



# AMATS

THE GREATER AKRON AREA'S TRANSPORTATION JOURNAL

July - December 2015

Volume 4, Issue 2

## Inside



**AMATS Director Jason Segedy Leaving for New Position**

.....page 3.

**October's 2015 AMATS Annual Meeting was the 'Place' to Be**

.....pages 2-3.

**Community Focus: Tallmadge**

.....page 4.

**COVER:**

A couple enjoy the pedestrian-friendly area of Cuyahoga Falls' Portage Crossing. More walkable areas may be on the horizon thanks to the new *2015 Pedestrian Plan*.

To read more, turn to page 6.



## Another Step Forward - The 2015 Pedestrian Plan

.....page 6.

## October's 2015 AMATS Annual Meeting was the 'place' to be

With its theme of "place matters," the Oct. 16 2015 AMATS Annual Meeting at times seemed like a continuation of the preceding year's meeting with a mere 12-month intermission in between. Last year's meeting described how love of place and sense of community can spur the public into becoming active players in transportation planning.

This year's meeting, with Summit County Public Health Assistant Director of Community Health James Hardy as the day's featured speaker, dovetailed the previous year's meeting topic perfectly. Hardy observed that one's place can spur public activity period.



**PLACE MATTERS:** Summit County Public Health's James Hardy, standing, told meeting attendees that physical environment is a major factor in public health.

"You are only as healthy as the environment around you," Hardy told the audience of more than 150 attendees gathered in the banquet hall of the Sheraton Suites Akron Cuyahoga Falls. Hardy said that physical environment combined with behavioral choices are two of the greatest influences as to whether individuals will lead healthy lives. Physical barriers and poor choices have led to an obesity epidemic and related problems such as diabetes across the U.S. and the Greater Akron area over the last 20 years.

For the public, it's not merely a matter of deciding to be healthier, Hardy explained. It's about living in areas, where they are able to access goods and services that help them to live healthier. The physical environment of neighborhoods can be an asset or a barrier to a healthier lifestyle. Hardy praised AMATS for its recognition that transportation planning can impact the choices that people make regarding their health. "How we lay out our roads, how we plan our communities, makes a huge impact in terms of the lives, the actual lives, of the people that live there," Hardy said.

Planning has inadvertently fostered a culture that is overly dependent on the automobile for day-to-day mobility such as grocery shopping and commuting, he noted. Among the factors in an area's physical environment that can promote communitywide health are: affordable, reliable public transit; access to fresh foods; universally designed roads; interconnected neighborhoods; and safe, affordable housing.

Hardy described how Seattle, Washington and Wray, Colorado used unique planning strategies to promote public health. In the mid-1990s, the Seattle Department of Transportation asked 37 of the city's neighborhoods to draft plans identifying key transportation concerns and ways to address those concerns for the consideration of the Seattle City Council. Thirty-five neighborhoods identified pedestrian problems as their paramount concern, which prompted Seattle's municipal leaders to initiate a 10-year effort to create an integrated network of pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle infrastructure to link neighborhoods and business districts. Describing Seattle's infrastructure as an example of an "if-you-build-it-they-will-come" mentality, Hardy said that about 8,000 Seattle residents ride their bikes to work each day while making extensive use of the city's network of bike lanes and cycle-accommodating transit services. "Thousands more walk to their work," Hardy added.

Bucolic Wray is not the metropolis that Seattle is, but they too had their public health and transportation issues. Nestled in eastern Colorado, Wray built a state-of-the-art fitness center for its residents in the heart of downtown. However, after 10 years, no one was using the center. Public engagement revealed that residents didn't want a single large facility located in a central area, but preferred smaller indoor and outdoor fitness

*Continued Next Page*

**Continued from Page 2**

areas located throughout their community. Such areas became a reality under the Wray Health Initiative, which saw the installation of such amenities as walking trails, exercise prompts and pull-up bars in neighborhoods.

In only three years, Wray began seeing significant decreases in obesity and diabetes because people didn't want to drive to the fitness center. What the examples of Seattle and Wray have in common is responsiveness. Planners and civic leaders responded to the demands and needs of the public, according to Hardy. Locally, Summit County Public Health has undertaken its "Health In All Policies" movement over the last 18 months urging the consideration of the health impacts in governmental decisions, including planning. County officials launched this movement following a yearlong grassroots community engagement plan that asked residents questions about their neighborhoods and overall quality of life.

The *AMATS Road Diet Analysis*, the area's Safe Routes to School Programs and Better Block events are among the county's success stories in promoting the consideration of health in public policy, Hardy said. He added that, while agencies such as AMATS and Summit County Public Health are at the forefront in considering health issues in planning, significant health and social disparity challenges abound in the Greater Akron area. According to Hardy, Summit County has many "food deserts," which - as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture - are locations where people live outside a one-mile radius of a large retail grocer and in an area with a poverty rate of 20 percent or more. Referring to a map depicting area food deserts, Hardy observed that, "If I were to put up a map that shows you where diabetes is a big problem, it's the same map. If I were to put up where obesity is a problem, it's the same map."

Progress won't be made unless changes are made where people live and improvements made in how people get to places, Hardy warned. "What we have found is that if we don't partner more with transportation and planning organizations and vice versa, we aren't going to solve some of these issues," Hardy said.

## **AMATS Director Jason Segedy leaving for new position**

After seven years as director of AMATS, Jason Segedy will be leaving this position in January. Akron Mayor-elect Daniel Horrigan announced in early December that Segedy will be the city's new planning director.

Segedy became AMATS director in 2008 and has been with the agency since 1998. During his tenure as agency director, AMATS focused its efforts on increasing funding for road and bridge preservation, pursuing "Complete Streets" planning principles, and advocating better urban design to focus more on people than cars.

"Although it is never easy to leave a job one loves, the knowledge that our region - by working together - has been making great and steady progress towards becoming a better connected, cohesive and equitable place, makes it easier to say 'goodbye' to our wonderful organization and its members," Segedy said.

AMATS Planning Administrator Curtis Baker will replace Segedy as interim director on Jan. 4. Baker has been with AMATS for over nine years and holds a bachelor's degree in organizational leadership from Miami University and a master's of city and regional planning from The Ohio State University.

## Community Focus: Tallmadge

*Community Focus* presents information about communities within the Greater Akron area. The city of Tallmadge has been a member of AMATS since December 1962.

**Founded** – 1807    **Population** – 17,537 (2010 U.S. Census Bureau)

**Area** – 14.02 square miles    **Policy Committee Member** – Mayor David G. Kline



**History** – The Rev. David Bacon founded Tallmadge, placing a square road in the center of town where several other roads met, modeled after New England designs of the time period. In the 19th century, Tallmadge continued to develop around the square as its centerpiece, which years later became a traffic circle commonly known as "Tallmadge Circle." The rest of the city was designed in a grid pattern. Commercial development in Tallmadge took the form of suburban growth typical of the 1950s with small convenience centers close to emerging neighborhoods and automobile-oriented, strip-type centers along major thoroughfares.

Tallmadge Circle surrounds the Historic Church, Old Town Hall, and Circle Park and is a notable landmark at the center of the town. State Routes 91 and 261 meet at the intersection and the eight roads that emanate from Tallmadge Circle form a spoke design and are named by their respective directions, such as North, South, East, and West avenues. According to the latest traffic crash analysis compiled by AMATS spanning 2012 through 2014, Tallmadge Circle ranks 29th on the agency's listing of high-crash intersections in the Greater Akron area. While the vast majority of the city lies in Summit County, portions on the east side protrude into neighboring Portage County due to the annexation of small sections of neighboring Brimfield Township. There are currently nearly 1,800 acres of undeveloped land within Tallmadge that can accommodate new residential, commercial, and industrial growth.

**Transportation Challenges** – Tallmadge is in the process of updating its comprehensive plan, which will assist in the future development of residential and commercial areas and define how to best accommodate increased vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

A recent traffic analysis of Tallmadge Circle compiled by the city predicts that - between 2011 and 2035 - average overall delays at the Circle will increase by 670 percent during the morning peak hour and by 137 percent during the evening peak hour. Based on this analysis and other available intersection data, Tallmadge Circle is anticipated to have a Level of Service (LOS) of "F" during its peak hours. Nine different options were considered by the analysis to improve the LOS for all approaches to the Circle, none of which would likely achieve an improvement in LOS higher than "D."

Since Tallmadge entered into a Joint Economic Development District agreement with Brimfield Township in the area of Tallmadge Road and Interstate 76, this area has experienced large-scale commercial development. This development has created a significant increase in traffic volume on East Avenue and has led to traffic issues on connecting residential streets and in accessing East Avenue. Tallmadge is investigating improvements to East Avenue/Tallmadge Road with center-turn lanes, bike lanes, sidewalks and traffic signals.

There is an intersection in southeast Tallmadge with six different approaches connecting South Munroe Road, Eastwood Avenue and Southeast Avenue. This signalized intersection creates considerable traffic delays due to its configuration and proximity to I-76. Tallmadge is currently working on a plan to reconfigure the intersection to a traffic circle similar to one that was developed several years ago at the intersections of North Munroe Road, Northeast Avenue and East Howe Road, which has cut delays in this area significantly.

**Web site** – [www.tallmadge-ohio.org](http://www.tallmadge-ohio.org)

## Number of Greater Akron area crashes continue to climb, albeit slowly

The number of traffic crashes on Greater Akron area roadways, intersections and freeways increased slightly between 2012 and 2014, according to the latest three-year analysis compiled by AMATS. This upward trend is a continuation of one that began in 2009, when area crashes hit their low point.

The agency identified slightly less than 53,000 motor vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian-related crashes in the Greater Akron area during the period using Ohio Department of Public Safety records. While the number of crashes actually decreased by nearly 3 percent between 2012 and 2013 with 17,738 crashes and 17,236 crashes respectively, the area experienced a significant jump to 17,859 crashes in 2014 - an increase of nearly 4 percent from 2013.



*Photo courtesy of the Akron Police Department*

AMATS Transportation Engineer Dave Pulay says that the area's crash totals have been trending up since hitting their nadir in 2009 when slightly more than 16,400 crashes occurred. Pulay adds that there has been a corresponding increase in the number of vehicle miles travelled throughout the area meaning that more people are commuting and traveling. Interestingly, despite the uptick in area crashes since 2009, the number of crash-related fatalities in the area has remained relatively constant and appears to be easing. There were only 39 fatalities in 2014 which matches the recent low of 2009. The most recent peak was 46 fatalities in 2011, but the number of fatalities has been receding since then and remains well below the record high of 68 fatalities reached in 2007.

AMATS uses this information to identify needed projects throughout the area. Communities rely on the report when applying for Highway Safety Program funds through the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). For its most recent analysis, the agency identified 124 high-crash roadway sections and 275 high-crash intersections in the region. The analysis of freeway crashes was done by ODOT. The department only considers the top 50 rural and 50 urban locations across the state for further study. Six AMATS-area freeway locations appeared on ODOT's top 50 lists with two being located on the Ohio Turnpike.

Among the findings of the analysis are:

- Akron is home to four of the 10 highest ranked high-crash roadway sections and eight of the highest ranked high-crash intersections in the Greater Akron area.
- In Portage County, the highest ranked high-crash intersection remains state Routes 14/303 and 43 in Streetsboro.
- There were 339 bicycle-related crashes during the period with 275 or 81 percent resulting in an injury and two in a fatality.
- There were 464 pedestrian-related crashes during the period with 409 or 88 percent resulting in an injury and 10 in a fatality.

The *2012-2014 Crash Report* and reports dating back to 2005 are available on the *Reports, Maps and Data* page of the agency's web site and by clicking [here](#).

## Another step forward - The 2015 Pedestrian Plan

The *2015 Pedestrian Plan* approved by AMATS in December is another significant step by the Greater Akron area towards regional connectivity. The new plan provides a bold vision as to what sort of pedestrian networks that the area should pursue in the coming years.

The *2015 Pedestrian Plan* identifies safety, connectivity and vibrancy as three areas of improvement for the region's pedestrian systems and suggests various strategies for communities to consider during project planning. Many of the strategies are based on "complete street" principles, which emphasize the importance of safe access for all users, not just automobiles, and the promotion of pedestrian-friendly concepts.

AMATS Public Information Coordinator Kerry Prater says that the *2015 Pedestrian Plan* goes beyond urging communities to consider installing a few feet of sidewalks and curb ramps in limited locales. The new plan recommends the pursuit of such planning practices as road diets, mixing land uses and vibrant streetscapes.

"This is a significant update of our first plan from three years ago. We have prepared a significant planning resource for communities that they can use to develop pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods," Prater says. He notes that existing examples of the practices espoused in the new plan can be found in Cuyahoga Falls' Portage Crossing and Kent's Acorn Alley areas.

The *2015 Pedestrian Plan* will be used as an input in the development of the Greater Akron area's upcoming long-term Regional Transportation Plan. To view the *2015 Pedestrian Plan*, please click [here](#).



## Project Updates

The following table lists significant projects that have been awarded between June 16, 2015 and Oct. 22, 2015.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION	AMOUNT
<b>East Summit Street</b> - Reconstruction, from South Lincoln Street to Loop Road, in Kent. Project includes various signal and intersection improvements and construction of a roundabout at the relocated West Campus Drive/Risman Plaza and the Ted Boyd Drive/Johnston Drive intersection.	10/31/2017	\$14,171,997
<b>Buchholzer Boulevard</b> - Sidewalk construction and signal improvements, from Independence Avenue to Chapel Hill Mall entry drive, in Akron.	04/29/2016	\$238,919
<b>State Route 18</b> - Widening, from South Hametown Road to Interstate 77, for additional lanes in Copley Township. Project includes ramp relocation of state Route 18 Eastbound to Interstate 77 Southbound.	10/31/2016	\$7,699,856
<b>State Road</b> - Resurfacing, from Turkeyfoot Lake Road (state Route 619) to New Franklin North Corporate Line, in New Franklin.	10/23/2016	\$190,291
<b>Wooster Road North</b> - Resurfacing, from Hopocan Avenue to Norton Avenue, in Barberton.	09/30/15	\$468,634

### A COMPLETE PICTURE:

AMATS reps were among the 57 attendees of the Nov. 10 Complete Streets principles workshop hosted by the Akron Section of APA Ohio. Area planners, engineers and other officials gathered in the Summit County Health Department Auditorium to learn how they can pursue Complete Street practices in their communities.

Moving safely and easily by a variety of modes affects our ability to maintain appropriate weight, cardiac health and general fitness. The workshop was part of the Akron Section's commitment to the Plan4Health project, which promotes public awareness that quality of rights of way impact public wellness.



## Dates to Remember

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Committee/Event</u>	<u>Location</u>
January 1	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - New Years Day
January 18	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Martin L. King Day
January 21	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
January 21	6:30 p.m.	CIC	Akron-Summit County Public Library
January 28	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
February 15	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Presidents' Day
March 17	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
March 24	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
April 14	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Determined
May 12	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom C
May 19	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom C
May 30	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Memorial Day
July 4	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - July 4th Holiday
July 14	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
July 14	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Determined
July 21	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
September 5	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Labor Day
September 15	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
September 22	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
October 7	8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Annual Meeting	Sheraton Suites Akron Cuyahoga Falls
October 10	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Columbus Day
November 11	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Veterans Day
November 17	6:30 p.m.	CIC	To Be Determined
November 24-25	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Thanksgiving
December 8	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
December 15	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Quaker Square Inn, Grand Ballroom B
December 26	*	*	AMATS Offices Closed - Christmas Day

Persons with disabilities needing assistance are asked to contact Billy Soule, Assistant to the Mayor for Community Relations, 166 S. High Street, Room 200, Akron, Ohio 44308, (voice) 330-375-2189, (TDD) 330-375-2345, at least seven (7) days in advance.

@AMATS is published by the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study, 806 CitiCenter, 146 S. High St., Akron, Ohio 44308-1423. Editorial comments are welcome.

Director - Jason Segedy

E-Mail - [amats@akronohio.gov](mailto:amats@akronohio.gov)

Editor/writer - Kerry Prater

Please visit our web site at: [www.amatsplanning.org](http://www.amatsplanning.org)

Phone - 330-375-2436 / Fax - 330-375-2275

This report was prepared by the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Ohio Department of Transportation, and the Village, City and County governments of Portage and Summit Counties and a portion of Wayne County. The contents of this report reflect the views of AMATS, which is responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official view and policies of the Ohio and/or U.S. Department of Transportation. This report does not constitute a standard, specification or regulation.