

# The AMATS Quarterly

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## Region continues to sprawl outward

The amount of residential land in the Akron metropolitan area grew significantly between 2000 and 2005 while the area saw scant population growth, according to the recently completed *2005 Land Use Inventory*. Prepared by AMATS, the inventory examines the area's land use trends and patterns between 2000 and 2005.

The inventory found that a 25-square mile area, roughly equal in size to the city of Hudson, was consumed by new residential development in suburban areas such as central and southern Summit County and northwestern Portage County.

A disturbing aspect of this growth is that while land was developed at a rapid pace, the area's population remained stagnant. According to U.S. Census estimates, the area's population grew by only 6,000 during the

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**CHANGING LANDSCAPE:** The amount of residential land in the Akron metropolitan area grew significantly in the first five years of this decade. The aerial photos above show that many new homes were built in the Sunset Way Boulevard area of Kent north of Fairchild Avenue between 2000 and 2005.

## New development can carry costs beyond dollars

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period or less than 1 percent. This situation poses a troubling question for the area's leaders and planners: What is the best use of the region's limited land resources?

AMATS Transportation Planner Curtis Baker says that new residential and commercial development can have financial ramifications in terms of infrastructure costs, congestion, public services, and transit.

"It's a double-edged sword. People want to buy homes where they choose, but that freedom carries a price beyond the cost of a new home's list price," Baker observes.

He lists some of the costs associated with development.

"Roads that were built for low traffic volume need improvements to handle new congestion; public safety forces must extend their reach to serve new areas; new developments with few houses are difficult to serve with transit," he pauses and then adds, "In the end, these developments will demand financial investments from the region just to maintain and serve them."

The report notes that whether the area's development trends will continue is unknown. The economic climate has altered significantly since 2005 with rising fuel prices, a credit slump and a substantial slowdown in the housing market. These factors will most likely impact the region's development in the near future, but it is too early to tell whether these conditions will alter or reverse the trends identified in the inventory.

AMATS will rely on the inventory as it develops *Transportation Outlook*, the upcoming regional transportation plan. Understanding land use trends is an important component of transportation planning.

The inventory is available on the AMATS web site at [www.ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/](http://www.ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/).

**"It's a double-edged sword. People want to buy homes where they choose, but that freedom carries a price beyond the cost of a new home's list price."**

**- AMATS Transportation Planner  
Curtis Baker -**

## Akron-Canton Airport charts a new 10-year flight plan

The Akron-Canton Airport (CAK) is embarking on a new flight plan: CAK 2018, a major \$110 million expansion plan, which calls for the completion of 10 projects in 10 years. The plan is another leg in the airport's journey from a small limited-service airport nestled between Akron and Canton to a major economic player in regional commerce and transportation.

In a September appearance before the AMATS Policy Committee, Kristie VanAuken, CAK senior vice president and chief marketing and communications officer, said that airport management hopes that CAK 2018 will lead to non-stop flights from the airport to anywhere in the U.S. and possibly to destinations in Mexico, the Caribbean and Canada.



VanAuken said that the push to improve CAK began in the early 1990s when management decided that it was time to diversify the airport's product mix of airline service beyond "high fares and turboprop service to other hubs." Diversifying CAK's mix meant luring a new carrier, AirTran Airways, and proving that the region was a viable market for service to various destinations. (Most recently, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced that US Airways may begin daily round-trip service to Washington D.C. in January.) At the same time, management also decided that it was time to launch an aggressive marketing campaign to promote the airport's convenience and low fares. "When you're a small fish in a big pond, you've got to get your name out there and keep it out there," VanAuken said.

The result of the airport's efforts over the last 10 years have been more non-stop flights by other carriers, more passengers using CAK, an estimated \$300 million economic boost to the region, and 2,200 jobs at the airport, according to 2005 data compiled by CAK. VanAuken noted that, while many of the jobs created at the airport are tied to airlines and airline-related businesses and support services, six new hotels with hundreds of employees have also been built near the airport since CAK began its efforts to re-invent itself.

Unveiled in March, CAK 2018 includes a major runway extension and improvements to the airport's passenger concourse. Other projects include a replacement of the airport's rescue and maintenance facility and construction of a new U.S. Customs and Border Protection facility. Multi-million dollar expansions of the airport's Transportation Security Administration screening area, ticket wing, parking lots and entrance road are part of the plan. One of the plan's projects offers the promise of landing up to 1,000 new jobs in the region: the 213-acre \$6 million Port Green Industrial Park. The airport and the city of Green are pursuing a grant from the state's Job Ready Site Program to develop the park, which will accommodate up to 12 light industrial businesses. Under a land leasing arrangement, the park will also generate funding for the airport.

A consideration for AMATS and other planners in the region is that, as the airport expands, it will have a larger impact on the transportation system demanding better access and transit service. Information about CAK 2018 is available on the Akron-Canton Airport's web site at [www.akroncantonairport.com](http://www.akroncantonairport.com).

## Area public transportation needs topping \$1 billion

The Akron metropolitan area will need more than \$1 billion to support its public transportation system between now and 2030, according to the *Public Transportation Needs Report*.



Completed in October, the report is an important component of *Transportation Outlook*, the upcoming regional transportation plan. The report recommends transit improvements for METRO in Summit County and the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) in Portage County.

Merely preserving existing levels of service in terms of equipment and operating expenses will require more than \$1 billion for the authorities. Expanding and improving services over the 20-year period will require another \$213 million. Paying for transit will be difficult as funding continues to decrease and costs continue to rise. Because the Ohio Department of Transportation no longer directly assists with operating funding and local sources are most likely tapped out in the wake of voter approval of sales tax increases for METRO and PARTA in recent years, the authorities will probably have to look for additional state and federal funding to cover future fuel and labor costs.

AMATS Study Director Jason Segedy observes that urban sprawl (See **REGION**, Page 1) has placed increased demands on transit agencies while declining revenues have left them ill-equipped to meet these demands. "METRO and PARTA have both had to do more with less for years. It is my hope that federal and state lawmakers will step up and provide transit agencies with the funding that they need to operate their systems," Segedy says.

METRO's capital needs include the purchase of over 500 buses at an estimated cost of about \$99 million while its general operating expenses, which include labor, fuel and utility costs, are expected to be more than almost \$700 million. METRO's capital and operating costs are expected to be over \$900 million during the 20-year period.

PARTA's capital needs include over 200 bus replacements at an estimated cost of about \$25 million while its operating expenses are expected to be \$140 million. PARTA's capital and operating costs are expected to be almost \$200 million during the period.

Expansion recommendations are ambitious for both transit authorities with calls for both to extend their service hours and to establish better service between Summit and Portage counties and with neighboring counties.

With limited funding projected for the future, AMATS will prioritize these recommendations for inclusion into *Transportation Outlook*. The *Public Transportation Needs Report* can be viewed on the AMATS web site at [www.ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/](http://www.ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/).

## AMATS approves \$900,000 for PARTA, METRO projects

The AMATS Policy Committee approved funding to the area's two transit authorities so that the agencies could help others.

During its October meeting, the committee approved requests from the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) and METRO of Summit County to receive nearly \$900,000 in funding from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) New Freedom and Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) programs.

The New Freedom Program provides funds for public transportation services for people with disabilities while the JARC Program provides funds to get low-income residents to work.

The committee approved more than \$338,000 in New Freedom Program funds and more than \$346,000 in JARC funds for PARTA's mobility management system. A mobility management system coordinates services for the elderly, people with disabilities and low-income individuals through various means such as cooperative scheduling and dispatching between agencies and the use of technology.

A mobility management system was one of the key recommendations contained in the *Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan* approved by AMATS in May. The plan expressed support for activities to plan and implement coordinated services.

Bryan Smith, PARTA's director of planning, says that the project's purpose is to close the gaps in transit service among Portage County's social service agencies.

PARTA began designing its system in 2006

using a \$320,000 grant from the FTA's United We Ride Program. In its grant application, PARTA proposed using technology to help the disadvantaged overcome barriers to transportation.

One of PARTA's first steps was hiring Doug Wagener as its director of mobility management. Since his hiring in July, Wagener has been serving as liaison to about 64 different employers and social service agencies in Portage County and is working with them to identify needs and methods to improve service coordination.

Smith and Wagener say that technology such as Global Positioning Systems and onboard data terminals will allow PARTA to improve system efficiency by eliminating service redundancy and realizing cost savings.

Wagener holds out the possibility that someday the authority can provide multi-point access to passengers requesting service using the phone or Internet.

PARTA will use the funding approved by AMATS to purchase new computer hardware and software and communications equipment. The authority plans to share components of this system with Portage County social service agencies. Summit County will eventually be incorporated into the system.

The Policy Committee also approved \$200,000 in JARC funds for METRO to continue its existing services for low-income individuals. The authority has worked with the Summit County Department of Jobs and Family Services since 1998 to provide transportation service for welfare recipients and low-income workers.

## Rising gas prices result in falling traffic levels in region

Traffic in the Akron metropolitan area has dropped as gas prices have risen in the last several years.

AMATS recently completed its *Traffic Count Summary Report*, which shows that the drop in area traffic is not limited to specific locations, but appears to be occurring across the region.

The report is the latest evidence presented by the agency that gas prices have impacted driving habits. Since 2004, when gas prices began spiking above \$2 a gallon, the level of vehicle miles traveled within the Akron metropolitan area dipped for the first time after climbing steadily for most of the 1990s and the early part of this decade.

As shown in the accompanying graph, daily vehicle miles traveled in the area dropped slightly more than 3 percent from 13.3 million miles in 2004 to 12.8 million miles in 2007.

This decline in vehicle miles traveled appears to be steeper in Summit County than Portage County. Summit County saw a 3.7 percent decline in vehicle miles traveled from 10.5 million miles in 2004 to 10.1 million miles in 2007. During the same period, Portage County

saw a decline of 1.4 percent from nearly 2.8 million miles to slightly more than 2.7 million miles.

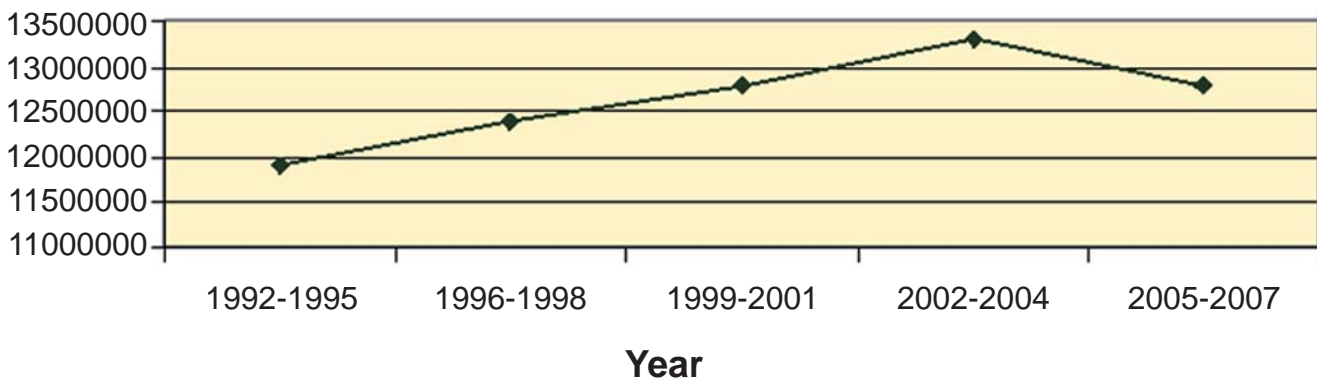
The report analyzes the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volume on the area's roads since 1992. The report is based on data collected by the agency and the Ohio Department of Transportation using a variety of traffic counting methods.

What are the implications of these trends? AMATS Engineer Gabriel Elissa says that whether area traffic volume will continue its downward slide depends upon energy prices. Elissa holds out the possibility that high prices might prompt people to pursue lifestyle changes.

"We've already seen a higher interest in fuel efficient vehicles and people reducing their number of vehicle trips. Rising energy costs, including the price of gasoline, may eventually force people to relocate closer to their workplaces and to shopping and entertainment centers," Elissa observes.

For more information about the *Traffic Count Summary Report*, please contact AMATS at **330-375-2436**.

**Regional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)**



## Area roadway congestion drops for the first time in decades

The AMATS Congestion Management Process (CMP) finds that Akron metropolitan area roadways aren't as congested as they used to be.

Approved by the agency in September, the CMP is one of the final elements of *Transportation Outlook*, the area's upcoming regional transportation plan. The report identifies congested roadways and recommends strategies to ease traffic congestion on the region's freeways, arterials and intersections.

Unlike previous congestion management reports prepared by AMATS, the CMP found that congestion in the area declined for the first time in decades. AMATS Engineer Amy Prater notes that people are driving less and making fewer trips over the past year due to higher fuel prices.

"While it is too early to tell if this trend is here to stay, it's important for it to be considered as *Transportation Outlook* is developed," Prater says.

She adds that, although the report notes the decline in travel, it nonetheless includes needed capacity improvement recommendations.



"With limited funding available for improvements, it is likely that only the most congested roadways will receive funding for improvements," Prater says.

Among the recommended congestion-reduction strategies presented in the report are the construction of new through lanes, turn lanes and signal coordination. The report recommends that additional measures, such as express bus and transit service improvements and new Park and Ride lots, be considered.

The report also encourages local communities to consider implementing strategies to help reduce congestion such as promoting alternative work hours, carpooling and smart growth principles.

The report may be viewed on the AMATS web site at [www.ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/](http://www.ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/).

## Project Updates

The following table lists transportation projects that have been awarded between August 8, 2008 and October 29, 2008.

PROJECT	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATES	CONTRACTOR	AMOUNT
<b>Interstate 77</b> - Bridge rehabilitations on I-77 spanning State Routes 21 and 303 and Brush Road in Richfield Township.	09/30/2010	The Great Lakes Construction Co. - Hinckley -	\$10,073,110

## Dates to Remember

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Committee</u>	<u>Location</u>
January 22	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Stow Safety Building
January 22	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Silver Lake Village Hall
January 28	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Martin University Center The University of Akron
March 12	1:30 p.m.	TAC	Stow Safety Building
March 12	7:00 p.m.	CIC	Silver Lake Village Hall
March 18	1:30 p.m.	Policy	Martin University Center The University of Akron

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