

AMATS Area Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan

May 2018

Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study

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The AMATS Area Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan is a joint effort between AMATS, the region's public transit agencies (METRO RTA and PARTA) and a number of social and human service agencies and organizations.

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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 persons who depend on public transportation: persons aged 65 and over, persons with disabilities and those of low income. The AMATS Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Plan is a joint effort between AMATS, the region’s public transit agencies (METRO and PARTA) and a number of 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, approximately 12% of the region’s population has some form of disability, 14% of the population is below the national poverty level, and nearly 16% 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. Areas remain, however, where fixed-route bus coverage is limited or entirely absent. Some of the key transportation gaps include:

- Summit County: Copley Township, the City of Green and the City of Twinsburg
- Portage County: the City of Aurora, Brimfield Township, Village of Mantua and the City of Streetsboro
- Wayne County Portion: Public transportation is entirely absent from the AMATS portion of Wayne County (Doylestown, Rittman and their surrounding townships)

The region’s public transit agencies are constantly re-evaluating their services, and are taking steps to address many of the gaps identified above. METRO has introduced its “Call-a-Bus”, a fully accessible demand response call-ahead service, to help serve the gaps in Twinsburg and Green. The service is available to anyone. METRO is also in the process of re-designing their line service routes, taking the gaps identified in this report into consideration. 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. Free transfers are offered at both locations. Fixed routes run on clock-faced timing for easier transfers and reduced wait times. PARTA consistently monitors routes to identify gaps in services and makes changes as necessary. 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. Wayne County recently completed its own coordinated planning process, with Wooster Transit leading the way. Although the agency currently only operates

vehicles within the Wooster city limits, its goal is to operate demand-response service throughout the entire county, which would dramatically increase the transportation options available to the AMATS communities in the far northeastern portion of Wayne County – where service is currently unavailable.

The AMATS Coordinated Plan presents seven 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, and funding innovative new public transit service to key employment areas are all top regional priorities. In addition to these recommendations, the Coordinated Plan proposes two 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, and promoting ridesharing.

Our goal is that through the implementation of the recommendations proposed within the AMATS Coordinated Plan, all parties involved in the transportation of the elderly, persons with disabilities and low-income individuals will share in a unified vision 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 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 available within our region.

Especially in today’s sluggish 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 overarching purpose of this plan is to bring any 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 to be included within a locally developed, coordinated public transit – human services transportation plan (Coordinated Plan). The following plan, approved by the Policy Committee on May 10, 2018 (anticipated), 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 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 (2014) of the AMATS Coordinated Plan was developed by AMATS in cooperation with METRO, PARTA and 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 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 players” 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. 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 analyses and identify preliminary gaps, regional strengths, potential concerns, etc.
- 4. Agency and Public Outreach Efforts:** Through a variety of methods, engage in conversation 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).
- 5. Synthesize Information into Prioritized Regional Recommendations:** Compile all of the data, comments and concerns from prior planning phases. Perform analyses 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 2040* – the long-term regional transportation plan.
- 6. 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.

- 7. 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.
- 8. AMATS Committee Approval:** Present the plan and proposed strategies to the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee and the Citizens Involvement Committee for comment. Seek final approval of the document from the AMATS Policy Committee.
- 9. Submit Approved Coordinated Plan:** Officially file the locally adopted, coordinated public transit – human services transportation plan with the Federal Transit Administration’s regional office and ODOT’s Office of Transit.

2 General Transportation Needs

This planning process will attempt to identify the transportation needs of three targeted profile groups, identified as having special transportation needs – with a particular reliance on public transportation.

2.1 Persons With Disabilities

People with certain physical or mental disabilities may be unable to operate personal vehicles, and in some cases, are unable to use non-motorized transportation methods such as walking or bicycling. The transportation services provided by public, private and not-for-profit agencies and organizations are vital in facilitating these individuals to accomplish even the most basic tasks, such as buying groceries and other necessities, attending medical appointments and engaging in social, recreational and employment-related activities.

The term “disability” covers a wide spectrum of physical or cognitive limitations, and of an equally broad range of severity. Disabilities affect people regardless of age, sex, race or income level, and a number of human and social services agencies exist within the AMATS region (and beyond) to address the specific needs of such a diverse population.

One growing segment of the population in regards to those having some form of disability is veterans returning home from overseas combat operations. In some ways, the needs of our veterans mirror the needs of civilians with similar disabilities. However, our veterans may have options available to them beyond those available to the general public, such as Veterans Administration (VA) facilities. In honor of their service and sacrifice for our nation, AMATS considers it of utmost importance to assist our local heroes in meeting their transportation needs.

Table 1 - US Census Disability Statistics

2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

	Summit County	Portage County	Wayne County**
Total population* having some form of disability	13.7%	14.7%	12.7%
Age 65+ with some form of disability	34.7%	37.1%	30.7%
Total population with some form of ambulatory difficulty	7.8.%	7.4%	6.1%
Age 65+ with some form of ambulatory difficulty	23.0%	25.2%	20.4%

**Civilian, non-institutionalized population **Entire county; includes non-AMATS portion*

Table 2 - US Census Veteran Population*

2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

	Summit County	Portage County	Wayne County**
Veteran Population	33,658	10,161	6,709
% of 18+ Population	7.9%	7.7%	7.6%

**Includes all veterans - not only disabled **Entire county; includes non-AMATS portion*

2.2 The Elderly

The aging of the U.S. population reinforces the importance of good planning for the needs of those age 65 and older. In 2011, the oldest members of the “Baby Boom” generation started turning 65 years of age. According to the Pew Research Center, 10,000 “Baby Boomers” will reach age 65 every day for the next 19 years. Currently, Boomers make up approximately 26% of the total U.S. population. This rapid expansion of the 65+ demographic will have a dramatic effect on the nation’s population. Currently, those aged 65+ make up 13% of all Americans. By 2030, Pew projects that those aged 65 and older will comprise at least 18% of the total U.S. population.

The Akron metropolitan area is no exception to this trend. According to the most recent U.S. Census data (2016 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates) , 17.1% of Summit County residents are age 65 or older; in Portage County, those aged 65+ comprise 15.2% of the population. The Ohio Department of Aging projects that the state’s older population will steeply increase through 2020, and could nearly double by 2040.

Although most people remain active at this point in their lives (and well beyond), this aging population will undoubtedly lead to an increase in demand for various transportation services. An Ohio Public Transit Association analysis estimates that most people will outlive their ability to drive a personal automobile by eight to ten years. The time is now to start planning for the infrastructure and coordinating the organizations and agencies charged with transporting these residents to wherever it is they need to go.

The transportation needs of seniors may differ from other segments of the population, in that employment-based trips are not a major focus. Instead, the focus is most likely to be trips to physicians and medical centers. Trips for basic necessities – grocery shopping, recreation and entertainment, and access to social and religious activities – are also important.

The current programs designated for providing transportation access to seniors are stretched to the limit just from medical trips alone, given existing resources. Meeting future demand for these and other transportation needs will require cooperation and coordination between family members, transportation providers and a multitude of social and human services agencies to ensure the most efficient use of available assets, and the maximum leveraging of any available funding sources.

Table 3 - Age 65+ Population
US Census and American Community Survey

	Summit County	Portage County	Wayne County**
2000 (US Census)	14.1%	11.0%	12.2%
2012 (ACS 1-year Estimate)	15.4%	13.7%	15.5%
2016 (ACS 1-year Estimate)	17.1%	15.2%	16.8%

**Entire county; includes non-AMATS portion

2.3 Low-Income Individuals

Although America’s “Great Recession” may have technically passed, few would argue that we are in the midst of great economic uncertainty, and that finding stable, full-time employment is not without its challenges. A sizable percentage of the population within the AMATS region falls below the national poverty line, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 4 - Population Below Poverty Level
2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

	Summit County	Portage County	Wayne County**
All People	13.6%	14.4%	12.4%
Age 65 or older	6.0%	5.3%	6.6%

***Entire county; includes non-AMATS portion*

The many steep costs involved in vehicle ownership preclude many low-income individuals from owning one. This was not as major of a concern historically, when most job opportunities were located in the hearts of our cities, and one’s daily work commute involved a short walk or a quick trip on the local public transportation system. Since the invention of the national freeway network, however, our cities land use patterns have become decidedly more auto-centric and decentralized, with many employment opportunities moving ever outward from central cities and town centers. Residential and retail land uses followed suit. The end result was many low-income families compelled to occupy the inexpensive housing in older, central neighborhoods were now located far from prime job opportunities.

Beyond providing access to jobs, it is important to realize that in today’s knowledge-based economy, specialized training and/or degree programs are required to land the jobs best able to help individuals and families rise from poverty. For this reason, providing access to educational and job-training centers is especially important for low-income individuals.

Job access is important, but that should not distract us from the fact that low-income individuals need reliable access to retail and grocery, social services, medical facilities and recreational opportunities as well.

Table 5 - Percent of Households without Vehicles
2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

By County	
Summit County	9.0%
Portage County	6.1%
Wayne County**	9.1%
By Larger City	
Akron	15.0%
Barberton	10.4%
Cuyahoga	7.3%
Kent	11.4%
Ravenna	15.3%

***Entire county; includes non-AMATS portion*

Figure 1 – Population Over 65 Years of Age

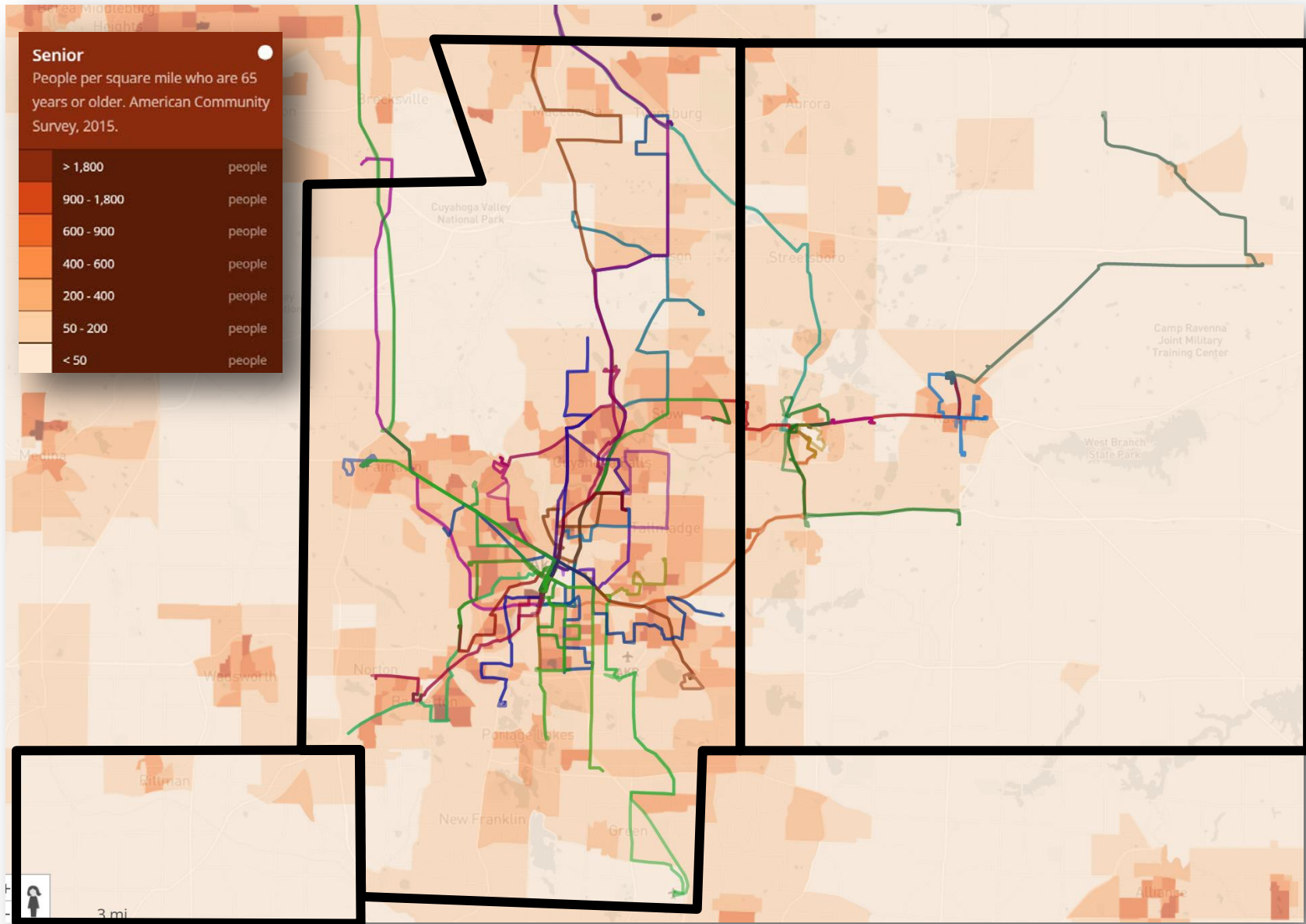
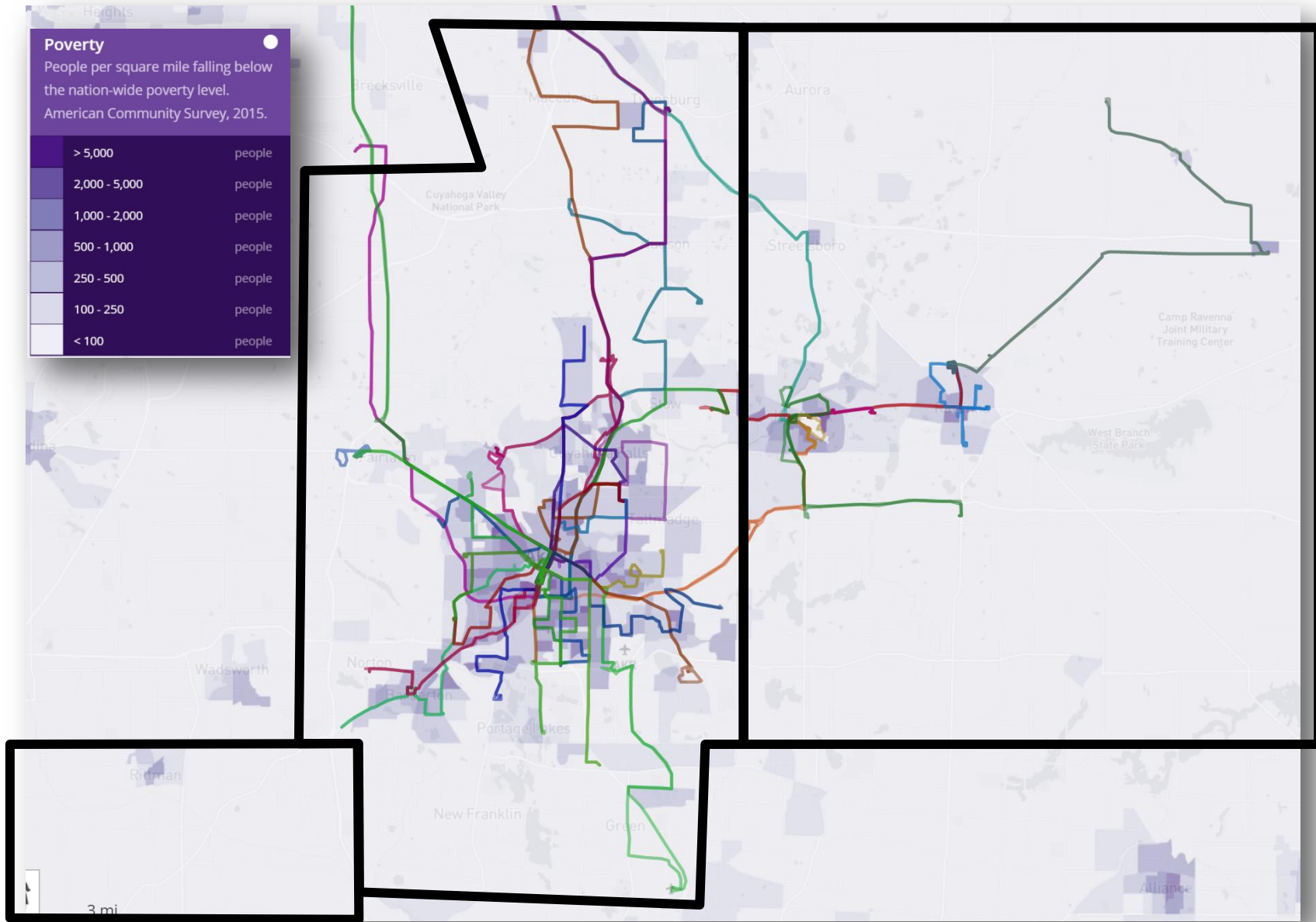


Figure 2 – Low Income Population



3 Transportation Partners & Their Assets



A variety of assets are available within our region to assist in the transportation of persons with special needs. With so many agencies and programs dedicated to transportation in existence – transit agencies, human services agencies, non-profit providers, faith-based organizations, volunteer programs and so on – providing an all-inclusive list is difficult. 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.*

3.1 Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)

3.1.1 METRO and PARTA

These 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 runs its increasingly frequent North Coast Express service into Cleveland, and 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.

Table 6 - Key Transit Statistics

		
Large Buses	140	32
Small Buses/MV-1 Vehicles	91	37
Transit Center	Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center 631 S. Broadway St, Akron	Kent Central Gateway 201 E. Erie St, Kent
# of Fixed Routes	37	8 County, 2 Express, 6 Campus
# of Fixed Route Passengers (2017)	4,885,178	1,164,796
# Demand Response Passengers (2017)	265,833	89,874
Central Office	416 Kenmore Blvd, Akron	2000 Summit Rd, Kent
Contact	330-762-0341	330-676-6701

3.1.2 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 County Transit (GCT) – 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. Although trips must generally be scheduled in advance, GCT demand-response service is available to anyone in the county (no special qualifications necessary), and for an additional fee, will transport clients outside of Geauga County.

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 – the RTA serving Lake County provides three types of service: local, fixed-route bus service within Lake County, park-and-ride commuter service to Cleveland and dial-a-ride, demand-response service. The dial-a-ride service provides service anywhere within Lake County, as well as major medical facilities in Cleveland. 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) – Serves the cities of Elyria and Lorain with four fixed-route bus lines and ADA dial-a-ride service. Currently does not provide service into Cleveland.

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. The “loop” routes are semi-fixed, in that they follow a sequence of scheduled stop locations, but can deviate from the route by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a 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 27 fixed routes (plus additional late night loop and other specialty routes), and serves Canton, Massillon, Alliance and a number of smaller communities. SARTA provides valuable express service to the Akron-Canton Airport, METRO’s RKP Transit Center in Akron, as well as weekday trips to Cleveland. In addition to fixed-route bus service, SARTA provides Proline demand-response service to all county residents with an ADA recognized disability.

Western Reserve Transit Authority (WRTA) – As Youngstown/Mahoning County’s public transit provider, WRTA operates a number of 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, serving the city of Warren.

Wooster Transit – As a relatively small transit system, Wooster Transit operates small buses on two fixed routes in Wooster and nearby areas. Wooster Transit buses currently *do not* serve the portion of Wayne County that lies within the AMATS region (Doylestown, Rittman, etc.), although the agency hopes to provide countywide demand-response service in the future.

3.1.3 NEORide

Stemming from a recommendation from the 2014 Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan, NEORide was established as a Council of Governments (COG) under Ohio law in 2014. The founding members were METRO, PARTA and SARTA with Laketran joining the group in 2017.

Chapter 167 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) permits “the governing bodies of any two or more counties, municipal corporations, townships...or other political subdivisions” to establish a regional council to solve “the problems of local government” and discharge “the responsibilities and duties of local government in the most efficient possible manner”. COGs have the power to “study such area governmental problems common to two or more members of the council as it deems appropriate”, including those of health, welfare, economic and regional development. They may “promote cooperative agreements and contracts among its members or other governmental agencies and private persons, corporations or agencies.”

NEORide’s journey began with a feasibility study underwritten by a \$50,000 grant from the state’s Local Government Innovation Fund. After gathering input from each systems’ general managers and the general public, NEORide analyzed every aspect of the inter-county transit services offered by METRO, PARTA and SARTA. By evaluating both existing and potential demand, the team conducted a study to develop short, intermediate and long-term goals that provide a clear roadmap for the future of a regional public transit in Northeast Ohio, as shown on the following page.

The goals identified by NEORide both directly and indirectly support the recommendations coming out of this plan.

SHORT/INTERMEDIATE TERM GOALS

- Increase and enhance service by coordinating, combining and extending existing inter-county routes now operated by the three agencies;
- Include information about the enhanced/increased service and NEORide on each agency's website, printed schedules and other materials;
- Develop a stand-alone NEORide website. Mission accomplished--you're viewing it now;
- Brand and market the NEORide concept, including identifying coordinated/combined/extended routes as service provided via NEORide in conjunction with the three agencies.

LONG TERM GOALS

- Additional route revisions/additions and service increases;
- Development of NEORide specific GPS-powered rider tools;
- Coordination of paratransit services; Fare coordination and collection;
- Identify and secure revenue sources to expand and promote regional transit service.

(from the NEORide website - <https://www.neoride.org>)

3.2 Government Agencies

A number of government agencies directly provide transportation services for the clients that they serve. The following table (based on survey data) illustrates the major government agencies providing transportation within the AMATS region:

Table 7 - Government Agencies Providing Transportation Services

Summit County			
Name	Clients Served	Destinations Served	Fleet Size
Summit County Dept of Jobs and Family Services	Low-Income, Senior Citizens, Persons with Disabilities		NET Trips Contracted to other providers
Summit County Veterans Service Commission	Veterans	VA Medical Centers	Not Available
Portage County			
Name	Clients Served	Destinations Served	Fleet Size
Portage County Dept of Jobs and Family Services	Low-Income, Senior Citizens, Persons with Disabilities	Not Specified	One Minivan, NET Trips Contracted to other providers
Portage County Veterans Service Commission	Veterans	VA Medical Centers	Not Available
Wayne County			
Name	Clients Served	Destinations Served	Fleet Size
Wayne County Dept of Jobs 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

3.3 Not-for-Profit Transportation Providers

A number of 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 particular government agency. The following table illustrates the key not-for-profit providers of transportation in the AMATS region:

Table 8 – Not-for-Profit Organizations Providing Transportation Services

Name	Office Locations	Clients Served	Services	Fleet Size	Phone Number
Community Support Services, Inc	Akron	Low Income Individuals, Seniors, Persons with Disabilities, Veterans	A wide variety of social services, including transportation to employers	Five 15 passenger vans	330-253-9388
The Counseling Center of Wayne and Holmes Counties	Main Office - Wooster; AMATS region branch office in Rittman	Low Income Individuals, Seniors, Persons with Disabilities, Veterans	A wide variety of social services and assistance to persons with emotional and mental concerns	1 large van, 3 minivans, 2 SUVs	330-925-5466
Family and Community Services	Akron, Kent, Mogadore, Ravenna, Others outside of AMATS region	Low Income Individuals, Seniors, Persons with Disabilities, Veterans	A wide variety of social services throughout Northeast Ohio and beyond	8 vans, 2 with mobility device lifts	330-297-7027
Independence of Portage County	Ravenna	Persons with Disabilities	Residential facilities and various support services	Buses and vans, some with mobility device lifts	330-296-2851
International Institute of Akron	Akron	Low Income Individuals, Seniors, Persons with Disabilities	A number of programs and services to assist the foreign born to integrate into society	2 vans, 2 station wagons	330-376-5106
United Disability Services (UDS)	Akron, Kent, Twinsburg	Persons with Disabilities	Adults attending various UDS adult services programs, other organizations/groups under contract, including Job and Family Services	24 light transit vehicles and vans - all with mobility device lifts	330-762-9751

3.4 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 following table lists some of the key private transportation providers within the AMATS region:

Table 9 - Private, For-Profit Transportation Providers

Name	Service Area	Contact
City Yellow Cab	Summit County and Beyond	234-542-3941
TL Worldwide	Summit, Portage and Beyond	330-733-5372
Tri-County Taxi	Summit	330-786-1100
Emerald Transportation	Portage	330-673-9258
Falls/Suburban Cab Company	Summit	330-929-3121
Magic Taxi	Summit	330-753-8294

4 Outreach Efforts

No transportation planning effort can be successful without including the concerns, opinions and preferences of key stakeholders throughout the process. AMATS sought stakeholder input at multiple points during the creation of this locally adopted, coordinated public transit – human services transportation plan. Summaries of these outreach efforts are included below.

4.1 Planning Committee Meetings

The first step was to identify a large list of stakeholders that either work with or provide transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and/or people with low incomes. Over 70 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. Metropolitan Planning Organization, Regional Planning Organization, and Regional Transportation Planning Organization
- f. Department of Health and Human Services office (local/regional)
- g. Private Transportation Providers

In order to keep the group at a manageable size, a subset of these stakeholders were invited to participate in the Planning Committee. 16 agencies were invited and 9 actively participated. The remainder of the stakeholders were included in the survey, described in the following section.

Through a series of meetings, the Planning Committee identified needs and strategies to meet those needs, and determined priorities of those strategies. Meetings were held on the following dates:

- September 6, 2017 - Robert K Pfaff Transit Center (631 S Broadway, Akron)
- December 4, 2017 – PARTA Administrative Office (2000 Summit Rd, Kent)
- February 1, 2018 - Robert K Pfaff Transit Center (631 S Broadway, Akron)

4.2 AMATS Online Survey of Agencies and Organizations Involved in Regional Mobility Management

In December 2017, AMATS published an online survey created to gather the specific needs of regional social/human services organizations, and to better understand the diverse transportation assets available within our region.

The survey was carefully constructed to be brief, yet informative, and was created with substantial input from the region's two public transportation agencies: METRO and PARTA.

The survey was sent via email to 38 different agencies/organizations throughout the entire region. A total of 61 employees from those 38 agencies responded to the survey. The responding agencies represent a diverse mix of transportation providers, human/social service agencies and advocacy groups from all around Summit, Portage and Wayne counties. Some of the key information derived from the responses includes:

- Respondents indicated that the populations they serve include: seniors, disabled individuals, students, low income individuals, job seekers, veterans, behavioral health individuals and victims of crime/trauma.
- Most trips fall into one of two categories: medical-related and work-related (listed in order of frequency). Medical trips include medical appointments at doctor's offices and hospitals, as well as dialysis treatment, and appointments for rehabilitation/counseling services. Work-related trips include places of employment as well as Ohio Means Jobs Center and other job-searching/training organizations. Additional trip purposes include shopping, school, social activities and faith-based activities (also listed in order of frequency).
- Some of the largest challenges relating to existing transportation options include:
 - Inability to make cross-county connections
 - Service hours (not late enough, not early enough, not available on weekends)
 - Long lead time to request door-to-door service
 - Limited availability of fixed route services in rural areas
 - Fixed route services are confusing
- Most respondents indicated that they believed their clients would consider using a fixed route transportation service that does not require advance reservation if it were available to them for their trip. However, the barriers to choosing fixed route service are that it can be confusing or it is too physically difficult for them to walk to a bus stop.
- To make using fixed route transit service less confusing and more accessible, a vast majority of respondents (93%) said they would recommend free travel training services for their clients by METRO and/or PARTA to learn how to use transit services.

Most respondents (77%) indicated that their clients needed transportation services that cross county lines.

4.3 Survey of METRO/PARTA Paratransit Customers

In November 2017, METRO and PARTA conducted a short 3-question survey of their paratransit customers. METRO received 99 customer responses and PARTA received 66. The surveys were conducted when customers called in to schedule their trips.

- A majority of respondents (92%) indicated that they felt the transportation services provided in Portage/Summit counties suit the needs of individuals with disabilities and older adults.
- A majority of METRO customer respondents (69%), 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 indicated that they would use fixed route service if it was available to them, which is also expected since the fixed-route service in Portage County is concentrated in the more populated urban areas. The majority of the county is relatively 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
 - Service is not late enough in the evening or early enough in the morning
 - Inability to request a trip less than one day in advance

4.4 Public and Agency/Organization Comment Period

AMATS announced the opening of a public comment period for the draft of the Coordinated Plan at its Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) meeting on March 1, 2018. Multiple hard copies of the draft recommendations were made available at the meeting, and it was announced that the draft recommendations would also be posted to the AMATS website: www.amatsplanning.org. Comments were accepted through April 15, 2018 – none were received.

In addition to the CIC announcement, AMATS directly contacted 43 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 stakeholder.

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. The updated draft document was then presented to the AMATS Policy Committee for final approval at its May 10, 2018 meeting.

5 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 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.

5.1 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

5.1.1 METRO RTA

5.1.1.1 Fixed-Route Gaps

1. *Geographical Gaps* – These gaps may be identified using the maps on pages 9 and 10. 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 house 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 has introduced an innovative solution to serving low density areas such as these – branded as “Call-A-Bus”. METRO’s Call-a-Bus service is a new, 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.

2. *Operational Gaps* – Fixed bus routes in dense, urban areas (Akron, Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, etc.) run regularly, late into the evening and often offer weekend service. However, routes to more suburban areas (particularly express routes) tend to run infrequently, have early final runs (often around 6:00 p.m.) and typically offer no (or very limited) weekend service. METRO typically does not operate buses on major holidays.
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 persons with a disability. North Coast 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.

5.1.1.2 Demand-Response Gaps

1. *Geographical Gaps* – METRO operates three demand-response services: SCAT Senior for passengers age 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 $\frac{3}{4}$ 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 and holiday service is not available. 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 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 recently introduced “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.) are 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.

5.1.2 PARTA

5.1.2.1 Fixed-Route Gaps

1. *Geographical Gaps* – Beyond the cities of Kent and Ravenna, Portage County is largely rural and not especially conducive to fixed-route transit service. Nevertheless, PARTA provides regular service to communities like Hiram and Garrettsville in the northeast portion of the county. The relatively large, job-dense communities of Aurora and Streetsboro (except for one stop on the Cleveland Express) are not served. Neither the Village of Mantua nor the southern 1/3 of Portage County (which includes job-rich Brimfield Township) have fixed-route service available. PARTA is well ahead of most transit agencies in terms of offering fixed-route service beyond its home county borders. Express service is offered to Akron and Cleveland, and frequent service to Stow (in Summit County) allows for easy transfers to METRO’s bus system.
2. *Operational Gaps* – PARTA provides two categories of fixed-route bus service: campus service, which serves the Kent State University campus area, and county service, which serves the rest of Portage County. The campus service runs frequently and all throughout the day. Multiple campus routes also provide late-night service. The primary gaps are that there is limited weekend service and the campus routes only operate while Kent State is in session. PARTA’s county routes run less frequently, offer very little weekend service, and generally only run until 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. (with a few exceptions).
3. *Eligibility Gaps* – All PARTA buses are accessible to passengers using mobility devices. Fares should be very affordable to most: campus services are free of charge, county bus routes charge a \$1.00 fare (each way), and seniors and persons with disabilities may pay a reduced fare of \$0.50 each way. Express service to Akron is only \$1.00 each way. Trips to Cleveland are a bit more costly at \$5.00 per trip, which could be cost prohibitive to some lower income households.

5.1.2.2 Demand-Response 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 of the larger Portage County communities, service to the more remote villages and townships is only available certain days of the week. Saturday service is available only within portions of Kent and Ravenna, and 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. Dial-a-Ride buses are available between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. – leaving a significant service gap for those who are employed or have other needs in the evening.
3. *Eligibility Gaps* – Dial-A-Ride service is available to all Portage County residents. The cost of the service is \$4.00 each way, with a reduced rate of \$2.00 for seniors, children or persons with a disability. The full fare could prove cost prohibitive to low income individuals and households. All vehicles are accessible to those requiring mobility devices.

5.1.3 Neighboring RTA 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 to provide zero 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, 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. The complete absence of public transit service within the Wayne County portion of the AMATS area (Doylestown, Rittman and their surrounding townships). This could change in the future, as Wayne County is undergoing its own coordinated planning process, and hopes to one day offer county-wide demand-response bus service.
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.

5.1.4 Government Agency 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, Veteran’s 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 will no longer be able to provide transportation to their clients. With varying time tables established by each county, a segment of the population, for which public transportation is not an option, will no longer have safe, reliable, affordable transportation. Private organizations will need to enter this new market to fill the gap and provide the specialized transportation needed. The Summit County Developmental Disabilities Board is hosting a Transportation Collaborative comprised of governmental and non-profit agencies to help address these changes, focus on 'employment first', and create a hub that enables many providers to share information and maximize service to individuals

5.1.5 Not-for-Profit Transportation Provider 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; 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.).

5.1.6 Private (For-Profit) Transportation Provider Gaps

Private providers of transportation, which include taxi, limousine and charter bus companies, may work directly with their clients, or may perform work contractually for other agencies. 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 are most other providers of transportation.

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 service 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 persons with mobility devices. However, this gap may be narrowed with the recent passage of HB 195 by the Ohio General Assembly. This law allows taxis, ridesharing companies and NMT providers to offer transit service to individuals using a mobility device at a lower cost.

5.1.7 Summary of Transportation Services

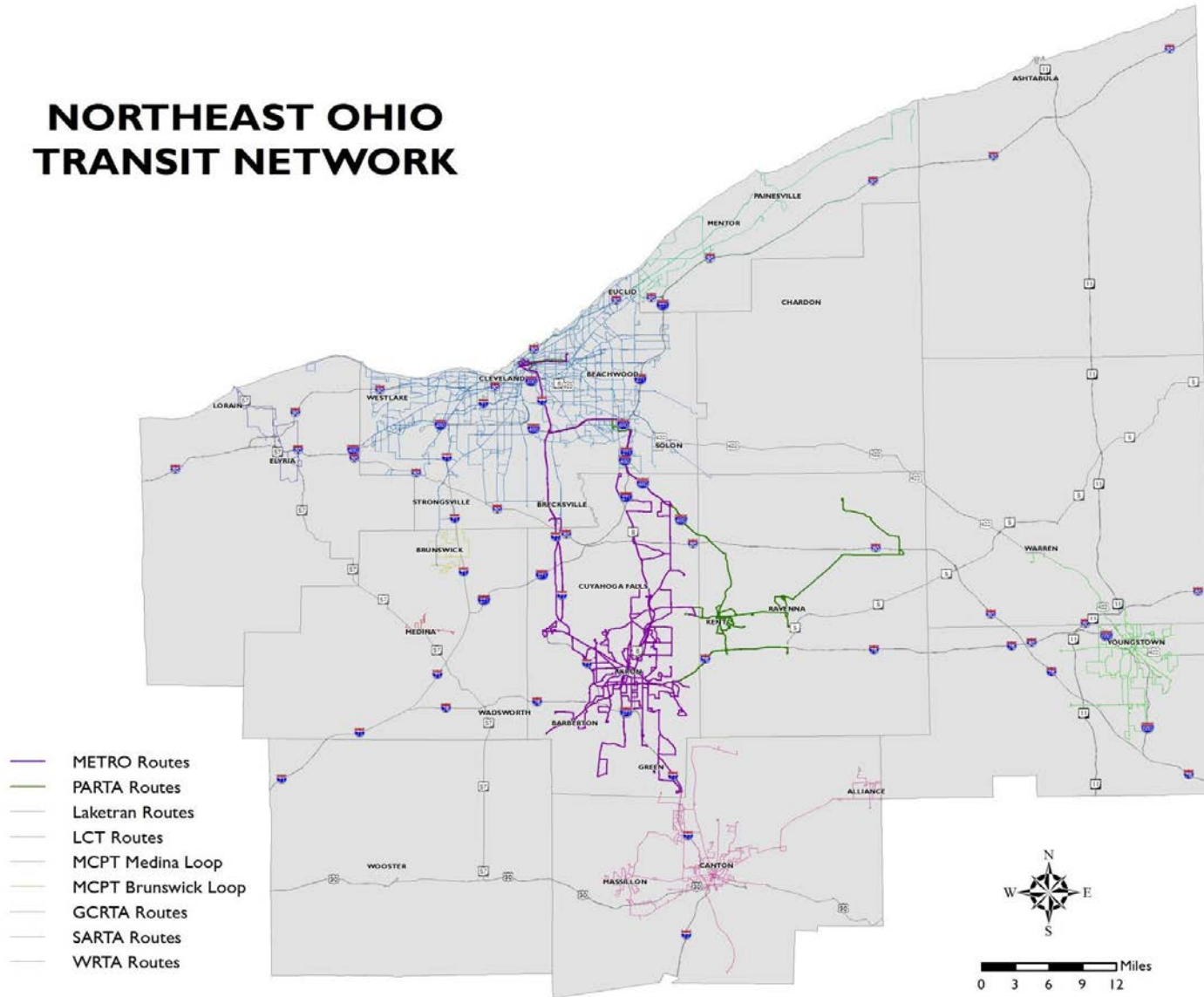
As illustrated above, a number of options are available to those who have special transportation needs. The following table summarizes the advantages of each of these options:

Table 10 – Summary of Transportation Services

	Public Transit Agencies	Government Agencies	Not-For-Profits	Private (For Profits)
Coverage within Home County	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ability to Cross County Border	Limited		Limited	✓
Late-Night Service	Limited			✓
Weekend Service	Limited		Limited	✓
Info Available/Visibility	✓	✓		
Immediate Availability				✓
Cost Effectiveness	✓			
Fleet Size/Variety	✓			
Fleet Includes Lifts for Mobility Devices	✓	Limited	✓	Limited

Figure 3 – Regional Public Transportation Providers

NORTHEAST OHIO TRANSIT NETWORK



6 Available Funding Programs

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) currently administers three major formulaic grant programs to assist with the public transportation funding needs of metropolitan areas. These programs provide a fairly predictable 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.

6.1 Federal Transportation Legislation: FAST Act

Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, otherwise known as FAST Act, is the current national transportation legislation, which was signed into law December 4, 2015. The previous federal transportation bill (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century – MAP-21), consolidated multiple grant programs into three major programs, and thus, streamlining the transportation funding process. The FAST Act maintained these changes. In regards to mobility management, two major funding programs were discontinued under MAP-21 and remained discontinued in the FAST Act:

FTA Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program – This program was established to help transport welfare recipients and low-income people to regional employment centers. Generally, projects funded through this program would transport people from low-income central city neighborhoods to employment centers in outlying suburbs, where many entry-level jobs are located. As these jobs often require employees to work in the evening and on weekends, projects would also extend service hours to accommodate these schedules. On average, the AMATS region received approximately \$320,000 annually to allocate toward JARC-eligible projects.

FTA New Freedom Program – This program was created to reduce transportation barriers and increase the mobility of people having disabilities. Projects funded through this program had to exceed the requirements established by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. On average, the AMATS region received approximately \$200,000 annually to allocate toward New Freedom projects.

Rather than eliminating these programs completely, the types of projects eligible for these programs have been rolled into three remaining, transit-dedicated funding programs:

6.1.1 FTA Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities Program (Sec 5310)

Although the 5310 program existed under previous federal transportation legislation, MAP-21 expanded the eligible activities which may be funded through the program. Eligible activities may fall within one of four categories (specific project examples are listed in Appendix B):

1. Former New Freedom program activities, which improve the mobility of persons with disabilities. These projects must exceed ADA requirements.

2. Projects to improve access to fixed-route public transit for seniors and persons with disabilities.
3. Public transit projects expressly designed for seniors and persons with disabilities where transit is insufficient, inappropriate or unavailable.
4. Alternatives to public transportation that assist seniors and persons with disabilities.

In previous funding cycles, this funding was used to purchase vans, paratransit buses and communications equipment for not-for-profit (501(c)(3)) providers of transportation throughout the AMATS region. AMATS staff solicits, reviews and scores the applications of participating organizations and the final funding decisions and allocations are approved by the AMAT’s Policy Board. The 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 Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan to be eligible for funding.

Table 11 - FTA 5310 Funding Allocations to the AMATS Region

Year	Amount	Ann. % Change
FY 2012	\$ 192,346	-
FY 2013*	\$ 565,976	194.2%
FY 2014	\$ 546,145	-3.5%
FY 2015	\$ 545,177	-0.2%
FY 2016	\$ 538,177	-1.3%
FY 2017	\$ 545,953	1.4%

**Large increase due to inclusion of former New Freedom program funding*

6.1.2 FTA Urbanized Area Formula Grant Program (Section 5307)

This formulaic grant program provides the majority of funding for METRO and PARTA’s capital expenses (i.e. new buses). 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.

Section 5307 funding may also be used for Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) projects and planning expenses, directly benefiting low-income individuals who need transportation to areas offering many employment opportunities.

The following table illustrates the 5307 funding allocated to the AMATS region in recent years:

Table 12 - FTA 5307 Funding Allocations to the AMATS Region

Year	Amount	Ann. % Change
FY 2012	\$ 7,305,165	-
FY 2013	\$ 7,354,093	0.7%
FY 2014	\$ 7,430,785	1.0%
FY 2015	\$ 7,683,579	3.4%
FY 2016	\$ 7,818,070	1.8%
FY 2017	\$ 7,838,243	0.3%

Totals include AMATS region's share of Cleveland urbanized area 5307 funding

6.1.3 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 established by the Section 5307 program.

Although similar funding previously existed as a discretionary program, MAP-21 established the formulaic program, which guarantees that a portion of any authorized funding can be used to improve the state of the AMATS region's public transit infrastructure.

Table 13 - FTA 5339 Funding Allocations to the AMATS Region

Year	Amount	Ann. % Change
FY 2013	\$ 713,317	-
FY 2014	\$ 859,895	7.1%
FY 2015	\$ 894,766	4.1%
FY 2016	\$ 821,650	-8.2%
FY 2017	\$ 829,598	1.0%

Totals include AMATS region's share of Cleveland urbanized area 5339 funding

7 Recommendations

Based on the previous analyses and findings from our public outreach efforts, AMATS presents the following list of recommendations to improve the coordination of transportation for low-income individuals, older persons as well as persons with a disability throughout the AMATS region and beyond. Recommendations are listed in order of priority based on the region's needs and anticipated resources. However, even lower-priority recommendations could receive funding if they meet the requirements established by the AMATS Funding Policy and demonstrate the potential to improve regional transportation coordination.

The following recommendations fall into one of two categories: those that are eligible for direct funding through the various programs administered by AMATS, and those in which funding is not applicable, but AMATS would strongly support by way of endorsement, technical assistance or through other non-financial means.

7.1 Recommendations for Transportation Funding

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

2. 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. Additional or specialized training to those individuals with limited English may also be needed.

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 charges and is individually designed to fit each person’s needs. In addition, METRO has 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 services, they essentially translate to any other public transit service. These videos may be accessed at: <http://www.akronmetro.org/metro-how-to-ride.aspx>

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 include increasing METRO and PARTA travel training presence at Ohio Means Jobs Centers, as well as at job fairs throughout their respective counties. Additionally, many human service organizations participating on this committee were not aware of this free service and were given information on how to contact each transit agency. 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. 119

3. Connect Transit Stops to Passenger Destinations

The pool of potential transit riders may be increased by simply improving the access between transit stops and the origins or destinations of passengers with special transportation needs. Although the 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.

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: 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.*

4. Expand the Reach and Hours of Fixed Route Transit and Fund New Public Transit Service to Key Employment Areas

Public transit is an important mode of transportation 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 8-to-5 hours and on weekends – times when most fixed-route bus service is infrequent or non-existent.

ConxusNEO participated on the Planning Committee and offered to help facilitate conversations between employers and METRO in Summit County. METRO is currently undergoing a re-organization of their fixed route network and can use this information to help inform route and schedule changes in the coming years.

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: 5310 (as “other eligible capital & operating expenses”) and 5307 (including JARC projects)

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 would 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.

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.

Project Examples: Fare boxes equipped with smart card capabilities; smart card technology; computer or mobile device hardware and software to enable proper fare accounting/invoicing at the agency or client level; applications to pre-pay fare using mobile devices.

Eligible Funding Programs: 5310, 5307 and potentially 5339 (as “bus related equipment”)

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 will 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.

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 service agencies and transportation providers, etc.

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

7. Implementation of Enhanced Regional Mobility Management and Encourage Trip-Sharing

For several years, AMATS supported the creation of a regional mobility management system. As originally envisioned, the final product would be a one-call/one-click system where human and social services agencies and their clients could submit their transportation needs, and a variety of options would be made available to them. Likewise, participating agencies and organizations could upload their available trips, assets and capacity to the system. Clients would be quickly and conveniently matched with transportation providers who were able to meet their needs. The successful implementation of this “ideal” mobility management system would allow us to take the best possible advantage of our available transportation resources, minimize redundant services and allow for easy transportation coordination between diverse agencies and organizations – within and even beyond the AMATS region.

In the past, PARTA agreed to take the lead in the development of this mobility management system, on behalf of the AMATS region. Working with the Trapeze Group, a transportation software solutions provider, the underlying program has essentially been completed.

Previous NEORide Investment				
Program	FY '07/'08	FY '09/'10	FY '11/'12	Total:
JARC	\$ 346,460	\$ 280,206	\$ 350,000	\$ 976,666
New Freedom	\$ 338,404	\$ 401,359	\$ 401,976	\$ 1,141,739
Total:	\$ 684,864	\$ 681,565	\$ 751,976	\$ 2,118,405

Since 2007, AMATS has contributed over \$2.1 million in JARC and New Freedom funding toward the development of the software. Although the software portion has been largely completed, several setbacks have occurred to prevent the implementation as originally anticipated. Finding mobility management partners has been difficult, the region’s RTAs are not sufficiently staffed to handle the daily management of a one-call/one-click mobility management system, the required supporting technology (interactive websites, automatic vehicle location and other supporting technology, etc.) is not in place, and on-going funding to manage such a system has not been identified.

The agencies participating in this program concede that the challenges of rolling out a large-scale, comprehensive mobility management program were greater than anticipated – and the economic downturn that has persisted since the start of the project has only complicated matters. Still, we believe that enhanced mobility management is critical to best leveraging the limited resources available within our region. In response to these challenges, it is recommended that all mobility management partners work to incrementally address the aforementioned obstacles.

Going forward, AMATS will transition to more of a facilitation role – helping achieve buy-in and aid in the participation of area social/human service agencies, non-profit and private for-profit transportation providers and participants from outside of the AMATS region. AMATS will work with transportation providers to purchase supporting equipment (see recommendation #2) which will allow diverse providers of public transportation to communicate with one another, as well as social service agencies and their clients.

Although the end product may differ from what was originally envisioned, and its full implementation may be further along the horizon, every incremental step forward will improve the transportation options available to those who rely on them the most.

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

7.2 Recommendations for Non-Financial AMATS Support

1. Increase Dialogue Between Transportation Providers and Significant Regional Employers/Medical Centers

As discovered in previous analyses, 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 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.

2. Promote Ridesharing

Another mobility option that may be feasible for certain trips is ridesharing. Gohio Commute is the premier 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. 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 notable to be served efficiently by fixed route bus service.

8 Conclusion

As illustrated throughout this planning process, the needs of those who rely on outside sources to meet their transportation requirements are great. Approximately 13% of greater Akron's population has some form of physical or mental disability – many of which preclude the ability to operate a personal automobile. Nationwide, the senior citizen population is steeply rising, and 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. Meanwhile, nearly 10% of low-income households have no access to an automobile in the Akron metropolitan region. The highest concentrations of these households are in dense, urban communities – where transit access to many suburban employment centers is infrequent (at best). Each of these groups - so often dependent on public transportation – are likely to increase over time.

The recommendations proposed in this AMATS Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan are the result of statistical and demographic analyses, 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 our existing transportation assets, allow us to use any new assets more effectively and to build upon the already strong public, private and non-profit partnerships within our region. 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.

Appendices

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	
FTA Region 5 Office	Midwest	312-886-3704	
Public Transportation Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
METRO RTA	Summit	330-564-2281	www.akronmetro.org
PARTA	Portage	330-678-7745	www.partaonline.org
MCPT	Medina	330-723-9670	http://www.medinaco.org/transit/index.html
GCRTA	Cuyahoga	216-566-5100	http://www.riderta.com/
Geauga County Transit	Geauga	440-279-2150	http://www.geaugatransit.org/
SARTA	Stark	330-477-2782	
Wooster Transit	Wooster	330-234-3650	http://woosterhospitalitytransit.com/index.html
Laketran	Lake		https://laketran.com/
Lorain County Transit	Lorain		http://www.loraincounty.us/commissioners-departments/transit
Western Reserve Transit Authority (WRTA)	Mahoning		http://www.wртаonline.com/rider-info/maps-and-schedules/
Non-Profit Transportation Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
Akron Summit Community Action Inc.	Summit	330-376-7730	http://www.ascainc.org/
Akron Urban League	Summit	330-434-3101	www.akronurbanleague.org
Direction Home (previously Area Agency on Aging)	Summit/Portage	330-896-9172	www.services4aging.org
Catholic Charities Community Services Sum. Co.	Summit	330-762-2961	www.ccs Summitcounty.org
Child Guidance & Family Solutions	Summit	330-794-4254	www.cgfs.org
Coleman Behavioral Health - Summit County	Summit	330-379-0667	http://www.coleman-bh.com/
Community Action Council of Portage County	Portage	330-297-1456	www.cacportage.net
Community Action Wayne/Medina	Wayne/Medina	330-927-1871	http://www.cawm.org/
Community Support Services	Summit	330-253-9388	http://www.cssbh.org/
ConxusNEO	Summit	330-630-9969	http://www.conxusneo.jobs/
Counseling Center of Wayne & Holmes Counties	Wayne/Holmes	330-925-5466	www.ccwhc.org
Easter Seals	Northern Ohio	440-324-6600	http://www.easterseals.com/noh/
Faith in Action	Summit	330-922-1900	www.fiaakron.org
Family & Community Services, Inc.	Portage	330-297-7027	www.portagefamilies.org
Family Promise of Summit County, Inc.	Summit	330-253-8081	www.familypromisesc.org
Gilchrist Adult Day Center	Wayne	330-658-7035	http://gilcrestadultdayservice.com/
Greenleaf Family Center	Summit	330-376-9494	www.greenleafctr.org
Hattie Larlham	Summit/Portage	330-274-2272	http://www.hattielarlham.org/
Haven of Rest Mission	Summit	330-535-1563	http://www.havenofrest.org/
Independence of Portage County	Portage	330-296-2851	www.indport.org
International Institute of Akron, Inc.	Summit	330-376-5106	www.iiakron.org
Interval Brotherhood Home	Summit	330-644-4095	www.ibh.org
Mature Services	Summit	330-253-4597	www.matureservices.org

Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Services (Rockynol)	Summit	330-867-2150	www.rockynol.org
The Arc of Summit & Portage Counties	Summit/Portage	330-836-5863	www.thearcneo.org
The Summit County Job Center	Summit	330-633-1050	
Tri-County Educational Service Center	Wayne/Ashland/Holmes		
Tri-County Independent Living Center	Summit/Portage/Summit	330-762-0007	www.tcilc.org
United Disability Services (UDS)	Summit	330-762-9755	www.udsakron.org
United Way of Portage County	Portage	330-297-1424	http://unitedwayofportage.com/
United Way of Summit County	Summit	330-762-7601	http://www.uwsummit.org/
United Way of Wayne and Holmes Counties	Wayne/Holmes	330-264-5576	http://www.uwayneholmes.org/
Wayne County Advocacy Council	Wayne		
Wayne County Family and Children First Council	Wayne	330-264-2527	http://www.waynefcfc.org/index.html
World Relief	Summit	234-334-5190	https://worldreliefakron.org
Summit County Children's Services	Summit		
Jewish Family Services	Summit	330-867-3388	
Human Services Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority	Summit	330-376-7963	http://www.akronhousing.org/index2.aspx
Portage County Board of Developmental Disabilities	Portage	330-297-6462	http://www.portagedd.org/
Portage County Department of Job and Family Services	Portage	330-297-3750	http://www.co.portage.oh.us/jfs/
Portage County Veterans Service Commission	Portage	330-297-3545	www.co.portage.oh.us/veterans.htm
Portage Metropolitan Housing Authority	Portage	330-297-1489	http://www.portagehousing.org/
Summit County Department of Job and Family Services	Summit		https://www.summitdifs.org/
Summit County Veterans Service Commission	Summit	330-643-2830	www.vscsummitoh.us
Summit Developmental Disability Board	Summit	330-634-8082	http://www.summitdd.org/
Wayne County Board of DD	Wayne	330-345-6016	http://www.waynedd.org/company.asp
Wayne County Job & Family Services	Wayne	330-287-5846	http://www.wayneohio.org/jobandfamily/
Wayne County Veterans Service Commission	Wayne	330-345-6638	http://www.waynecountyveterans.org/index.htm
Wayne Metropolitan Housing Authority	Wayne	330-264-2727	http://www.waynemha.org/
Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities		234-206-4205	
Private Transportation Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
Tri-County Taxi formerly Akron Checker Cab	Summit	330-376-5555	
City Yellow Cab	Summit	330-253-3141	http://www.cityyellowcab.com/
Emerald Transportation	Portage	330-673-9258	
Falls/Suburban Cab Company	Summit	330-929-3121	
Magic Taxi LLC	Summit		
TL Worldwide	Summit	330-733-5372	http://www.thomaslimousine.com/
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 that 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)

Citizens Involvement Committee Meeting

A public meeting is scheduled for **6:30 p.m., Thursday Mar. 1** at the **Akron-Summit County Public Library - Main Library** located at **60 South High Street** in Akron to discuss various local and regional transportation issues.

This meeting of the Citizens Involvement Committee (CIC) of the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation study (AMATS) will include the following highlights:



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

PROJECTS



Human Services Plan Recommendations



**Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
Citizens Involvement Committee
Meeting Room 1
Akron-Summit County Public Library – Akron Main Public Library
60 South High Street, Akron, Ohio**

Thursday, March 1, 2018
6:30 p.m.

Agenda

1. **Welcome**
2. **Introductions**
3. **Review of Last Meeting Summary**
 - A. January 18, 2018 Oral
4. **AMATS Work Update**
 - A. Discussion of January and March Meeting Materials.
 - B. AMATS Goals and Objectives for 2018.
5. **Discussion Item**
 - A. Draft *Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan*.
 - B. Status of Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) District 4 Projects in 2018.

Guest Speakers:
 - ODOT Planning Engineer Steve Rebillot
 - ODOT Design Engineer Chad Root
6. **Open Discussion**
7. **Adjournment 7:45 P.M.**

Next Regular Meeting:
Thursday, May 3, 2018 - 6:30 PM
Location – To Be Announced

All mailout material is available on the AMATS Web Site at www.amatsplanning.org

AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Citizens Involvement Committee

FROM: AMATS Staff

RE: AMATS Area Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan – Draft Recommendations

DATE: March 1, 2018

Background

The function of the area's Coordinated Plan is to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, older Americans and low-income individuals. Specifically, this plan is necessary for the area to obtain and utilize funds from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) program. Eligible projects seeking to use this funding source must be consistent with the Coordinated Plan. The development of the Coordinated Plan is a federal requirement, as established by MAP-21, and continued in current federal regulations.

Throughout the development of the Coordinated Plan, the AMATS staff has worked closely with METRO RTA, the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) and representatives of local public, private and non-profit transportation and human services providers. The planning process also solicited and received insightful guidance from members of the public.

The Coordinated Plan:

- (1) Identifies current transportation providers and the assets available to the region (public, private, and non-profit);
- (2) Assesses the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults and low-income individuals;
- (3) Provides recommendations to address the identified gaps between current services and needs; and
- (4) Assigns priorities for implementation.

Coordinated Plan Recommendations

Recommendations for AMATS Funding

1. The purchase of new, accessible vehicles for regional providers of public transportation for older individuals, those with disabilities and those of low income.

2. Promote and increase travel training
3. Connecting transit stops to passenger destinations
4. Providing new transit service to key employment areas
5. Investment in fare reimbursement solutions and smart fare technology
6. Investment in intelligent transportation systems (ITS) infrastructure
7. Implementing a regional mobility management system
8. Encouraging trip sharing between social service agencies
9. Promote the Gohio Commute rideshare program.

Recommendations for Non-Financial AMATS Support

1. Assist NEORide, a local council of governments (COG) initiative to facilitate broad mobility management system participation in Northeast Ohio
2. Facilitate dialogue between transportation providers and significant regional employers/medical centers

The Coordinated Plan recommends projects that are consistent with the list of eligible activities published in the program circulars issued by FTA. These recommended projects or activities are identified fully within the Coordinated Plan.

Recent Project Funding

In September 2016, the AMATS Policy Committee approved \$1,083,354 in federal funds from the Elderly and Disabled Program for handicap-accessible buses and associated equipment for METRO RTA, PARTA, United Disability Services and Hattie Larlham. The approved projects were programmed into FY 2017 of the TIP.

The AMATS staff anticipates a similar funding level to be made available for this fiscal year (FY 2018). An announcement will be made in July to accept letters of intent, and then applications, from eligible recipients, with final approval in September.

Staff Recommendation

The staff intends to present a resolution in May requesting that the AMATS Policy Committee approved the final draft of the Coordinated Plan following public review and comment. This resolution will adopt the area's Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan. As the region's public transit operators, METRO and PARTA will also be adopting the Coordinated Plan.

The Coordinated Plan will then be transmitted to the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). After review by FTA, the region will to continue move forward with efforts to use federal funds to coordinate transportation services for persons with disabilities, older Americans, and individuals with lower incomes.

The Staff will be pleased to receive public comments over the next 45 days.