medical Appointments	Multiple Vehicles, NET Trips contracted to other providers
Portage County Veterans Service Commission	Veterans	VA Medical Centers	3 Vans – Not Accessible

Wayne County			
Name	Clients Served	Destinations Served	Fleet Size
Wayne County Dept. of Job and Family Services	Low-Income, Senior Citizens, Persons with Disabilities	Not Specified	Not Available
Wayne County Veterans Service Commission	Veterans	VA Medical Centers	Not Available

4.5 Not-for-Profit Transportation Providers

Several not-for-profit organizations provide transportation for the clients that they serve. Although most of these organizations receive funding assistance or contractual work from government agencies, they are not affiliated with any government agency. The table on page 31 illustrates the key not-for-profit providers of transportation in the AMATS region: Services outside of METRO and *PARTA* are covered by a limited number of non-profit organizations listed below that provide trips to the general public, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.

4.6 Private (for profit) Transportation Providers

These firms serve the general public, typically in the form of taxi, limousine, or charter bus services. In some cases, they provide contractual services for local transit agencies and other government agencies. Some advantages that these firms have over public transit and not-for-profit providers of transportation are 24-hour, 365 days-a-year service, as well as same-day service. Most companies use sedans as their standard operational vehicles, which have wide doorways, allowing for easy entrances and exits for people with limited mobility. In addition, some of these providers own fully accessible vans or buses, equipped with mobility device lifts and/or storage. For those paying their own fare (i.e., not subsidized by a social service or government agency), some companies offer discounts to qualified riders, such as students, veterans, seniors, and frequent riders. The table on page 32 lists some of the key private transportation providers within the AMATS region.

Non profit Transportation Providers						
Name	Areas Served	Clients Served	Services	Fleet Size	Phone Number	Website
Emmanuel Ventures Limited (Morningstar Location)	Summit	School Transportation, Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Seniors	Senior, Paratransit and Special Needs Transportation Services	25 ADA Vans	(330) 412-4679	https://www.emmanuelventureslimited.com/contact
Easter Seals of Southern Ohio (Formerly Northern Ohio)	Summit	Persons with Disabilities	Adult Day in home services, transportation	3 ADA Vans	(234) 417-0250	https://www.easterseals.com/centralohio/our-programs/adult-services/adult-day-services-cuyahoga.html
Family and Community Services (Emerald Transportation)	Summit, Portage	Underserved community, Seniors, Persons with disabilities, Veterans.	A wide variety of social services	8 Vans (2 ADA Vans)	(330) 297-7027	https://fcsserves.org/
Hattie Larlham	Summit and Portage	Children and Adults with Developmental Disabilities	A wide variety including but not limited to transportation to and from day programs, educational programs, recreational and social activities,	71 ADA small buses and vans	(330) 486-5307	https://www.hattielarlham.org/
Independence of Portage County	Portage	Persons with Disabilities	comprehensive variety of residential and support services	Multiple accessible vehicles for their clients	(330) 296-2851	https://indport2.org/
Jewish Family Service of Akron	Summit	Seniors and Adults	Adult and Senior, Counseling, Care Management and Education	2 Vans	(330)-867-3388	https://www.jfsakron.org/
Jin Huo Community	Summit	Seniors and Adults	Social services through education, advocacy, and community/inter-generational engagement	2 Vans	(330)842-6090	
Open M	Summit	Underserved Adults	Food Services, Health Services and Employment Services for underserved adults	1 Van	(330) 434-0110	https://www.openm.org/about-us
Scenic View Transportation	Stark, Summit, Portage	Seniors, Persons with Disabilities and underserved communities	non-emergency transportation services to the elderly, underprivileged and disabled population to medical, non-medical	40 ADA vehicles	(330) 244-0657	https://www.scenicviewtransportation.com/
United Disability Services (UDS)	Summit	Persons with Disabilities	Various adult service programs, transportation groups under contract, NET program	40 ADA Small buses and vans	(330) 762-9755	https://www.udsakron.org/

Private For Profit Transportation Providers						
Name	Areas Served	Clients Served	Services	Transportation Services	Phone Number	Website
Active Transportation LLC	Summit	Seniors, Non emergency Medical	Non-emergency medical transportation	Multiple ADA vehicles	(330) 818-7474	https://www.activetransportationllc.com/
City Yellow Cab	Summit, Portage and beyond	General Public, NET Provided Trips and ADA trips	Taxi Company	Multiple vehicles-2 ADA Vans	(330) 253-3141	https://www.cityyellowcab.com
Falls Suburban Services	Summit	General Public	Taxi Company	Multiple vehicles	(330) 929-3121	
LifeCare Medical Services	Summit, Portage	General Public, emergency and non emergency	Emergency and non-emergency medical transportation serving medical facilities and communities located in northeast, central, and southwest Ohio.	Multiple vehicles	(330) 899-0022	http://lcmcd.org/
T.L Worldwide	Summit, Portage and Beyond	General Public, Individuals with disabilities, Seniors.	Limo, taxi, ADA, Senior and NET contracted trips	Multiple Vehicles (25 ADA accessible)	(330) 733-5372	https://www.theworldwidetrans.com/

4.7 Safety

All three agencies responsible for drafting this plan are committed to safety. Following is a summary of current efforts underway to ensure that our area roadways are safer, with a specific focus on public transit.

As the region's transportation planning agency, AMATS is responsible for reporting on crash data, developing a high-injury network (HIN), tying funding policies toward projects which are likely to improve safety, and for completing plans to recommend various strategic recommendations. Two core documents are central to this work:

First, AMATS has, for many years, produced an annual [Traffic Crash Report](#), which reports on the segments and intersections where crashes occur. Total number of crashes and severity of crashes are both analyzed in order to provide a prioritized and ranked list. Significant work goes into correctly coding all crashes that occur throughout a given year. The annual Crash Report currently considers crashes over a three-year window. Because AMATS also is the agency responsible for awarding federal transportation funds coming into the region, local funding policies incentivize projects ranking high on these lists. This report does not specifically take into account public transit, but overall roadway safety is considered for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle crashes, all of which affect the overall transportation system.

More recently, AMATS and its regional partners—including METRO and *PARTA*—were involved in developing the region's first [Safe Streets for All \(SS4A\) Action Plan](#). This effort began in the fall of 2022 and was finalized in May 2023. This plan dovetails off the work done through AMATS' Annual Crash Reports but goes much further in several new directions. SS4A is a new federal funding program established through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (the nation's current transportation funding bill).

The completed Action Plan contains several components relating to the safety of those who rely on public or human service transportation. While it's beyond the scope of this plan to get into these details, a few key points are worth mentioning. Most notable is that the foundation of SS4A in the region has committed to a *Vision Zero* goal, the idea being to reduce and eventually eliminate all traffic crashes causing a fatality or serious injury. To achieve this *Vision Zero* goal, it is essential to understand that not all crashes can be eliminated through design improvements alone. Rather, the reasons for such crashes are complicated, wide-ranging, and include behavioral shortcomings. Committing to *Vision Zero*, therefore, requires a combination of project-based recommendations and strategic recommendations to improve the region's safety.

To effectively plan for reducing serious crashes, a HIN was created based off the frequency of fatal and serious injury (FSI) crashes at a given location over a five-year period. This is similar to some of the analysis that goes into the annual Traffic Crash Report but considers a longer window of time in its analysis. A [HIN web-application](#) was developed to display the HIN and other important data about the crashes occurring throughout the region and the demographics of the region itself.

More specific recommendations to transit can be found in Chapter 7 (pages 32-33) of the SS4A Action Plan. This section, developed in close collaboration with METRO and PARTA, includes general strategic recommendations to improve safety (both while riding and when accessing transit), high-priority transit corridors within each region, and strategies aimed at improving coordination between agencies; basically, an abridged version of what this Coordinated Plan seeks to accomplish.

The area's two regional transit agencies, METRO and PARTA, are committed to providing safe and reliable public transit services to the greater part of the AMATS region. To that end, METRO and PARTA have each developed a Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) in coordination with the Federal Transit Administration. Each plan exceeds the requirements outlined in the federal guidance. To foster safety as part of their public service, METRO and PARTA have developed a Safety Management System (SMS), which entails a performance-based approach to safety. The purpose of the PTASP is to protect passengers, the public, employees, and bus system property.

The SMS is comprised of the following four components:

1. Safety Management Policy – including safety accountabilities and responsibilities, integration with public safety and emergency management, and documentation and records.
2. Safety Risk Management – including hazard identification and analysis, risk evaluation, and mitigation based on a pre-defined decision process.
3. Safety Assurance - including safety performance monitoring, internal safety audits, accident investigations, employee reporting systems, and safety certification and configuration management.
4. Safety Promotion – includes communication of safety information to employees and training to achieve and maintain competencies.

The purpose of this approach is to integrate all levels of operations to identify, assess, and control safety risks. The process is data driven and involves all members of the organization. The SMS is reviewed annually, and performance is assessed by both agencies.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has developed a host of materials to help small bus transit providers work with their state DOTs on Agency Safety Plan (ASP) development. Social service agencies are not required to meet this obligation. However, the FTA offers [resources for developing an SMS to suit the needs](#) of small providers.

5 Outreach

Although the administrative staff for each transit agency and AMATS prepared this plan, it was essential to understand the concerns, opinions, and preferences of key stakeholders and the general public at key points during the process. AMATS sought stakeholder and public input at various points during the creation of this locally adopted, Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan. Summaries of these outreach efforts are included below.

5.1 Planning Committee Meetings

METRO and *PARTA* assisted in gathering a list of stakeholders that either work with or provide transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and/or people with low incomes. Various agencies were identified, including agencies representing:

- a. Public transit
- b. Senior center or other organization serving older adults
- c. Local county and/or city government
- d. Department of Developmental Disabilities (local/regional) office and programs
- e. Department of Health and Human Services office (local/regional)
- f. Department of Job and Family Services office
- g. Private transportation providers

Stakeholders were invited to participate in the Planning Committee. METRO and *PARTA* also invited some of their loyal transit riders to ensure that citizen concerns and ideas were represented within the group.

Two meetings were held with the Planning Committee, as shown below:

	Meeting #1	Meeting #2
Date	August 8, 2023	August 28, 2023
Location	METRO RKP Transit Center (631 S. Broadway, Akron); Zoom option available as well	METRO RKP Transit Center (631 S. Broadway, Akron); Zoom option available as well
Purpose of the Meeting	The three agencies presented on the purpose/goals of the plan, the role of the Planning Committee, the 2018 plan’s gaps and recommendations, the region’s demographics and the 2023 survey results. An open discussion followed where attendees discussed gaps and ideas for recommendations.	Presentation of final plan; open discussion to hear any comments or reactions to the draft plan, discuss next steps that would occur so that the Planning Committee could eventually approve the plan.
Participation	<i>PARTA</i> invited 41 individuals to participate in the Planning Committee; 4 riders and 33 separate agencies. 16 individuals participated including 2 riders and 9 agencies. METRO invited.	18 members attended. Committee provided information and feedback on gaps and recommendations for the coordinated plan draft in writing or otherwise. Revised initial draft to provide

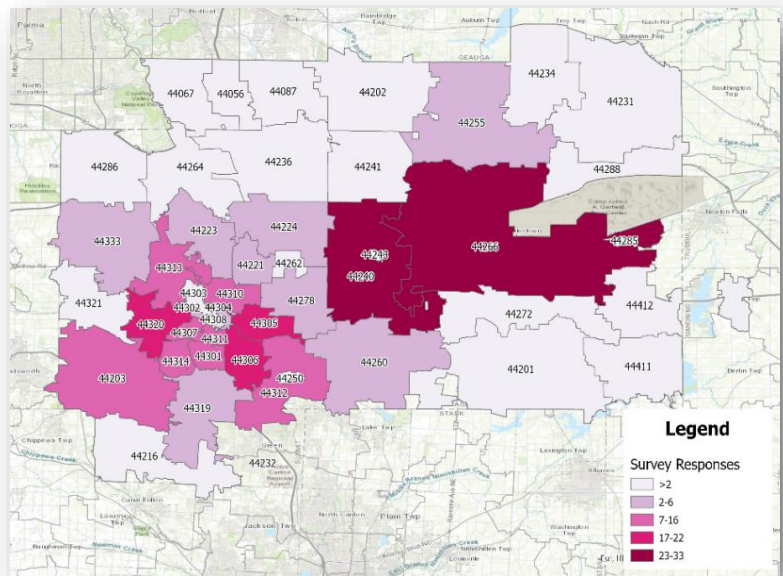
	20 Individuals and 19 agreed to participate on the Planning Committee.	further comments on gaps and recommendations.
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5.2 Online and Paper Surveys

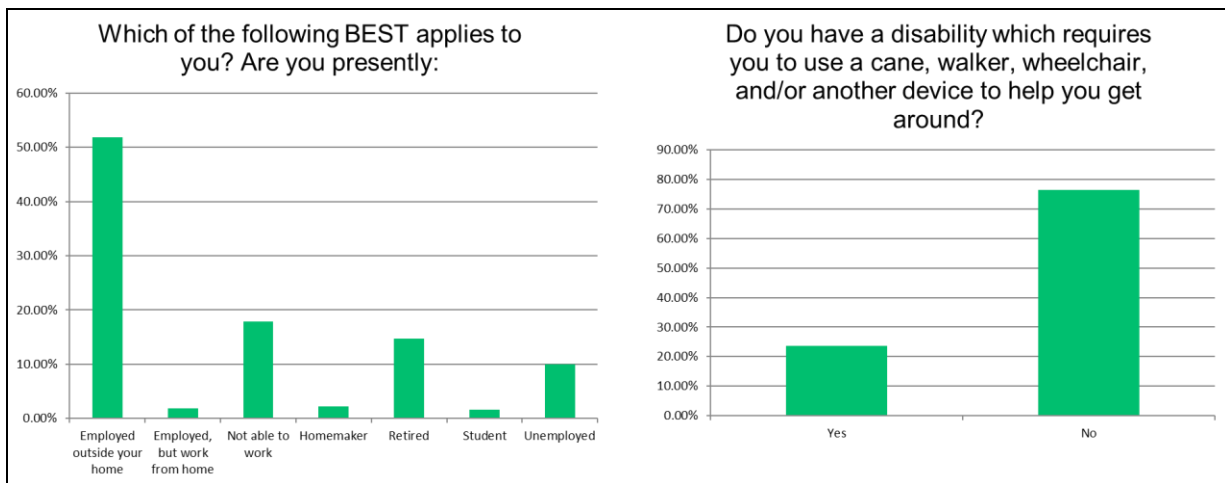
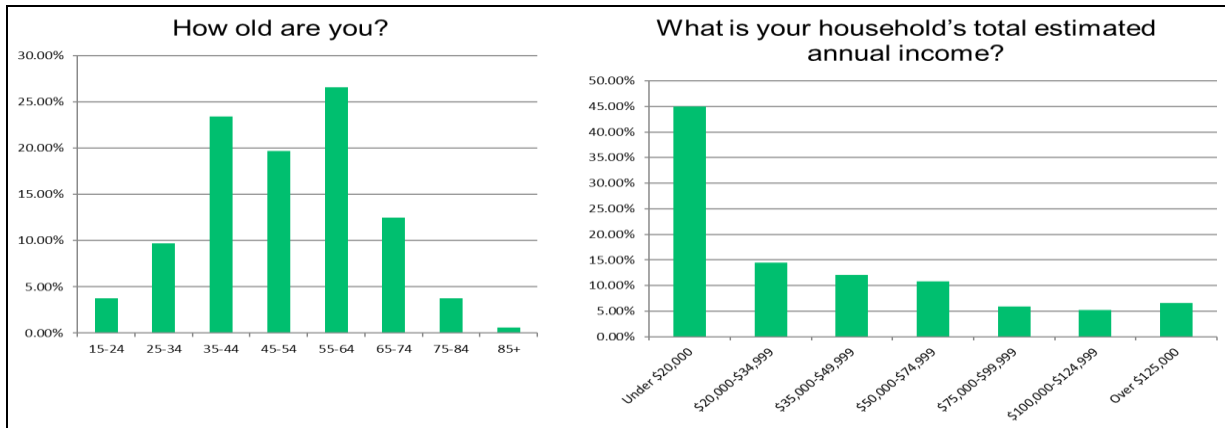
An online survey was prepared in May 2023 in order to gauge citizens’ public and human service transportation needs, learn where transportation gaps exist, and better understand how people are currently using various services. Great effort was made to disseminate the survey to a broad number of citizens, particularly those who regularly rely on transportation services. In total, 295 online surveys were returned in addition to 32 paper surveys with the same questions, providing a solid response rate of 327 responses. The maps and graphs below pertain to the online survey results. However, where applicable, results from the paper surveys are also discussed. Overall, results from the paper surveys were generally similar to the online survey results.

About the respondents

The map to the right shows the survey response rate by zip code. The highest response rates came from the Kent and Ravenna areas in Portage County. Because the paper surveys were distributed in Portage County, the Kent and Ravenna zip codes actually have even higher participation. Within Summit County, Akron had the highest response rates, which were highest in the West Akron, Goodyear Heights, Middlebury, and East Akron (Arlington Road corridor) neighborhoods.

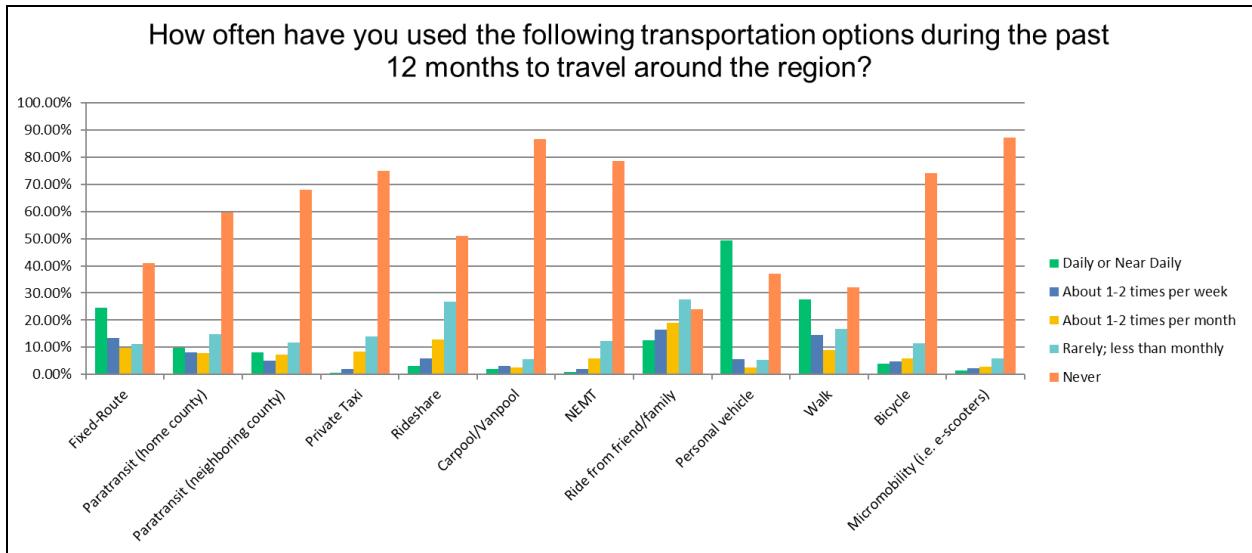


Respondents were asked a variety of questions about themselves, the results of which are shown beginning on page 37. Some notable highlights include that the vast majority of respondents were in the three lowest income brackets, with 45% making less than \$20,000 per year. Also, despite concerted efforts to reach physically disabled and senior populations, response rates in these categories were not as high as might be expected.

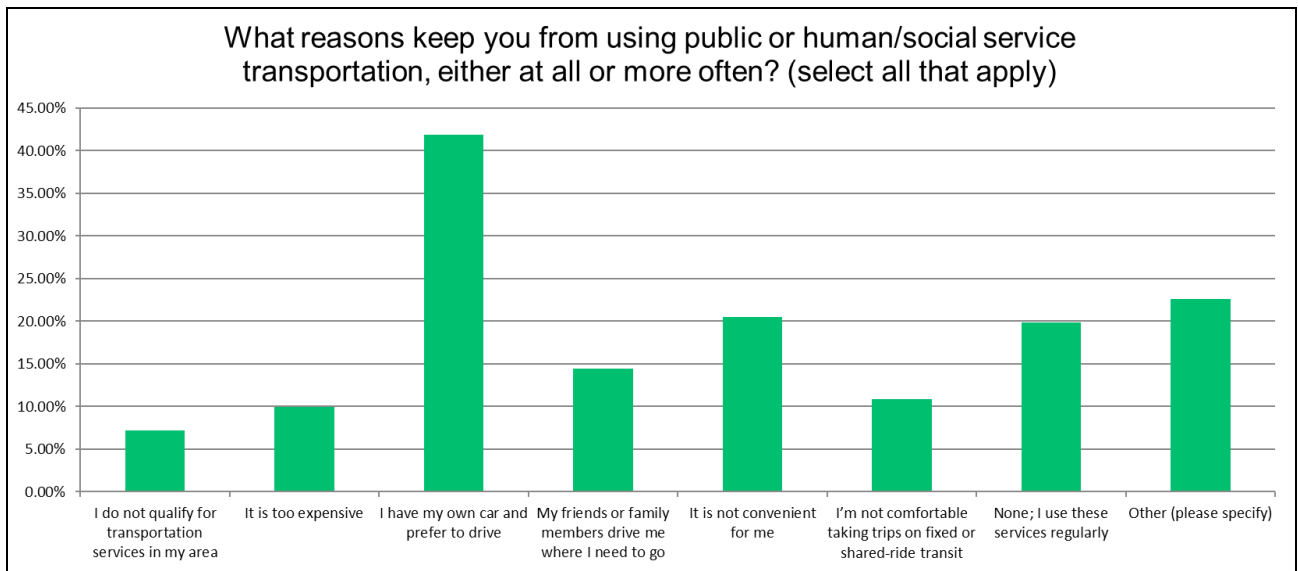


Survey Findings

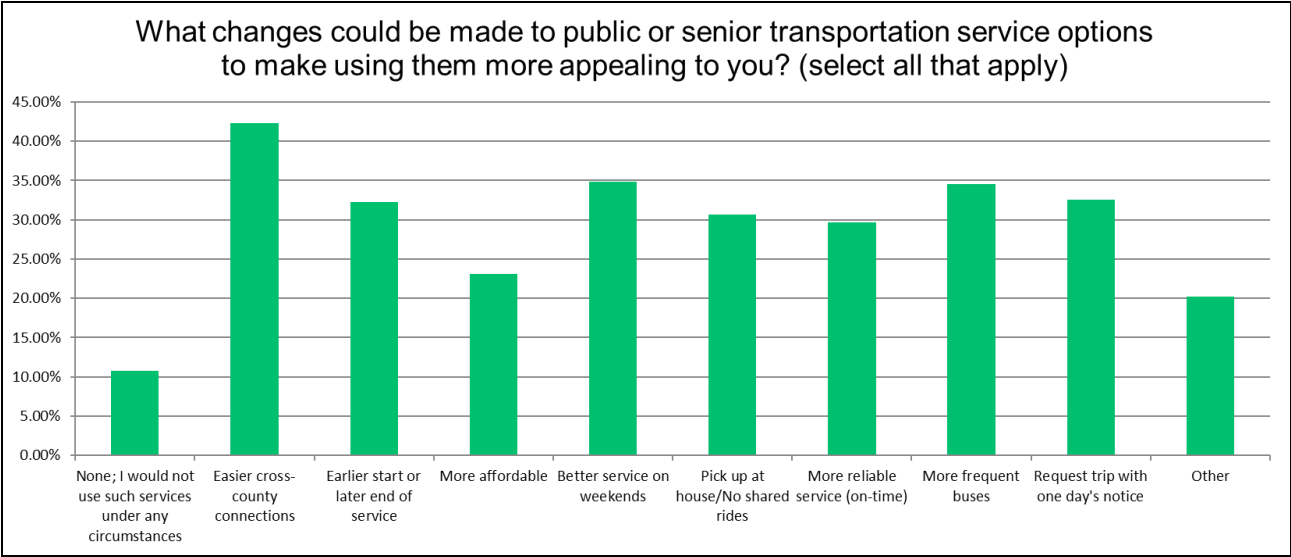
Respondents were first asked how often they have used a variety of transportation services over the past year. The results of this question are shown on the graph on page 38. Fixed-route transit services are more popular than paratransit and other shared-ride services such as non-emergency medical transportation and paratransit services.



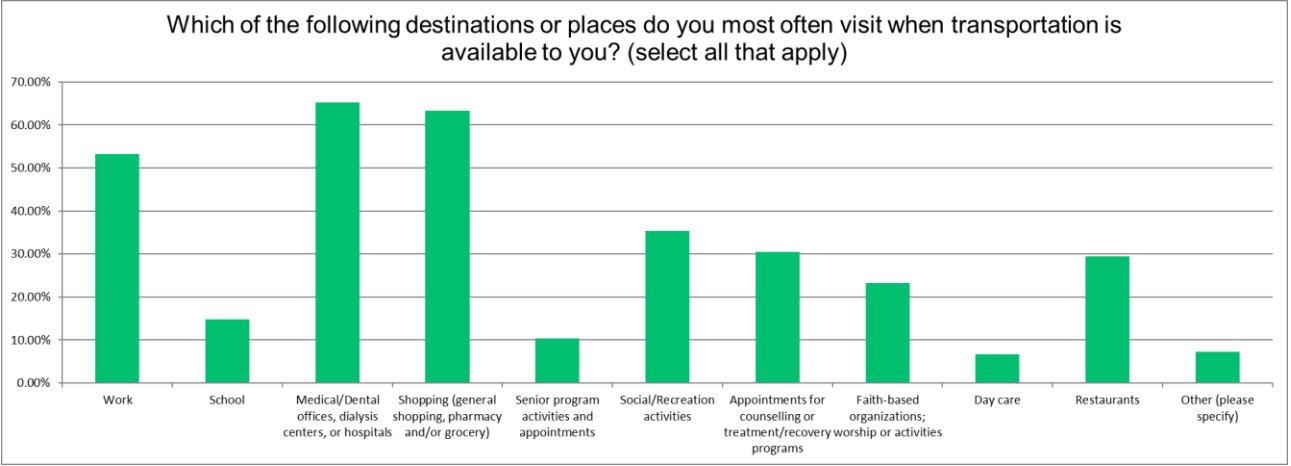
The next survey questions were geared toward understanding why people don't use public or human service transportation (more often at all) and what changes to service could make them more appealing. By far the most popular response on why services aren't used more often was that some respondents have their own vehicle and prefer to drive. Convenience was the second most popular response. Interestingly, cost was not a barrier for most respondents. Other options [those coded within the "Other (please specify)" category] included the difficulty of making cross-county trips, inability or difficulty of getting to bus stops, or that they are not aware of their service options.



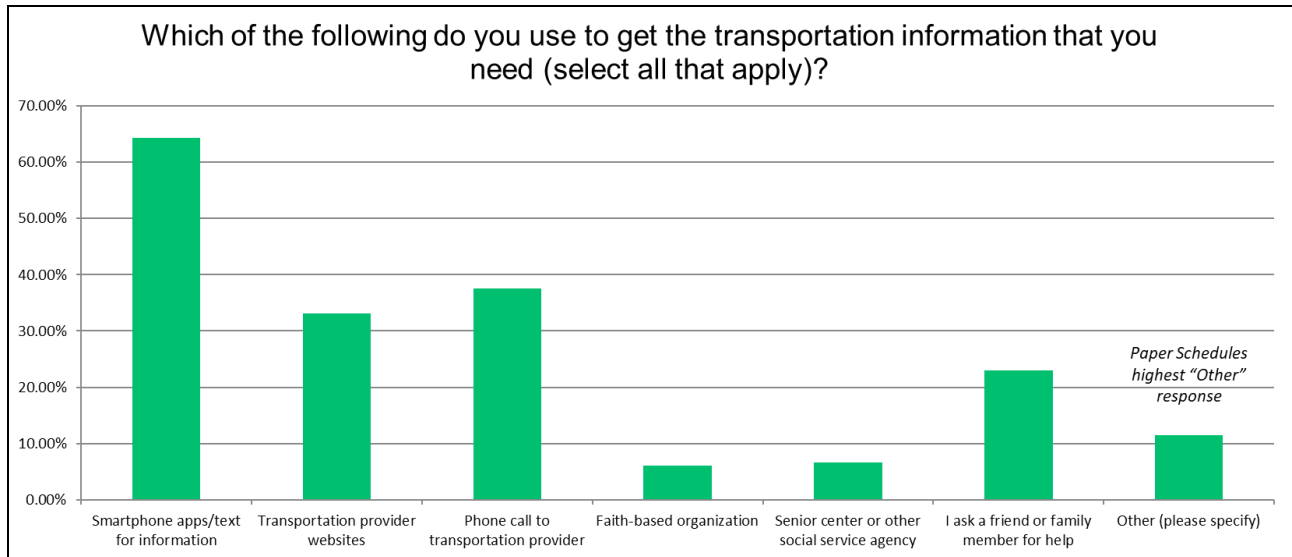
Better service at non-peak times and better connections from one county to another appeared to be the highest-priority changes citizens would like to see, as noted on the following chart. In fact, nearly 40% of respondents (online and paper survey results combined) reported that they have difficulty obtaining transportation services to other counties.



Asked about where riders travel when utilizing transportation services, medical appointments, shopping, and work were by far the top three answers.



Finally, respondents were asked how they get their information on transportation services such as learning about their options or scheduling trips. Interestingly, the current survey shows a high comfort level with the higher-technology options such as smartphone apps, texting, and provider websites. This proportion will likely be higher in the near future as *PARTA* gets ready to transition to app-based ride scheduling options. On the paper survey, many respondents also noted that they ask friends and family for help with scheduling rides in addition to the popular options listed in the following chart.



5.3 Customer Phone-Based Survey

Survey of METRO/PARTA Paratransit Customers

METRO and PARTA conducted a short 3-question survey of their paratransit customers to engage demand response riders in the planning process and learn what their transportation needs are. PARTA conducted their customer survey in May 2023 and received 79 responses. METRO conducted their survey in August 2023 and received 128 customer responses. The surveys were conducted when customers called in to schedule their demand response trips.

- A majority of respondents (93%) indicated that they felt the transportation services provided in Portage/Summit counties suit the needs of individuals with disabilities and older adults.
- A higher number of METRO customer respondents, who are all advanced reservation paratransit users, stated that they would not use a fixed-route system if that option was available near their home and destination. This is to be expected due to the relatively large coverage area of METRO's fixed route service. The customers using paratransit typically have circumstances that prevent them from using that service.
- Most PARTA respondents (73%) indicated that they would use fixed route service if it was available to them, which is expected since the fixed-route service in Portage County is concentrated in the more populated urban areas. Most of the county is rural and not conducive for fixed-route services, leaving paratransit as their only option.
- Barriers to transportation identified by customer respondents include:
 - No options for cross-county trips
 - No service available on weekends
 - Inability to request a trip less than one day in advance
 - Service is not late enough in the evening or early enough in the morning

5.4 Public Comment Period

In addition to the methods described above, AMATS shared and discussed the draft plan with their CIC on September 14, 2023. AMATS will share the final draft plan with their remaining committees in December. Specifically, highlights of the Coordinated Plan will be presented to the AMATS Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) on January 18, 2024, and the Policy Committee on January 25, 2024. Both committees will receive information on the Draft Coordinated Plan in their mail packets and AMATS Approval will be requested at the Policy Committee meeting.

In addition to the CIC announcement, AMATS, METRO, and PARTA directly contacted area agencies and organizations involved in regional transportation coordination to announce the availability of the draft report. A PDF of the draft was sent to each Planning Committee stakeholder for review and to add additional comments on the details of the plan.

All recipients, both public and organizational, were provided telephone, mail, and e-mail contact information to send any and all comments in the manner most convenient for them.

All comments were reviewed by AMATS' staff and any appropriately related agencies or organizations and incorporated into the document.

6 Transportation Service Gaps

The AMATS region is home to more than 700,000 people, and as has been previously discussed, many of them have special transportation needs. However, to best serve the needs of the transportation dependent, it helps to understand the greater regional context. Although the Akron metropolitan area is fairly large in-and-of-itself, it is also part of the much larger Cleveland-Akron-Canton combined statistical area, in which approximately 3.5 million people reside. Northeast Ohio is home to numerous communities that interact with and maintain strong economic ties to one another. Some of these communities are notable job centers, while others contain world-class medical facilities. Each offers unique retail, social, and cultural/recreational opportunities to which the transportation dependent population could greatly benefit from enhanced access.

One of the most important functions of this coordinated planning process is to identify transportation “gaps” – the absence of transportation options to meet the everyday needs of those dependent upon public transportation. In this section, gaps for each type of transportation provider will be examined.

6.1 Public Transit Service Gaps

Maintaining a robust public transit system is critical to those who depend on external sources to meet their transportation needs. When analyzing gaps in our regional transit systems, three areas must be examined:

1. **Geographical Gaps** – Communities or key destinations that are not served (or where service is limited) by transportation. These typically are in the context of fixed-route bus service since demand-response service generally covers all portions of Summit and Portage counties.
2. **Operational Gaps** – Limitations on the availability of the services (hours, frequency, days of the week, etc.).
3. **Eligibility Gaps** – Limitations on the persons eligible for and/or able to use the services offered.

Public Transit Service Constraints

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in reduced demand response services, but now, as the region continues to recover, the community has asked for increased demand response transportation services due to the changing demographics and the continued increase in older adults and persons with disabilities. While the regional economy continues to recover from the pandemic, and driver-shortages diminish, METRO and *PARTA* will work to restore demand response service to pre-pandemic levels. However, increasing demand response service may not be a feasible option for the foreseeable future. Demand response service is extremely expensive to operate. For example, in 2022 METRO’s demand response cost per trip was \$76.80 and *PARTA*’s was \$72.82 per trip. Passenger fares cover only a fraction of the cost, and agencies within large, urbanized areas are not usually eligible for operating funds which makes the sustainability of providing demand response service a significant challenge.

Public transportation, by nature, is designed to provide the widest, most efficient service to as many riders as possible. While METRO and *PARTA* strive for continuous improvement in meeting the needs of all riders, it is not economically or logistically feasible to offer fixed route line service throughout all neighborhoods within each of their counties.

Historically, travel training has focused on the use of fixed routes. Jointly METRO and *PARTA* acknowledge that there is a need for travel training on small buses, typically for demand response and ADA service. Collectively, METRO and *PARTA* offer individualized service to persons with disabilities that utilize a mobility device and will work to further accommodate these passengers by providing travel training on demand response service.

Finally, even in areas where fixed route coverage exists, there are additional gaps created when the sidewalk infrastructure does not fully and safely connect destinations and bus stops. Lack of sidewalk coverage and difficulty in traversing sidewalks and bus stops in winter weather should be considered an additional gap. Collaborative solutions to this gap are required as sidewalk construction and snow removal responsibilities do not fall solely on the public transportation providers. Typically, municipalities lead the construction of sidewalks, and snow removal usually falls as the responsibility of the adjacent property owners. Often, commercial property owners prioritize snow removal for personal vehicle traffic, which sometimes comes at the expense of pedestrian access.

Because of the constraints faced by public transportation providers, a primary purpose of the Coordinated Plan is not only to identify gaps in transportation services, but also to highlight and fund other government and social service agencies that are providing vital services that bridge these gaps.

6.1.1 METRO RTA

Fixed-Route Service Gaps

1. **Geographical Gaps** – These gaps may be identified using the maps on pages 10 and 12. Fixed-route service is limited in the following communities with high concentrations of those likely dependent on public transportation: Copley Township, the city of Green, and the city of Twinsburg. All three have significant concentrations of older persons and low-income households, which are not served by existing fixed-route transit routes.

Although fixed-route bus coverage is limited in these communities to regional commercial centers (such as Montrose and Arlington Ridge), METRO operates an innovative solution to serving low



density areas such as these – branded as “Call-A-Bus.” METRO’s Call-A-Bus service is an advance reservation (origin to destination) bus service, which, unlike its existing SCAT service, is available to *everyone*. Call-A-Bus is currently available in two areas of Summit County: the area of Northern Summit County located north of Twinsburg Road and the city of Green. This service goes a long way towards reducing the gaps in transportation services in Summit County. Requests for expansion of this service into other suburban areas have been made as a way to meet transportation needs in outlying areas. Additionally, there are limited opportunities for cross-country transfers via fixed-route services.

It should be noted that a gap created due to workforce shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic will be filled beginning August 20, 2023, which is the return of grocery bus service. The grocery bus is a fixed route providing a direct connection between apartment buildings and nearby grocery stores, reducing the need for SCAT or ADA trips to fill the same need.

2. **Operational Gaps** – With the implementation of Reimagine METRO in June 2023, operating days and hours have become more standardized across most METRO fixed routes. Most routes operate seven days a week with the same span of service. However, the Sunday span of service continues to be limited (9:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.) with frequent requests for expanding service in the earlier morning hours. While most routes run on this standard schedule, the ones that do not are the more regional cross-country routes, which have a more limited span of service and weekend service. While METRO has introduced high frequency routes through the recent bus network redesign, requests for additional high frequency corridors to reduce travel times are often heard.
3. **Eligibility Gaps** – METRO’s standard fare (\$1.25 per ride) is very low compared to other national transit agencies, and the agency strives to be affordable to persons with low incomes. Reduced fares (\$0.50 per ride) are available to older adults and people with a disability. Northcoast Express service to Cleveland could be viewed as more cost prohibitive to lower income individuals (\$5.00 each way) yet is still an excellent value considering the full cost to travel to downtown Cleveland (fuel, parking, vehicle wear-and-tear, etc.). All buses are equipped with ramps or lifts for mobility devices. METRO fixed-route service essentially has zero eligibility gaps.

Demand-Response Service Gaps

1. **Geographical Gaps** – METRO operates three demand-response services: SCAT Senior for passengers aged 62 and older, SCAT Temporary for persons with a qualifying disability prohibiting them from using regular line service, and ADA complementary paratransit service, which complements fixed-route service by transporting passengers with a qualifying disability to origins and destinations within ¼ mile from an existing active bus line. SCAT services are available anywhere in Summit County during certain days and times – the only geographical gaps would be any destination beyond the county border.

2. **Operational Gaps** – METRO’s SCAT services are available from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. near Akron and from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. for riders in more outlying portions of Summit County. A significant gap in evening service exists. Weekend service is not available and holiday service is limited. In order to plan for the most efficient routing, all services must be scheduled at least one day in advance; same-day service is not available, creating a service gap for individuals who need transportation on short-notice and do not have an origin and/or destination within Summit County.

3. **Eligibility Gaps** – SCAT and ADA complementary paratransit services are available only to individuals who are 62 years or above and/or who have a qualifying disability travelling within an active fixed route corridor. This leaves a transportation gap for those who meet neither of these qualifications, particularly low-income individuals who need transportation beyond the reach of existing fixed-route bus services. The only current exception to this gap is METRO’s “Call-A-Bus” program. This program, which operates similarly to SCAT services (must call in advance, runs from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., uses small accessible buses, etc.), is available to *anyone* traveling between select Northern Summit County communities or within the city of Green. SCAT services are slightly more expensive than the standard fixed-route service (\$2.00 each way), while the Call-A-Bus service is \$4.00 each way – likely cost-prohibitive to low-income individuals. An additional gap identified through this process was created during the pandemic when SCAT trip purposes and number of trips were limited due to a national workforce shortage. For those individuals who are not ADA-eligible or live outside the ADA corridor, limitations on trip purpose limit their ability to travel freely throughout the county; elimination of this gap allows for greater access when fixed route services are not available or feasible.

Given the above description of eligibility and the varied demand response services offered, there is also an understandable gap in the general awareness and understanding of the nuances of each program. The opportunity for additional travel training to fill this gap should be considered.

6.1.2 PARTA

Fixed-Route Service Gaps

1. **Geographical Gaps** – Portage County is predominantly rural, which is not conducive to fixed-route transit service. However, in addition to PARTA’s urban routes through Kent and Ravenna, fixed-route service is provided to the smaller communities of Windham, Garrettsville, and Hiram in the northeast portion of the county. The northern portion of the county, with job-dense commerce centers in Aurora and Streetsboro cities, is located far from areas where potential shift workers are likely to reside and largely lack pedestrian and transit safety and accessibility amenities. Streetsboro is serviced along the Cleveland Express and job-rich Brimfield has limited service via the Akron Express. Neither the Village of Mantua, Deerfield, or the southern 1/3 of Portage County have fixed-route service. PARTA is well ahead of many transit agencies when it comes to providing service beyond its home county borders. Express service to Akron and Cleveland is

provided Monday through Friday and PARTA's Interurban route services several stops in Stow located in Summit County, allowing for easy transfer to the METRO transit system.

2. **Operational Gaps** – PARTA provides two categories of fixed-route bus service: Kent State University campus service, which connects to PARTA's county service; operating through Kent, Ravenna, Windham, Garrettsville, and Hiram with express routes to Akron and Cleveland. Campus service is frequent, with headways between 8 and 15 minutes. In addition, several campus routes provide late-night service. Gaps include limited weekend service and reduced service during university breaks. PARTA's county routes operate less frequently and provide limited evening and weekend service. Yet, since the 2018 Coordinated Plan was published, PARTA has extended evening service on county routes with some routes operating until 11:30 p.m. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent driver shortages, there remains a reduction in service on multiple county routes for the foreseeable future.
3. **Eligibility Gaps** – All PARTA buses are accessible to passengers assisted by mobility devices. Fares are relatively low as passengers ride fare-free on campus routes via an open-door revenue service contract with Kent State University and bus fare on local county routes is \$1.00 per trip. Seniors and persons with disabilities are eligible for reduced fare of 50¢ per trip. Express service to Akron is \$1.00 per trip. The fare for the Cleveland Express is \$5.00 per trip, which may be cost prohibitive for some lower income households. In 2023, PARTA introduced fare capping on its local fixed-route service by enhancing its technology to ensure fare equity. Room for improvement remains regarding access to bus stops as approaches to some stops are difficult to navigate. Efforts to enhance riders' abilities to comfortably access stops continues to be a priority. Finally, some riders face challenges understanding how to use bus schedules, so there is an on-going need for simplified schedules as well as travel training.

Demand-Response Service Gaps

1. **Geographical Gaps** – PARTA's Dial-A-Ride service provides door-to-door bus service throughout all of Portage County. Geographical gaps would only exist outside of Portage County – to popular destinations in Summit, Stark, or Cuyahoga counties, for example.
2. **Operational Gaps** – Although Dial-A-Ride service is available Monday – Friday to all the larger Portage County communities, service to the more remote villages and townships is only available certain days of the week. Since the 2018 Coordinated Plan, PARTA has implemented a new Dial-A-Ride service model with extended hours between 5:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. Monday - Friday and 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Saturday. No Sunday or major holiday service is available. Like most demand-response services, trips must be scheduled at least one day in advance, creating a gap for those who need transportation services on short notice.
3. **Eligibility Gaps** – Dial-A-Ride service is available to all Portage County residents, and PARTA's vehicles are all accessible to individuals traveling with mobility devices. The cost of the service is

\$6.00 each way, with a reduced rate of \$3.00 for seniors and persons with disabilities, and \$2.00 for ADA service. The full fare could prove cost prohibitive to low-income individuals and households. Finally, while *PARTA* provides demand response travel training when it is requested, the residents of Portage County would benefit from greater awareness of the demand response services available to them. Opportunities for both marketing and conducting travel training should be considered to fill this gap.

6.2 Neighboring RTA Service Gaps

Similar to METRO and *PARTA*, the regional transit authorities (RTAs) which surround the Akron metropolitan region provide the majority of their service within the borders of the county in which they are based. GCRTA is the only RTA that does not provide service beyond its county borders. Most others run service into Cuyahoga County and/or Cleveland. SARTA, the RTA for Stark County, provides excellent service into Akron and Summit County, serving the Akron-Canton Airport and METRO's downtown Akron transit center.

Three significant RTA gaps exist within or near the AMATS region:

1. Limitations to the ability of more rural RTAs (*PARTA*, MCPT, GCT, Wayne County, etc.) to run demand-response service into Summit County in order to access its major regional medical facilities, employment centers, or cultural/recreational/retail destinations.
2. Since the creation of the last AMATS Area Coordinated Plan, WCT has been formed in partnership with SARTA and Community Action Wayne/Medina to provide demand response trips within Wayne County. Cross-county connections remain unavailable.
3. Very limited transit connection between Medina County (especially the city of Wadsworth, which lies within the Akron urbanized area according to the 2010 U.S. Census) and Summit County.

6.3 Government Agency Service Gaps

These gaps largely depend on where the particular agency falls within the larger governmental hierarchy. In Ohio, many social/human services agencies fall under the umbrella of the county government (Job and Family Services, Departments of Health, Veterans Commission, etc.) and serve only clients within the home county. Any transportation services are likely subject to these same constraints. Sparsely populated, rural counties (such as Wayne and Portage) are more likely to experience an adverse impact from these constraints since they don't have the same access to large employers, major medical facilities, and regional shopping destinations that larger, more urbanized counties do. The inability to cross these "hard" borders creates an opportunity gap for residents of our more rural counties and communities.

Another limitation of government agencies is that they typically serve a very specific client base. Funding has generally been budgeted to help that particular client base, and expenditures directed elsewhere would likely be viewed as "leakage." Any transportation offered by government agencies is unlikely to make seats available to those outside of their client base (as confirmed through responses to an AMATS mobility management survey).

As mandated by law, each Ohio county's Department of Developmental Disabilities is no longer able to provide transportation to their clients. With varying timetables established by each county, a segment of the population, for which public transportation is not an option, no longer has safe, reliable, affordable transportation. Private and public organizations have entered this new market to help fill the gap and provide the specialized transportation needed.

6.4 Not-for-Profit Transportation Provider Service Gaps

Many of these agencies/organizations are similar to government sponsored human/social service agencies, in that they have specific focus and are unable to transport anyone outside of that client base. However, there are others that not only specialize in accessible transportation, but they have the capacity and the willingness to transport individuals from a variety of backgrounds and transportation needs. Another advantage these organizations have over public agencies is the absence of geographical limitations. They generally may travel freely to any community and across county borders if their partners and clients express this need. The main "gap" in their services is one of capacity – either in vehicles/seats available to meet demand, in drivers to operate their vehicle fleets, or in the availability of accessible vehicles.

Not-for-profit transportation providers typically perform transportation services on a contractual basis – often for government agencies (Job and Family Services, etc.).

6.5 Private (For-Profit) Transportation Provider Service Gaps

Private providers of transportation, which include taxi, limousine, charter bus companies, and ridesharing services such as Uber and Lyft, may work directly with their clients or may perform work contractually for other agencies. The advantages of for-profit firms are that they operate late at night (24 hours in some cases), may not require advance scheduling, and operate seven days a week and on holidays.

The primary gap in private transportation service is that many cities strictly regulate (through licensing or by ordinance) their operations, and some municipalities may be off-limits to certain providers. On the other hand, assuming taxi companies have the appropriate licensing and permissions, they are not necessarily constrained by geographical borders as most other providers of transportation are.

Another limitation (i.e., an "eligibility gap") to taxi service is that the fare costs are typically much higher than those offered by public and not-for-profit providers of transportation services. This increased expense may be offset by subsidies paid by local social and human services agencies for taxi services being performed on a contractual basis. In addition, some providers offer discounts to certain riders, such as senior citizens, students, and veterans. Finally, not all private providers have accessible vehicles, creating another gap for people with mobility devices.

7 Recommendations

7.1 Financial Recommendations

1) The Purchase of New, Accessible Transit Vehicles (small buses, vans, etc.)

Whether the vehicles are for non-profit providers of public transportation for the elderly, disabled or low-income individuals, or for METRO and/or *PARTA*, the need for sufficient quantities of reliable, fully accessible rolling stock is paramount to the success of mobility management throughout the AMATS region and beyond.

During funding consideration, preference will be given to agencies/organizations that actively coordinate transportation services with other regional partners. Other determining factors include number of trips provided, estimated vehicle usage, remaining useful lives of existing vehicles, and related criteria, as detailed in the Section 5310 *Performance Management Plan* or the *AMATS Funding Policy Guidelines*.

Project Examples: Purchase of small buses, vans, light-transit vehicles (LTVs), MV-1, and/or other accessible vehicles.

Eligible Funding Programs: 5310 (*at least 55% of funding*), 5307, and 5339. State OTP2.

2) Connect Transit Stops to Passenger Destinations

Transit ridership could be increased by improving the connections between bus stops and passenger origins and destinations. Adding or improving transit amenities would benefit all riders, but especially those with disabilities who would have a hard time navigating a bus stop that's not ADA accessible and/or trying to get to a destination that's not connected by a sidewalk.

Although individual communities would provide most of the financing for these types of projects, AMATS could dedicate a portion of transit-dedicated funding to areas which are highly used, yet highly inaccessible or disconnected. Locations with a history of pedestrian crashes should receive particular scrutiny. Encouraging and incorporating transit into the design of roadways has clear safety benefits for both pedestrians and motorists. Encouraging communities to collaborate with transit agencies can help to identify where the greatest needs for transit amenities exist and implement projects that improve mobility and accessibility, especially for individuals with special transportation needs. The AMATS regional Safety for All Plan highlights improving transit stop locations including shelters that: 1) Prioritize lighting improvements to transit stops and nearby areas. 2) Work with municipalities to complete sidewalk gaps up to a one-mile/20-minute walk of a transit stop to increase the population served. 3) Stripe, reconfigure, or create accessible crosswalks, and install pedestrian control devices and high intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) beacons to improve pedestrian safety near transit stops.

Additionally, to address the difficulty of accessing bus stops during winter weather events, some recommended actions to help collaboratively solve this gap are: (A) Form a taskforce comprised of

transportation providers, planners, municipal officials, and potentially commercial property owners to further explore the issue and reasons why snow removal does not occur, and come up with better solutions than currently exist; (B) Work with partners to initiate creative, volunteer-led efforts (such as adopt-a-stop shoveling) to remove snow at higher pedestrian traffic locations; (C) Have agencies partner together to monitor snow removal within an area, identifying regularly offending property owners. Then engage property owners and/or municipal officials to work toward more effective winter maintenance processes; and (D) Educate senior and disabled riders about shared-ride transportation options, which typically provide door-to-door services, thus reducing risks associated with walking through snow and ice.

Project Examples: The construction of sidewalks, accessibility ramps, high-visibility signage, and enhanced crosswalks and signals between highly active bus stops and the important land uses identified earlier in this plan (i.e., employment areas, medical centers, etc.); transit waiting environments designed with the elderly and disabled in mind; enhanced wayfinding or informational signage, etc.

Eligible Funding Programs: Safe Streets 4 All, 5310 (as “other eligible capital & operating expenses”) and 5307 (as “associated transit improvements”). *The AMATS Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) may also be used to fund these and related project types.* State OTP2.

3) Expand the Reach and Hours of Fixed Route Transit and Demand Response Service

The expansion of fixed route transit service, both geographically as well as with more frequency of service and longer hours, is an ongoing need in the AMATS region. METRO and PARTA face different challenges in providing additional service to the region, including funding, staffing, and the difficulties of providing fixed route service to rural communities. Despite these challenges, METRO and PARTA will continue to work towards providing the most efficient and beneficial fixed route transit service possible.

While both METRO and PARTA provide fixed route service to Cleveland, PARTA provides service to Stow and Akron in Summit County, and METRO provides service to Brimfield in Portage County, outreach and stakeholder feedback has identified the need for additional cross-county transit service. With inter-agency collaboration, new innovative means of connecting riders to cross-county destinations can be researched, developed, and implemented.

The expansion of demand response services for both METRO and PARTA has been a top discussion point among the gaps in transportation services made by the planning committee. As highlighted in previous sections cost of demand response trips for these agencies are high and legitimate constraints do currently exist that have kept both METRO and PARTA from expanding this service. If an increase in funding is realized and adequately planned for sustainability, expansion for demand response services would be considered by both agencies.

Project Examples: Route studies; new fixed-route bus service to areas that have been historically underserved; shared-ride shuttle service; late-night service; weekend service; increased bus frequency on existing fixed-routes serving both low-income and high-employment communities; cross-county

service. Increased operational funding to expand the hours and capacity of the demand response program.

Eligible Funding Programs: FTA 5310 (as “other eligible capital & operating expenses”) and 5307.

4) Funding Innovative New Public Transit Service to Key Employment Areas

Public transit is an important means for low-income individuals to reach employment opportunities. A mismatch exists in that most existing bus service is located in populous urban areas, whereas many job-rich areas are located in suburban areas with little or no transit access. Many of these are entry-level jobs which require employees to work outside of the traditional 9-to-5 hours and on weekends, when most fixed-route bus service is infrequent or non-existent. Communities and transit agencies are encouraged to work together to identify the region’s work transportation needs and explore solutions and opportunities to fill these gaps.

METRO and PARTA work with employers to ensure that fixed-route transit service is designed to connect workforce members to employment centers; however, there remain significant employment centers in the region that are underserved. A new ODOT program, The Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Program may provide the agencies with opportunities to explore the viability of new workforce transit services. However, ODOT has notified both METRO and PARTA that they are not eligible for the first round of funding. METRO is working to implement a new service that will provide work trips to areas that are not served by fixed-route service. PARTA is developing plans to connect underserved employment centers with new fixed-route service.

In addition, AMATS will consider funding new or expanded service projects that show strong promise of helping match transit-dependent workers with the jobs that could improve their lives and independence.

Project Examples: New fixed-route bus service to key employment areas; shared-ride shuttle service to/from employers; late-night service; increased bus frequency on existing fixed-routes serving both low-income and high-employment communities.

Eligible Funding Programs: Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Program, 5310 (as “other eligible capital & operating expenses”), and 5307.

5) Invest in Fare Reimbursement Solutions/Smart Technology

One barrier to efficient trip sharing and the combining of clients from different agencies is the complexity involved with reimbursement of trip costs. Human/social services agencies and other non-profit organizations work with limited budgets and need assurance that their transportation funds are spent only on their clients. Smartcard technology, enhanced fare boxes, and accompanying software allow agencies to track client trips, directly bill the agency or client, or debit a pre-paid account. If

multiple agencies could agree upon a standardized system for the region, passengers affiliated with multiple agencies could occupy the same public transportation vehicle, while all parties would receive the appropriate credits/debits. Automation would allow for a quick and seamless process that would allow for more streamlined cross-county trips.

A secondary benefit to the widespread adoption of smart technology could be the potential collection of basic, anonymous trip origin/destination data. The availability of this data would allow care-providers and decision makers to understand transportation demand and to further improve their coordination/mobility management efforts.

Significant strides have been made toward filling this gap through the NEORide-led EZFare project. EZFare is a mobile ticketing platform used by various RTAs throughout the Northeast Ohio and surrounding region; both METRO and *PARTA* are EZFare users – in addition to other surrounding RTAs such as SARTA, GCRTA, Laketran, and MCPT. Passengers can create an EZFare account on their mobile device and pay their fare for any of the participating agencies by tapping their device on the mobile ticket validator on the transit vehicle. EZFare accounts can be funded via credit card or cash at select RTA and retail locations. Additionally, many agencies (including METRO and *PARTA*) have rolled out an EZFare smartcard that can be used in the same manner for those without access to a mobile device with internet access. While having a mutual payment platform is a great step in the necessary direction to fill this gap, there is still work to be done in creating a standardized or unified fare structure that would allow for simplified revenue and trip sharing between multiple agencies.

Project Examples: Enhanced payment application and dispatching platform that allows for trip and revenue sharing across agencies.

Eligible Funding Programs: FTA Federal 5310, 5307, and 5339. State OTP2.

6) Invest in Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Infrastructure

The technology allowing for immediate communication and real-time vehicle or passenger location is advancing at a rapid pace. The equipment used to facilitate this immediate information is available and attainable to providers of transportation services, as well as their client agencies and the passengers they serve. Immediate information on bus locations, arrival times, and practical alternatives allow everyone involved in the mobility management process to best leverage the assets available to our region.

Although a variety of ITS technology is available, and many funding options exist to purchase such equipment, an important consideration for advancing regional mobility management efforts is to ensure that any equipment purchased has the capability of communicating with that of other agencies and organizations. Transportation providers and social services agencies should work together to consider the compatibility of all new ITS equipment and are encouraged to integrate this requirement into their formal bidding processes, when applicable.

In 2023, PARTA implemented a major ITS infrastructure update that includes new scheduling software that provides better ridership data that will improve service efficiency. The ITS update includes a mobile app, PassioGo, that riders can use to track their bus in real time. METRO has expanded the use of real-time arrival screens at each of their transit centers. Additionally, real-time information is provided through a variety of customer-facing apps including Google Maps, Transit App, and MyStop. Because technology advances quickly, investing in ITS infrastructure remains a priority for advancing the mobility of the region.

Project Examples: GPS/AVL units for buses; “Next Bus Arrival Time” signage at bus stops/transit centers/agency pick-up points; website and/or mobile device applications showing real-time bus locations and arrival times; enhanced communication equipment in vehicles; shared communication between social services agencies and transportation providers, etc.

Eligible Funding Programs: 5310 (as “support facilities & equipment”), 5307 (as “associated transit improvements”), and 5339 (as “bus-related equipment”). State OTP2.

7) Provide Same-Day Service

One barrier frequently identified in the surveys, as well as by the Planning Committee, is the gap created by the inability to schedule same-day trips for demand response services. This limits the flexibility for riders that do not have access to fixed-route service to take a trip when the need arises within the same day.

Both the need and demand for same-day service have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic also resulted in reductions in service and personnel. The number of drivers the agencies can hire has increased as our economy recovers from the pandemic. However, staffing has not yet returned to pre-pandemic service capacity.

Both METRO and PARTA are committed to providing same-day service and are actively engaged in strategic planning to meet this recommendation. However, the timing of implementation is dependent on the transit agencies having enough drivers and funding to add new services. In addition, the agencies need specialized Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) software and equipment to provide same-day service.

METRO is looking into implementing ITS technology to provide same-day service. METRO plans to procure updated demand response dispatching software that allows for the re-optimization of resources within the same day to accommodate new trip requests. Similarly, a customer-facing mobile application for trip scheduling will allow the scheduling of same-day trips, as well as real-time tracking of vehicles with predicted arrival times. Procuring and implementing this technology will allow METRO to provide same-day service.

In 2023, PARTA implemented new ITS software and equipment that can facilitate same-day service. Once PARTA has enough drivers and funding, PARTA will introduce micro-transit options, including a customer-facing app with same-day service trip scheduling capabilities.

Project Examples: Demand Response dispatching software that allows for same-day trip scheduling; customer-facing mobile application with trip scheduling capabilities.

Eligible Funding Programs: FTA Federal 5310, 5307, and 5339. State OTP2.

8) Promote and Increase Travel Training

Throughout our outreach efforts, a common goal was repeatedly expressed by the representatives of social services agencies: to encourage clients to remain as independent as possible. Some elderly and disabled clients will require full assistance meeting their transportation needs, and agencies are willing and fully prepared to assist them. Others may simply need a helping hand to understand the sometimes-confusing transportation process. Many people – regardless of their age or ability – have difficulty interpreting complex bus schedules, understanding arrival times and the transfer process, how to properly board a bus, pay his or her fare, or signal for a stop. For demand response services, it can be difficult to navigate the varied programs that are offered, each with specific eligibility and/or geographic coverage areas.

METRO, PARTA, and a number of area social/human services agencies offer travel training to anyone who has questions about the process of riding on public transportation. This service is offered free of charge and is individually designed to fit each person’s needs. In addition, METRO and PARTA have put together a series of YouTube videos, where a potential rider may watch and learn the bus travel process from the comfort of his or her home. Although the videos are specific to METRO’s and PARTA’s services, they essentially translate to any other public transit service. These videos can be accessed at: <http://www.akronmetro.org/metro-how-to-ride.aspx>
<https://www.youtube.com/@portagearearta6034/videos>.

There are many benefits to encouraging transportation independence, including:

- Exercise from walking to and from the bus stop
- Use of basic problem-solving, math, and other cognitive skills
- Increased social interaction and feeling of connection with the neighborhood
- A sense of accomplishment and satisfaction
- Efficient use of existing transportation assets

Some suggestions stemming from discussions of the Planning Committee on how to expand the reach and breadth of travel training include: 1) Increasing METRO and PARTA travel training presence at Ohio Means Jobs Centers, Immigrant and Refugee Centers, and social services agencies and developing a “train the trainer” approach, 2) Providing additional emphasis on providing translation to the Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations of the region, and 3) Expanding the focus of travel training to include both fixed route and demand response. Both transit agencies are always looking to market their services

and will continue efforts and make sure our information is clear, informative, and accessible to all. METRO has established a “Friends of Transit” program to reach riders where they are through a “train the trainer” program. METRO is maximizing efforts within specific communities, as well as training agency personnel to successfully ride the bus. Trusted, known members within a community will be teaching public ridership skills to their clients. Recipients of this training will learn from people they are familiar with rather than learning from a video or someone employed through METRO, hopefully increasing their independence throughout the region. METRO will continue to roll this program out to agencies who have already expressed interest in helping their constituents, thereby expanding METRO’s reach while increasing independence within our community, whether English is not your first language, you have never ridden the bus before, or haven’t ridden in years.

Promoting an increased dialog between transit agencies and large human services providers could also address current gaps in cross-county trips for carless individuals. Improved cross-county transportation service coordination could be achieved by human service providers becoming more aware of existing transportation options and sharing information about their services. In addition, the transportation providers could develop greater awareness and connections with similar organizations and agencies in the surrounding counties.

Any additional agencies interested in travel training can contact METRO or PARTA at the following telephone numbers:

METRO Travel Training 330-762-0341

PARTA Travel Training 330-678-1287 ext. 149

Eligible Funding Programs: FTA Federal 5310, State OTP2, ODOT Workforce Program.

7.2 Non-Financial Recommendations

9) Increase Dialogue Between Transportation Providers and Significant Regional Employers/Medical Centers

As discovered in previous analysis, two types of trips are dominant among those most dependent on public transportation: medical trips and work-related trips. Within their home counties, the region’s public transportation providers (METRO and PARTA) work diligently with major employers and medical centers to provide the most efficient service possible. However, complications arise when those major trip attractions lie within another county. This challenge was confirmed by responses in both the stakeholder and public surveys. Again, ConxusNEO, a work-force development non-profit agency, offered to help facilitate these conversations in Summit County.

As a regional planning agency, AMATS would willingly help to facilitate dialogue between transportation providers and high-demand destinations throughout our region and beyond.

10) Maintain a Standing Committee to Address Coordination Issues

The Planning Committee responsible for drafting this Coordinated Plan will continue to provide guidance and direct any annual updates to the Plan, as needed. In addition, members of the Planning Committee will assist in outreach activities with their clients and other agencies and employers. The Planning Committee will continue to share available data on elderly and disabled needs, as well as transportation assets.

11) Promote Ridesharing

Another mobility option that may be feasible for certain trips is ridesharing. Gohio Commute is a ride planning, matching, and logging tool available for free to anyone who lives, works, or attends school in the AMATS region. The service is also available in other Ohio counties and is funded and operated by members of the Ohio Association of Region Councils (of which AMATS is a member). This interactive platform gives someone in need of a ride the information they need to make smart choices – and save money, improve their health, and improve air quality by connecting with nearby commuters to share their ride.

Ridesharing is one option to help fill the gap of those suburban employment centers that are unable to be served efficiently by fixed route bus service. The Gohio Commute website can be found at <https://morpc.gohio.com/>.

8 Available Funding Programs (includes Funding Apportionments 2018-2023)

8.1 Federal Funding Programs

Federal Transportation Legislation

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, otherwise known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), is the current national transportation legislation. It was signed into law on November 15, 2021. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$550 billion in federal funds over fiscal years 2022 to 2026 for all forms of transportation. This includes funding for programs overseen by the FTA.



Available Funding Programs

The FTA currently administers three major formula grant programs to assist with the public transportation funding needs of metropolitan areas. These annual programs provide a regular stream of transit-dedicated revenue to the AMATS region. One of the primary reasons for creating a coordinated public transit-human services plan is to establish regional priorities for this transit-dedicated funding.

FTA Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities Program

(Section 5310)

Grants under the FTA Section 5310 program are available to finance capital and, on a limited basis, operating expenses. Funding may be awarded to qualified public agencies, RTAs, and for-profit providers of shared-ride transportation. Eligible projects include (but are not limited to):

1. Capital Rolling Stock & Related Equipment – accessible buses, vans, and other vehicles, on-board communications equipment, and computer hardware and software to aid in the efficiency and coordination of transportation for the elderly and those with disabilities.
2. Capital Projects to Increase Access to Transportation – public transportation projects exceeding ADA requirements, construction of accessible shelters, infrastructure to improve access to transit stops that are not currently accessible, and similar projects.
3. Operating Assistance – feeder services to provide access to fixed-route bus stops, new service to meet the needs of seniors and the disabled in areas where existing services are insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable, and alternatives to public transportation.

In previous funding cycles, this funding has been used to purchase vans, paratransit buses, and

communications equipment for not-for-profit 501(c)(3) providers of transportation throughout the AMATS region. The ODOT Office of Transit solicits, reviews, and scores the applications of participating organizations. A full discussion of this process can be found in the ODOT Specialized Transportation (5310) Program Guidance & Application Instructions. Final funding awards are approved by the AMATS Policy Committee as part of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process.

The 5310 program also requires that *at least* 55% of a metropolitan area’s 5310 funds must be allocated toward traditional 5310 capital projects (i.e., the purchase of capital equipment for *non-profit* providers of transportation). The remainder *may* be used on other non-traditional projects to enhance the mobility of seniors and persons with disabilities (i.e., allocated to public transit agencies for eligible projects and expenses).

5310 funding may be used to cover 80% of the project cost for capital expenditures (buses, equipment, etc.) and 50% of the project cost for eligible operating expenses. The remaining portion must be paid for using non-federal funds. All 5310 projects and recipients must be included in the AMATS Area Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan to be eligible for funding.

FTA 5310 Funding Allocations to the AMATS Region

Year	Amount	Annual % Change
FY 2018	\$552,133	-
FY 2019	\$558,729	1.19%
FY 2020	\$568,914	1.82%
FY 2021	\$588,799	3.50%
FY 2022	\$845,879	43.66%
FY 2023	\$845,267	-0.07%

METRO RTA and PARTA are direct recipients of FTA funds, and consequently are eligible to receive Section 5310 funds. Social services agencies are also eligible to receive Section 5310 funds and will receive those funds through ODOT acting as the designated recipient of funds. ODOT’s Program Management Plan (PMP) describes the designated recipient’s policies and procedures for administering FTA Section 5310 funds. The PMP is discussed in the ODOT Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan. The PMP also describes the competitive selection process.

FTA Urbanized Area Formula Grant Program (Section 5307)

The FTA Section 5307 program funding is apportioned to each urbanized area as a transportation block grant. These funds are flexible and may be used for a variety of transportation projects. However, these funds tend to be used for transit projects such as bus replacements and other transit capital projects. For

urbanized areas over 200,000 in population, such as Akron, Section 5307 funds may only be used for capital expenses. The exceptions to this restriction include expenses for preventive maintenance and the capital cost of leasing, planning, and complementary ADA paratransit service. The funding participation rate is generally 80% federal and 20% local. See the FTA circular for program guidance.

Grants under the Section 5307 program are available to finance planning and capital projects. Capital projects include acquisition, construction, improvement, and maintenance of facilities and equipment for use in public transit. Eligible purposes include planning, engineering design, and evaluation of transit projects and other technical transportation-related studies; capital investments in bus and bus-related activities such as replacement of buses, overhaul or rebuilding of buses, security equipment and construction of maintenance and passenger facilities; and capital investments in new and existing fixed guideway systems including rolling stock, overhaul and rebuilding of vehicles, track, signals, communications, and computer hardware and software. All preventive maintenance costs are considered capital costs. This formula grant program provides a large part of the funding for METRO and *PARTA*'s capital expenses (i.e., new buses).

Currently, the only designated recipients of Section 5307 funds in the AMATS area are METRO RTA in Summit County and *PARTA* in Portage County. Both METRO and *PARTA* receive the bulk of their Section 5307 funds from the Akron Urbanized Area's apportionment and receive smaller suballocations from the apportionment to the Cleveland Urbanized Area.

As a general public transit funding program, projects are not required to be aimed at populations with special transportation needs (although they must still meet ADA requirements). However, most METRO and *PARTA* bus routes serve densely populated areas which include many low-income, elderly, and disabled residents who are likely to benefit from enhanced service.

The table below illustrates the Section 5307 funding allocated to the Akron Urbanized Area (UZA) in recent years:

FTA 5307 Funding Allocations – Akron UZA

Year	Amount	Annual % Change
FY 2018	\$7,411,944	-
FY 2019	\$7,886,299	6.40%
FY 2020	\$8,128,041	3.07%
FY 2021	\$8,194,015	0.81%
FY 2022	\$10,536,012	28.58%
FY 2023	\$10,724,246	1.79%

FTA Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Grant Program (Section 5339)

Grants received from this program may be used to finance capital projects to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities in accordance with the grant requirements discussed in the federal program guidance.

Funds are allocated by formula to the Akron UZA in accordance with the grant requirements established by the FTA Section 5307 program. The designated recipients of program funding are operators of fixed-route bus services, which include METRO RTA and *PARTA* in the AMATS region. Public agencies or private non-profit organizations engaged in public transportation are eligible subrecipients. The funding participation rate is 80% federal and 20% local. METRO and *PARTA* receive the bulk of their Section 5339 funds from the Akron UZA's apportionment and receive smaller suballocations from the apportionment to the Cleveland UZA.

FTA 5339 Funding Allocations – Akron UZA

Year	Amount	Annual % Change
FY 2018	\$997,463	-
FY 2019	\$962,443	-3.51%
FY 2020	\$1,012,016	5.15%
FY 2021	\$940,047	-7.11%
FY 2022	\$900,715	-4.18%
FY 2023	\$924,986	2.69%

8.2 State of Ohio Transit Funding Programs

Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2)



The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) instituted the Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2) to provide state funds to the rural and urban transit systems in Ohio beginning in state fiscal year 2020. This replaces the Ohio Transit Preservation Partnership Program (OTPPP), which had provided federal funds to urban systems since 2012. The OTP2 is a discretionary program and projects are selected on a competitive basis with an emphasis on preservation in Tier I with preservation defined as the process of working to maintain, sustain, or keep in a good sound state the transit systems in Ohio. Tier II projects are focused on

regionalization, coordination, technology, service expansion, workforce initiatives, and healthcare initiatives.

Eligible applicants include RTAs, county transit boards, municipalities, or counties that own or operate public transportation systems. Transit systems must be recipients of FTA Section 5307 or 5311 funds in order to apply for OTP2 funds.

OTP2 Funding-Akron UZA

Year	Amount	Annual % Change
FY 2020	\$2,073,152	
FY 2021	\$2,701,575	30%
FY 2022	\$1,865,418	-31%
FY 2023	\$1,911,200	2%

The Urban Transit Program (UTP)

This funding is formula-based, administered by the Office of Transit for transit service in Ohio's urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or greater. The program's goal is to facilitate the most efficient and effective use of state funds in the provision of transportation services. There are 26 urban transit agencies in Ohio. Eligible applicants include RTAs, county transit boards, municipalities, or counties that own or operate public transportation systems. Transit systems must be recipients of FTA Section 5307 funds in order to receive UTP funds.

UTP Funding-Akron UZA

Year	Amount	Annual % Change
FY 2020	\$1,242,054	
FY 2021	\$1,259,685	1%
FY 2022	\$1,260,225	0%
FY 2023	\$1,285,223	2%

ODOT Workforce Development

This new program offers \$15 million of federal flex funds each SFY for projects that easily and efficiently transport resident workforce members to economically significant employment centers or to places of employment outside of their service area. It is important to note that ODOT is still awaiting formal FHWA authorization for the funding before the source of federal flex funds can be determined. Recipients of the funds must be rural or urban transit systems as outlined in sections 306.30 to 306.53 of the Revised Code. In the first round of funding, METRO and PARTA were deemed ineligible for this funding.

9 Conclusion

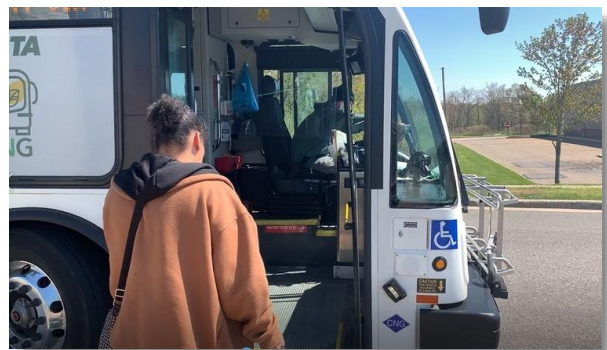
Just as previous coordinated planning processes have illustrated, this process revealed that the needs of those who rely on outside sources to meet their transportation requirements are substantial. Consider, for example:

- Over 15% of the Greater Akron population has some form of physical or mental disability, up from approximately 13% when this plan was updated in 2018. Many of these disabilities preclude the ability to operate a personal automobile.
- The senior citizen population is growing at a high rate, both nationally and regionally. Nationwide, this population group is expected to double by 2040. Research indicates that the average life span will continue to outpace one's ability to safely operate an automobile. While shifts toward semi-autonomous vehicles may help to keep drivers safer and may even keep elderly populations driving longer, the need for alternative transportation options will only increase for the growing senior population.
- Nearly 8% of low-income households have no access to an automobile in the Akron metropolitan region. While the highest concentrations of these households are in dense, urban communities like Akron with myriad transit services, many rural areas further away from these services also have high concentrations of carless households. Given that so many of the older populations live in these outlying areas, demand for rural transportation options is likely to increase over the coming years.
- While medical facilities and other public services still have a strong presence in traditional city centers, many newer facilities are being built in outlying suburban areas. Both transit agencies and many other transportation drivers do an admirable job of providing services to newer suburban frontiers, but the level of service in lower density areas cannot practically be the same as in high-density neighborhoods with high levels of transit-loyal riders.



Collectively, these points demonstrate not only that the current needs are both great and complex, but that such challenges will likely increase within the life of this plan and over the coming decades.

The recommendations proposed in this AMATS Area Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan are intended to meet these challenges head-on. They were born out of



statistical and demographic analysis, multiple public outreach methods, and partnerships with the agencies and organizations most responsible for meeting the needs of the transportation dependent. The implementation of these recommendations—largely accomplished through the transit-dedicated federal funding received by the AMATS region—will help increase the efficiency of the region’s existing transportation assets, allow agencies to use any new assets more effectively, and to build upon the already strong public, private and non-profit partnerships within the Greater Akron area. The resulting expanded coverage, better access, and real-time information should not only enhance the experience for those who depend on public transit but for everyone.

Appendix A: List of Coordinating Agencies/Organizations

Transportation Planning Agencies			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
AMATS	Summit, Portage, Wayne		amatsplanning.org
ODOT Office of Transit	Statewide	614-728-9609	dot.state.oh.us
FTA Region 5 Office	Midwest	312-886-3704	transit.dot.gov
Public Transportation Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
METRO RTA	Summit	330-564-2281	akronmetro.org
PARTA	Portage	330-678-7745	partaonline.org
MCPT	Medina	330-723-9670	medinaco.org/transit
GCRTA	Cuyahoga	216-566-5100	riderta.com
Geauga County Transit	Geauga	440-279-2150	geaugatransit.org
SARTA	Stark	330-477-2782	sartaonline.com
Wooster Transit	Wooster	330-234-3650	woosterhospitalitytransit.com
Laketrans	Lake		laketrans.com
Lorain County Transit	Lorain		loraincounty.us
Western Reserve Transit Authority (WRTA)	Mahoning		wrtaonline.com
Non-Profit Transportation Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
Vantage Aging	Summit	330-253-4597	matureservices.org
The Arc of Summit & Portage Counties	Summit/Portage	330-836-5863	
Coleman Behavioral Health - Summit County	Summit	330-379-0667	colemanservices.org/services
Community Action Council of Portage County	Portage	330-297-1456	cacportage.net
Community Support Services	Summit	330-253-9388	cssbh.org
Emmanuel Ventures	Summit		ccwhc.org
Easter Seals of Southern Ohio	Summit	440-324-6600	easterseals.com/noh
Faith in Action	Summit	330-922-1900	fiaakron.org
Family & Community Services, Inc.	Portage	330-297-7027	portagefamilies.org
Greenleaf Family Center	Summit	330-376-9494	greenleafctr.org
Hattie Larlham	Summit/Portage	330-274-2272	hattielarlham.org
Haven of Rest Mission	Summit	330-535-1563	havenofrest.org
Independence of Portage County	Portage	330-296-2851	indport.org
Jewish Services			
Jin Huo Community	Summit		
Open M	Summit		

Non-Profit Transportation Providers (Continued)			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
United Disability Services (UDS)	Summit	330-762-9755	udsakron.org
United Way of Portage County	Portage	330-297-1424	unitedwayofportage.com
United Way of Summit County	Summit	330-762-7601	uwsommit.org
Scenic-View	Summit		
Summit County Children's Services	Summit	330-379-9094	
Human Services Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority	Summit	330-376-7963	akronhousing.org/index2.aspx
Portage County Board of Developmental Disabilities	Portage	330-297-6462	portagedd.org
Portage County Department of Job and Family Svcs.	Portage	330-297-3750	co.portage.oh.us/jfs
Portage County Veterans Service Commission	Portage	330-297-3545	co.portage.oh.us/veterans.htm
Portage Metropolitan Housing Authority	Portage	330-297-1489	portagehousing.org
Summit County Department of Job and Family Svcs.	Summit		summitdjfs.org
Summit County Veterans Service Commission	Summit	330-643-2830 330-64	vscomsummitoh.us
Summit Developmental Disability Board	Summit	330-634-8082	summitdd.org
Wayne County Board of DD	Wayne	330-345-6016	waynedd.org/company.asp
Wayne County Job & Family Services	Wayne	330-287-5846	wayneohio.org/jobandfamily
Wayne County Veterans Service Commission	Wayne	330-345-6638	waynecountyveterans.org/index.htm
Wayne Metropolitan Housing Authority	Wayne	330-264-2727	waynemha.org
Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities		234-206-4205	
Private-Non-Ambulance Transportation Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
TL Worldwide	Summit	330-733-5372	thomaslimousine.com
City Yellow Cab	Summit	330-253-3141	cityyellowcab.com
Active Transportation	Summit	330-818-7474	
Falls/Suburban Cab Company	Summit	330-929-3121	
Magic Taxi LLC	Summit	330-753-8294 (330) 848-4955	
Life Care	Summit/Portage	866-998-3999	
Provide A Ride	Summit, Stark, Portage	888-288-7050	
Hospitals			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
Summa Health System	Summit	330-344-7101	
Cleveland Clinic Akron General	Summit	330-344-6000	
Churches			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
St Bernard Catholic Church	Summit	330-253-5161 x 13	
The House of the Lord	Summit	330-864-9073	
Arlington Church of God	Summit	330-773-3321	

Appendix B: List of Eligible 5310 Projects

(Per FTA Circular 9070.1G)

Eligible Capital Projects that Meet the 55% (or Greater) Requirement

- A. Rolling Stock and Related Activities
 - 1. Acquisition of expansion or replacement buses or vans, and related procurement, testing, inspection and acceptance costs;
 - 2. Vehicle rehabilitation or overhaul;
 - 3. Preventive maintenance, as defined by the National Transit Database (NTD);
 - 4. Radios and communication equipment; and
 - 5. Vehicle wheelchair lifts, ramps and securement devices

- B. Passenger Facilities
 - 1. Purchase and installation of benches, shelters and other passenger amenities;

- C. Support Facilities and Equipment
 - 1. Extended warranties that do not exceed the industry standard;
 - 2. Computer hardware and software;
 - 3. Transit-related intelligent transportation systems (ITS);
 - 4. Dispatch systems; and
 - 5. Fare collection systems

- D. Lease of Equipment when Lease is More Cost Effective than Purchase

- E. Acquisition of Transportation Services Under a Contract, Lease or Other Arrangement. Both capital and operating costs associated with contracted service are eligible capital expenses.

- F. Support for Mobility Management and Coordination Programs Among Public Transportation Providers and Other Human Services Agencies Providing Transportation
 - 1. The promotion, enhancement and facilitation of access to transportation services, including the integration and coordination of services for individuals with disabilities, seniors and low-income individuals;
 - 2. Support for short-term management activities to plan and implement coordinated services;
 - 3. The support of state and local coordination policy bodies and councils;
 - 4. The operation of transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies and customers;

5. The provision of coordination services, including employer-oriented Transportation Management Organizations' and Human Service Organizations' customer-oriented travel navigator systems and neighborhood travel coordination activities such as coordinating individualized travel training and trip planning activities for customers;
6. The development and operation of one-stop transportation traveler call centers to coordinate transportation information on all travel modes and to manage eligibility requirements and arrangements for customers among supporting programs; and
7. Operational planning for the acquisition in intelligent transportation technologies to help plan and operate coordinated systems inclusive of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, coordinated vehicle scheduling, dispatching and monitoring technologies, as well as technologies to track costs and billing in a coordinated system and single smart customer payment systems.

Other Eligible Capital and Operating Expenses (May not exceed 45% of metropolitan area's annual apportionment)

- A. *General (includes projects that would have been eligible for the FTA's former New Freedom funding program)*
 1. Public transportation projects (capital and operating) planned, designed and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate;
 2. Public transportation projects that exceed the requirements of the ADA;
 3. Public transportation projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance by individuals with disabilities on ADA complementary paratransit service; or
 4. Alternatives to public transportation that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities with transportation

- B. **Public Transportation Projects the Exceed the Requirements of the ADA**
 1. Enhancing paratransit beyond minimum ADA requirements
 - a. Expansion of paratransit service parameters beyond the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile required by the ADA;
 - b. Expansion of current hours of operation for ADA paratransit services that are beyond those provided on the fixed-route services;
 - c. The incremental cost of providing same-day service;
 - d. The incremental cost (if any) of making door-to-door service available to all eligible ADA paratransit riders, but not as a reasonable modification for individual riders in an otherwise curb-to-curb service;
 - e. Enhancement of the level of service by providing escorts or assisting riders through the door of their destination;

- f. Acquisition of vehicles and equipment designed to accommodate mobility aids that exceed the dimensions and weight ranges established for wheelchairs under ADA, and labor costs of aides to help drivers assist passengers with over-sized wheelchairs; and
- g. Installation of additional securement locations in public buses beyond what is required by the ADA
- h. “Feeder” transit service to provide access to other public transportation modes not required under the ADA

C. Public Transportation Projects that Improve Accessibility

- 1. Making accessibility improvements to transit and intermodal stations not designated as key stations
 - a. Building accessible pathways to bus stops not currently accessible (curb-cuts, sidewalks, accessible pedestrian signals, etc.);
 - b. Adding an elevator or ramps, detectable warnings or other accessibility improvements to a non-key stop/station that are otherwise not required by the ADA;
 - c. Improving signage or wayfinding technology; or
 - d. Implementation of other technology improvements that enhance accessibility for people with disabilities including ITS technology
- 2. Travel training for individual users on awareness, knowledge and skills of public and alternative transportation options available in their communities;

D. Public Transportation Alternatives that Assist Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities with Transportation

- 1. Purchasing vehicles to support new accessible taxi, ride-sharing and/or vanpooling programs (vehicle must be able to accommodate mobility devices without passenger needing to leave the device)
- 2. Supporting the administration and expenses related to new voucher programs for transportation services offered by human services providers
- 3. Supporting volunteer driver and driver aide programs (covers support and administrative costs)