

# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

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2013 Planning Grant

Discovery Phase: Montrose

May 30, 2013



The purpose of the discovery phase document is to identify the preliminary needs of the Connecting Communities Planning Grant study area. In early May, AMATS conducted a site visit to the Montrose area of Bath and Copley townships. The staff drove through the area as well as walked portions of the area and took pictures to highlight issues identified. The key issues identified in the corridor include:

- Limited pedestrian infrastructure/ Transit Last Mile Connections
- Limited bicycle infrastructure and storage
- Automobile access and wayfinding
- Poor visual aesthetics/Parking reduction
- Zoning and land use coordination among townships

More detail on each of these issues is provided below.

### **Limited Pedestrian Infrastructure/Transit Last Mile Connections**

There are virtually no sidewalks in the study area. There is a strip of sidewalk on the south side of Brookwall near an apartment complex but it only lasts a short distance. Walking between certain developments would be unthinkable under current conditions.

Transit stops exist throughout the study area, however, most of them are just signs and a patch of worn grass. Pedestrian crossings are limited and it is dangerous to try to get from one side of SR 18 to the other. The study should consider some bus shelters as well as sidewalks to allow for last mile connections.



Above: Transit stop on Flight Memorial in front of Wendy's



Above: Looking west down SR 18 on Bath side. There are no sidewalks down this stretch of SR 18.

### **Limited Bicycle Infrastructure and Storage**

While there is evidence that people bike to and from the Montrose area, there is very little infrastructure to support the activity. Currently there are no bike lines on SR 18 or Cleveland Massillon Rd. There is also no bike infrastructure within the existing retail developments. During our site visit we found a number of places where people had locked their bikes to light poles and guardrails. It seems there should be some focus on providing additional bicycle infrastructure to the Montrose area.



Above: One of two bike racks in Study area. Both in West Market Plaza.



Above: Bike stored on guardrail in Fairlawn.

### **Automobile Access and Wayfinding**

It is very difficult to find your way around in Montrose. There are numerous unconnected parking lots, flurries of signage, and driveways along SR 18 which confuse motorists. On the Bath side of the study area, Taco Bell, Five Guys, Red Lobster, McDonald's and others all have their own driveways as does the shopping center set behind them. On the Copley side, Ford, Applebee's and Olive Garden have their own driveways off of 18. Visually when driving the corridor it is easy to turn into the wrong driveway and then be stuck due to lack of shared parking facilities. When confusion hits during peak traffic times the results can be dangerous or just plain frustrating. Some access management principles need to be applied to some of the existing retail development.



Above: Two separated parking lots both with access to SR 18 (Applebee's and Olive Garden)



Above: Extensive signage in Copley provides little direction



Above: Separated parking offers strips of green vegetation, but no connections



Above: SR 18 left turn lane leads directly into Ford dealership which is disconnected from retail development

### **Poor Visual Aesthetics/Parking**

Very simply put, Montrose is ugly. While there are a few spots with very pretty trees and vegetation, most of Montrose is pavement. Building design is very bland and has no real character. Montrose is a place in name only and there is very little branding or aesthetics to make it feel like a uniform place. While most of Montrose is built out, there may be opportunities for façade improvements to buildings as time goes on.

Montrose has a lot of parking and in some places it is probably justified. However, there are some locations where an argument could be made to reduce parking. This seems particularly relevant around the Movie Theater and World Market on the Copley side of the planning study. Some analysis should be completed to determine the amount of parking actually required at some of these developments.



Above: A sea of parking in Montrose

### **Zoning and Land Use Coordination**

The Connecting Communities Planning Grant is a great start to improve zoning and land use coordination of the Montrose area. The area functions as one place and needs to be considered as one place when it comes to zoning and land use. This means new construction, façade improvements and design guidelines should be coordinated between each township when practical.

### **Conclusion**

All of the issues in Montrose cannot be solved by a \$50,000 planning grant. However, we believe with a narrow scope we can achieve some major improvements to the area. It will be necessary to work with ODOT, METRO RTA and the Summit County Engineer's Office to make significant changes. AMATS is looking forward to working with Bath and Copley townships on this challenging project.