

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

2020 Planning Grant

PARTA SR 59 Alternative Transportation Improvements

Site visit – April 16, 2021

In 2020, AMATS awarded PARTA and Franklin Township a Connecting Communities Planning Grant to identify multimodal improvements for SR 59 between Horning Rd. and SR 261. As part of the grant process, AMATS develops a discovery document to identify areas of concern or improvement. The discovery document highlights areas that have potential for infrastructure improvement as well as provides important data about the study area.

The SR 59 corridor between Horning Rd and SR 261 in Kent/Franklin Twp. includes five lanes and has an average daily traffic of almost 20,000 automobiles. The study area includes residential as well as retail and dining areas, with young and old navigating the environment. Two bus routes serve this corridor, with a total of 17 stops in the study area. AMATS staff conducted a site visit in April 2021. Walking the corridor, the following challenges were identified:

- Auto-oriented
- No bike infrastructure
- Sidewalk gaps
- Goat paths
- Bus stop amenities: limited to non-existent
- Missing crosswalks

The intersection of Horning Rd and SR 59 has crosswalks, curb cuts, and pedestrian signals, making it much safer and easier to navigate on foot than the rest of the intersections in our study area. Although the future holds changes for this particular intersection, its current state is an example of what could be done to the intersections in the SR 59 corridor from here to SR 261.



Auto-oriented

After studying the corridor and identifying the lack of crosswalks and pedestrian signals, the missing sidewalks, the lack of bus amenities and bike infrastructure, it is apparent that this corridor caters to the automobile. Vehicles easily speed through this section of SR 59, the only stops being a few lights. There are a total of four lighted intersections, and this includes the intersections at each end of the (almost one mile) corridor. Truck traffic is plentiful, which adds to the discomfort while on foot. It is not a fun experience to walk this corridor, let alone attempt it in a wheelchair or with a stroller. Being near the university, with several housing developments along the way, it is reasonable to assume that pedestrians are plentiful. Additionally, knowing the improvements that the city of Kent is planning for SR 59 just west of this corridor, the time is right to make changes that improve the walkability of this corridor, with improvements for transit and bicycle as well.



No bike infrastructure

While walking the SR 59 corridor from Horning Rd to SR 261, it was noted that there is no bike lane, sharrow, sign, etc. to indicate that cyclists can also use the road. Again, the existing five lanes of traffic make it difficult to travel the corridor without a vehicle. Cyclists have no protected bike lane or multi-use path to use. PARTA buses are equipped with bike racks to allow cyclists to ride and use their bikes for the first-mile/last-mile connections. Making cyclists more visible would improve their safety and encourage riding as an alternative to vehicular traffic. With the dining, retail, and living centers within the study area, it stands to reason that bicycle infrastructure would be welcome to make cycling a safe alternative for motorists.

Sidewalk Gaps



On the south side of SR 59 at Rhodes Rd and walking east, the sidewalk in front of Sunoco does not reach the curb. Pedestrians must walk through the grass here.



There is an existing sidewalk on the north side of SR 59 between Horning Rd and Rhodes Rd, as well as on the south side of SR 59 between Horning Rd and 6th Ave. However, there is no sidewalk on either the

north or south side of SR 59 between Rhodes Rd and SR 261. This particular section has five bus stops, three of which are lacking sidewalk access, or even a landing pad.



The below images show where the sidewalk ends while heading east on SR 59, first on the north side, then on the south side of SR 59.





Goat Paths

Goat paths are visible where sidewalks are lacking. This is an indication that facilities are needed and will be used when constructed.





The above goat path leads to the wide shoulder on SR 59 while heading toward SR 261. Although the shoulder is wide, it is quite uncomfortable to walk here. Cars and trucks are moving fast through here, especially if they are trying to make the light. Also, there is no protection from traffic. A sidewalk or trail with a buffer would make pedestrians and transit users not only feel safer, but actually be more visible and visible.



Bus Stop Amenities: limited to non-existent

Bus stops are not easily accessible without a sidewalk, landing pad, or curb cut. A person in a wheelchair would struggle getting over the curb in the pictures below, let alone when there is snow on the ground. It is difficult for anyone to get on or off the bus and go anywhere at stops like these due to the lack of sidewalk. Both of these bus stops exist in empty parking lots.



In front of Western Reserve Medical Center



North side of SR 59, in front of empty building

Missing Crosswalks

Crosswalks would improve pedestrian visibility and safety at the intersection of SR 59 and SR 261. Unfortunately, the pictures below show that a crosswalk would not connect to a sidewalk on the other side.



Pedestrians traversing this intersection are stuck walking in the grass, snow, or mud, and cross without a crosswalk or pedestrian signals.

The intersection of SR 59 and 6th Ave has crosswalks on three sides of the intersection. The image below shows the the east side of the intersection that is lacking a crosswalk.



Finally, SR 59 at Rhodes Rd would benefit from crosswalks and pedestrian signals. A crosswalk currently exists on the east side of the intersection only. The existing sidewalk is on the north side of SR 59, in front of Campus Point apartments. A crosswalk is lacking across Ashton Ln.



With five lanes of traffic and lack of signage and facilities, it is hard to imagine anyone considering alternative modes of transportation in this section of SR 59. Yet, we know pedestrians, transit users, and cyclists are there, creating goat paths, dodging traffic and finding bus stops in empty parking lots. It is time to identify solutions for those not using vehicles to make it safer and more inviting to navigate this section of roadway.