

4.7 Safety

All three agencies responsible for drafting this plan are committed to safety. Following is a summary of current efforts underway to ensure that our area roadways are safer, with a specific focus on public transit.

As the region's transportation planning agency, AMATS is responsible for reporting on crash data, developing a high-injury network (HIN), tying funding policies toward projects which are likely to improve safety, and for completing plans to recommend various strategic recommendations. Two core documents are central to this work:

First, AMATS has, for many years, produced an annual [Traffic Crash Report](#), which reports on the segments and intersections where crashes occur. Total number of crashes and severity of crashes are both analyzed in order to provide a prioritized and ranked list. Significant work goes into correctly coding all crashes that occur throughout a given year. The annual Crash Report currently considers crashes over a three-year window. Because AMATS also is the agency responsible for awarding federal transportation funds coming into the region, local funding policies incentivize projects ranking high on these lists. This report does not specifically take into account public transit, but overall roadway safety is considered for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle crashes, all of which affect the overall transportation system.

More recently, AMATS and its regional partners—including METRO and *PARTA*—were involved in developing the region's first [Safe Streets for All \(SS4A\) Action Plan](#). This effort began in the fall of 2022 and was finalized in May 2023. This plan dovetails off the work done through AMATS' Annual Crash Reports but goes much further in several new directions. SS4A is a new federal funding program established through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (the nation's current transportation funding bill).

The completed Action Plan contains several components relating to the safety of those who rely on public or human service transportation. While it's beyond the scope of this plan to get into these details, a few key points are worth mentioning. Most notable is that the foundation of SS4A in the region has committed to a *Vision Zero* goal, the idea being to reduce and eventually eliminate all traffic crashes causing a fatality or serious injury. To achieve this *Vision Zero* goal, it is essential to understand that not all crashes can be eliminated through design improvements alone. Rather, the reasons for such crashes are complicated, wide-ranging, and include behavioral shortcomings. Committing to *Vision Zero*, therefore, requires a combination of project-based recommendations and strategic recommendations to improve the region's safety.

To effectively plan for reducing serious crashes, a HIN was created based off the frequency of fatal and serious injury (FSI) crashes at a given location over a five-year period. This is similar to some of the analysis that goes into the annual Traffic Crash Report but considers a longer window of time in its analysis. A [HIN web-application](#) was developed to display the HIN and other important data about the crashes occurring throughout the region and the demographics of the region itself.

More specific recommendations to transit can be found in Chapter 7 (pages 32-33) of the SS4A Action Plan. This section, developed in close collaboration with METRO and PARTA, includes general strategic recommendations to improve safety (both while riding and when accessing transit), high-priority transit corridors within each region, and strategies aimed at improving coordination between agencies; basically, an abridged version of what this Coordinated Plan seeks to accomplish.

The area's two regional transit agencies, METRO and PARTA, are committed to providing safe and reliable public transit services to the greater part of the AMATS region. To that end, METRO and PARTA have each developed a Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) in coordination with the Federal Transit Administration. Each plan exceeds the requirements outlined in the federal guidance. To foster safety as part of their public service, METRO and PARTA have developed a Safety Management System (SMS), which entails a performance-based approach to safety. The purpose of the PTASP is to protect passengers, the public, employees, and bus system property.

The SMS is comprised of the following four components:

1. Safety Management Policy – including safety accountabilities and responsibilities, integration with public safety and emergency management, and documentation and records.
2. Safety Risk Management – including hazard identification and analysis, risk evaluation, and mitigation based on a pre-defined decision process.
3. Safety Assurance - including safety performance monitoring, internal safety audits, accident investigations, employee reporting systems, and safety certification and configuration management.
4. Safety Promotion – includes communication of safety information to employees and training to achieve and maintain competencies.

The purpose of this approach is to integrate all levels of operations to identify, assess, and control safety risks. The process is data driven and involves all members of the organization. The SMS is reviewed annually, and performance is assessed by both agencies.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has developed a host of materials to help small bus transit providers work with their state DOTs on Agency Safety Plan (ASP) development. Social service agencies are not required to meet this obligation. However, the FTA offers [resources for developing an SMS to suit the needs](#) of small providers.

5 Outreach

Although the administrative staff for each transit agency and AMATS prepared this plan, it was essential to understand the concerns, opinions, and preferences of key stakeholders and the general public at key points during the process. AMATS sought stakeholder and public input at various points during the creation of this locally adopted, Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan. Summaries of these outreach efforts are included below.

5.1 Planning Committee Meetings

METRO and PARTA assisted in gathering a list of stakeholders that either work with or provide transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and/or people with low incomes. Various 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. Department of Health and Human Services office (local/regional)
- f. Department of Job and Family Services office
- g. Private transportation providers

Stakeholders were invited to participate in the Planning Committee. METRO and PARTA also invited some of their loyal transit riders to ensure that citizen concerns and ideas were represented within the group.

Two meetings were held with the Planning Committee, as shown below:

	Meeting #1	Meeting #2
Date	August 8, 2023	August 28, 2023
Location	METRO RKP Transit Center (631 S. Broadway, Akron); Zoom option available as well	METRO RKP Transit Center (631 S. Broadway, Akron); Zoom option available as well
Purpose of the Meeting	The three agencies presented on the purpose/goals of the plan, the role of the Planning Committee, the 2018 plan's gaps and recommendations, the region's demographics and the 2023 survey results. An open discussion followed where attendees discussed gaps and ideas for recommendations.	Presentation of final plan; open discussion to hear any comments or reactions to the draft plan, discuss next steps that would occur so that the Planning Committee could eventually approve the plan.
Participation	<u>PARTA</u> invited 41 individuals to participate in the Planning Committee; 4 riders and 33 separate agencies. 16 individuals participated including 2 riders and 9 agencies. METRO invited.	18 members attended. Committee provided information and feedback on gaps and recommendations for the coordinated plan draft in writing or otherwise. Revised initial draft to provide

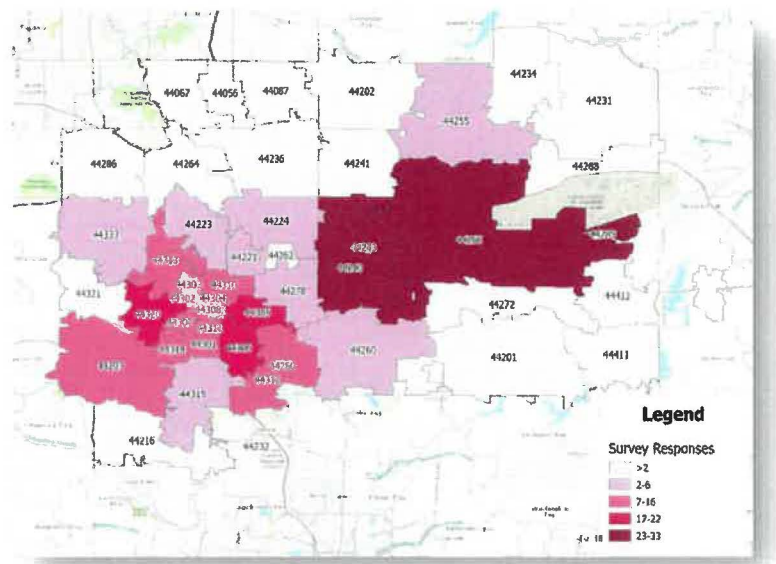
	20 Individuals and 19 agreed to participate on the Planning Committee.	further comments on gaps and recommendations.
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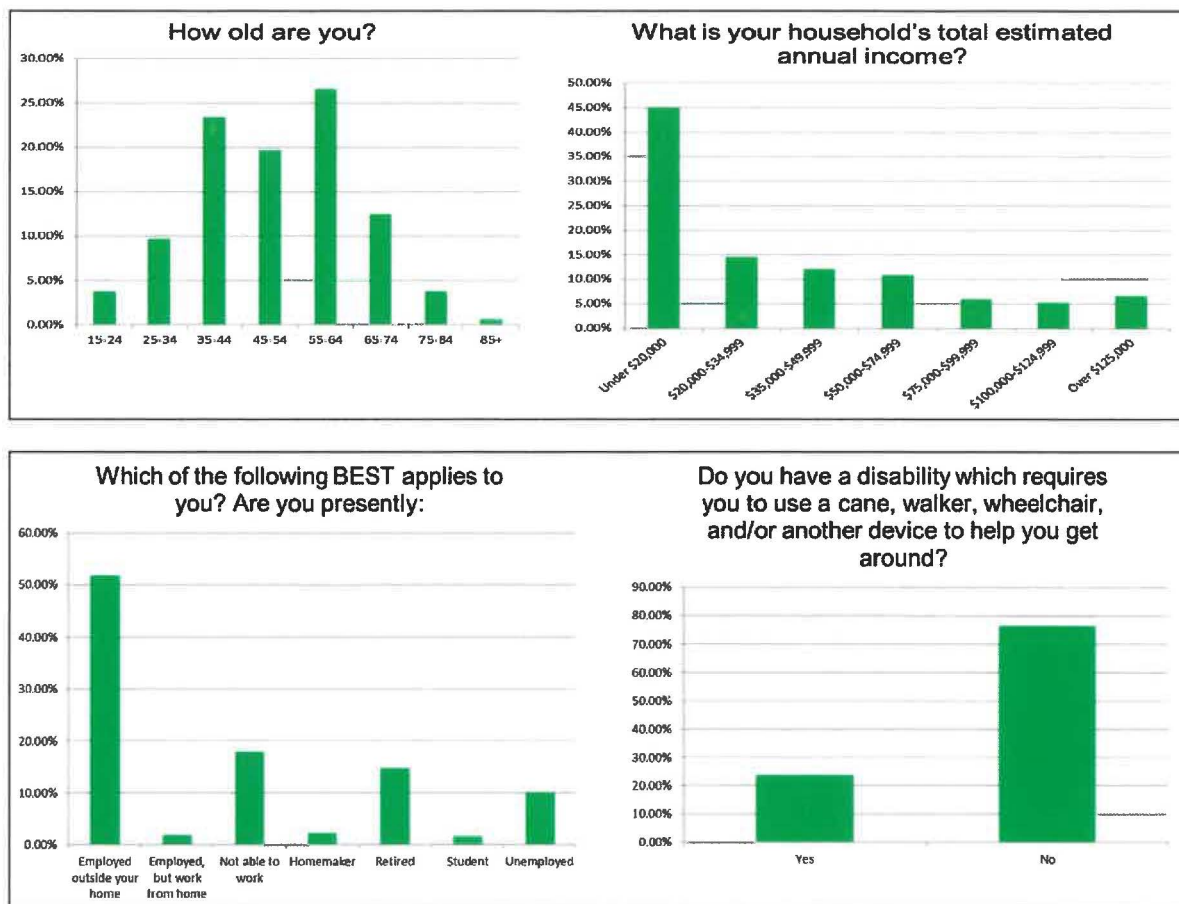
5.2 Online and Paper Surveys

An online survey was prepared in May 2023 in order to gauge citizens' public and human service transportation needs, learn where transportation gaps exist, and better understand how people are currently using various services. Great effort was made to disseminate the survey to a broad number of citizens, particularly those who regularly rely on transportation services. In total, 295 online surveys were returned in addition to 32 paper surveys with the same questions, providing a solid response rate of 327 responses. The maps and graphs below pertain to the online survey results. However, where applicable, results from the paper surveys are also discussed. Overall, results from the paper surveys were generally similar to the online survey results.

About the respondents

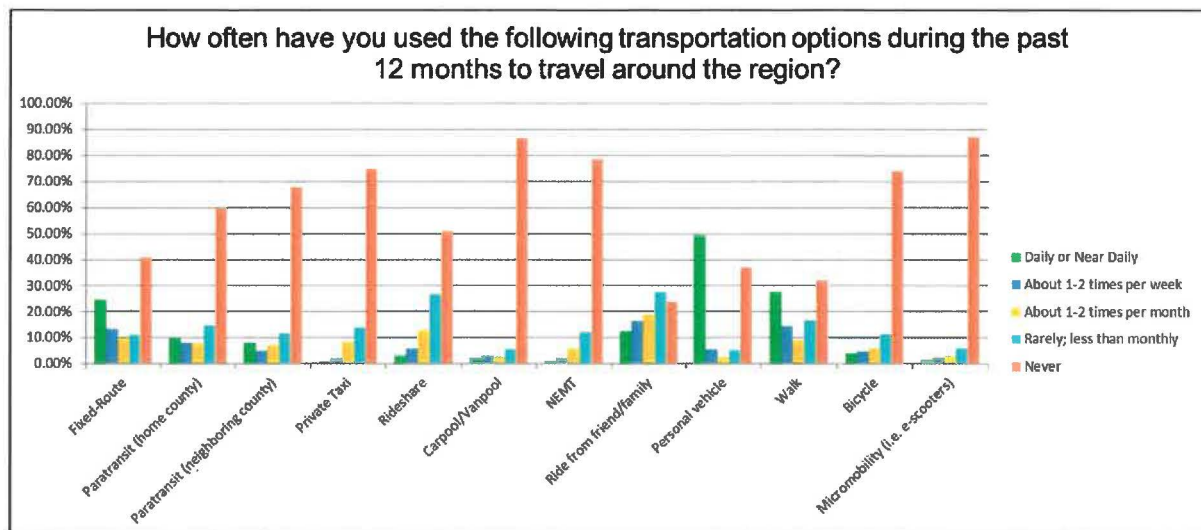
The map to the right shows the survey response rate by zip code. The highest response rates came from the Kent and Ravenna areas in Portage County. Because the paper surveys were distributed in Portage County, the Kent and Ravenna zip codes actually have even higher participation. Within Summit County, Akron had the highest response rates, which were highest in the West Akron, Goodyear Heights, Middlebury, and East Akron (Arlington Road corridor) neighborhoods.



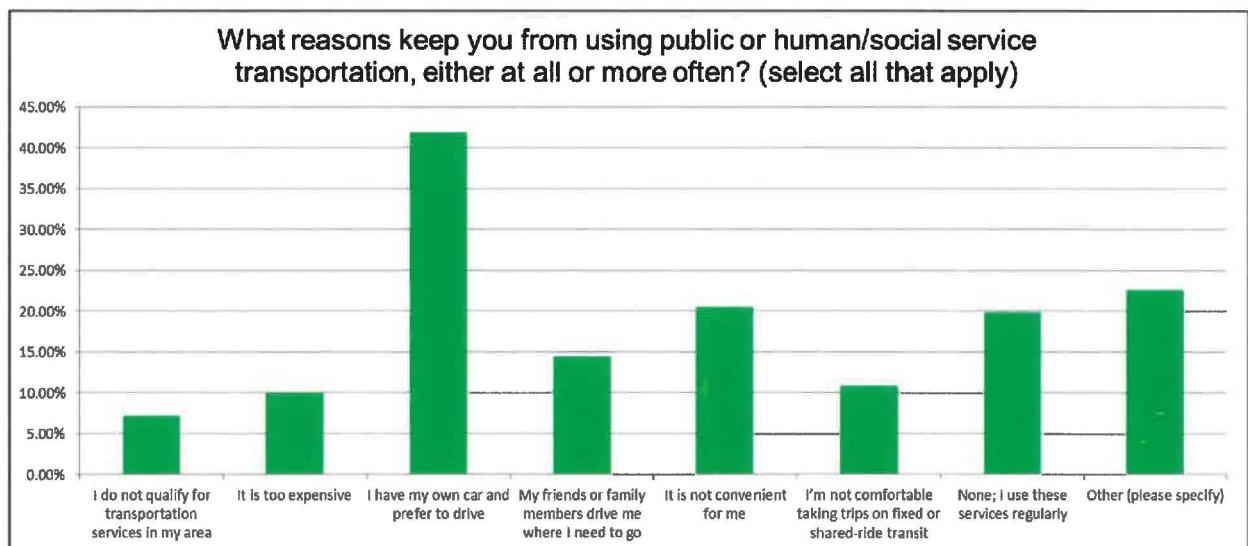


Survey Findings

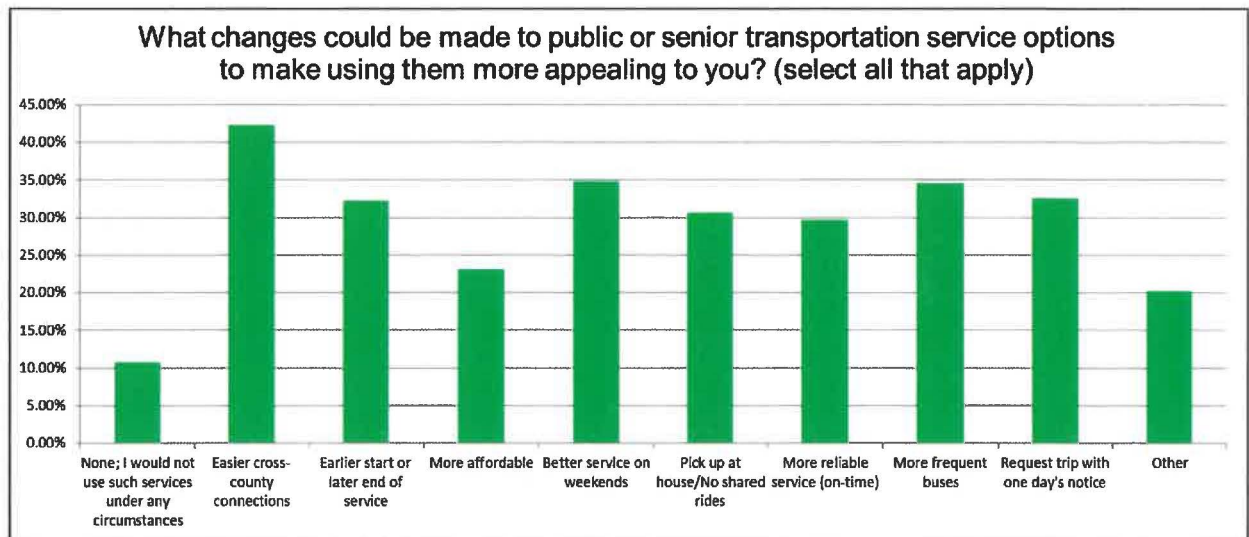
Respondents were first asked how often they have used a variety of transportation services over the past year. The results of this question are shown on the graph on page 38. Fixed-route transit services are more popular than paratransit and other shared-ride services such as non-emergency medical transportation and paratransit services.



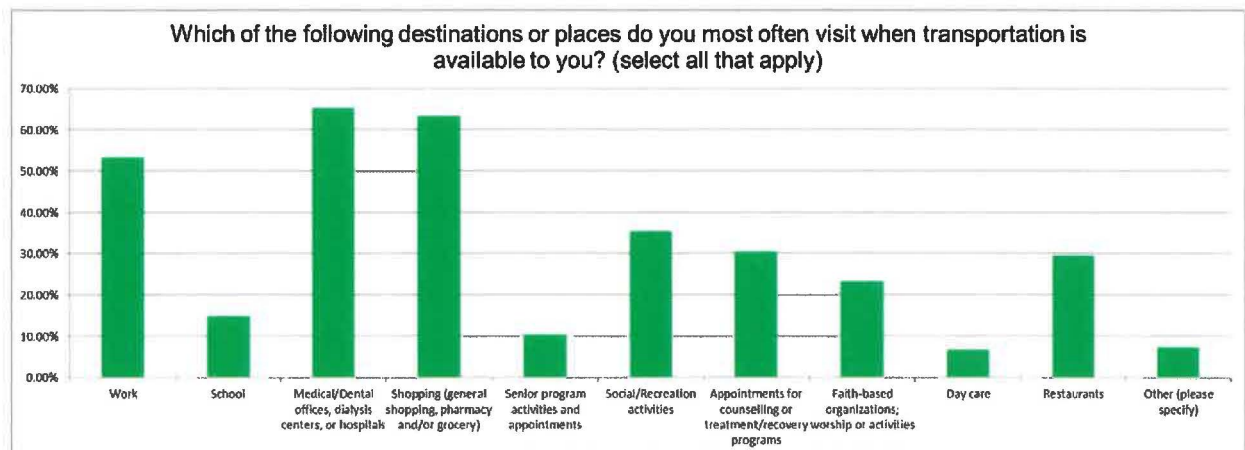
The next survey questions were geared toward understanding why people don't use public or human service transportation (more often at all) and what changes to service could make them more appealing. By far the most popular response on why services aren't used more often was that some respondents have their own vehicle and prefer to drive. Convenience was the second most popular response. Interestingly, cost was not a barrier for most respondents. Other options [those coded within the "Other (please specify)" category] included the difficulty of making cross-county trips, inability or difficulty of getting to bus stops, or that they are not aware of their service options.



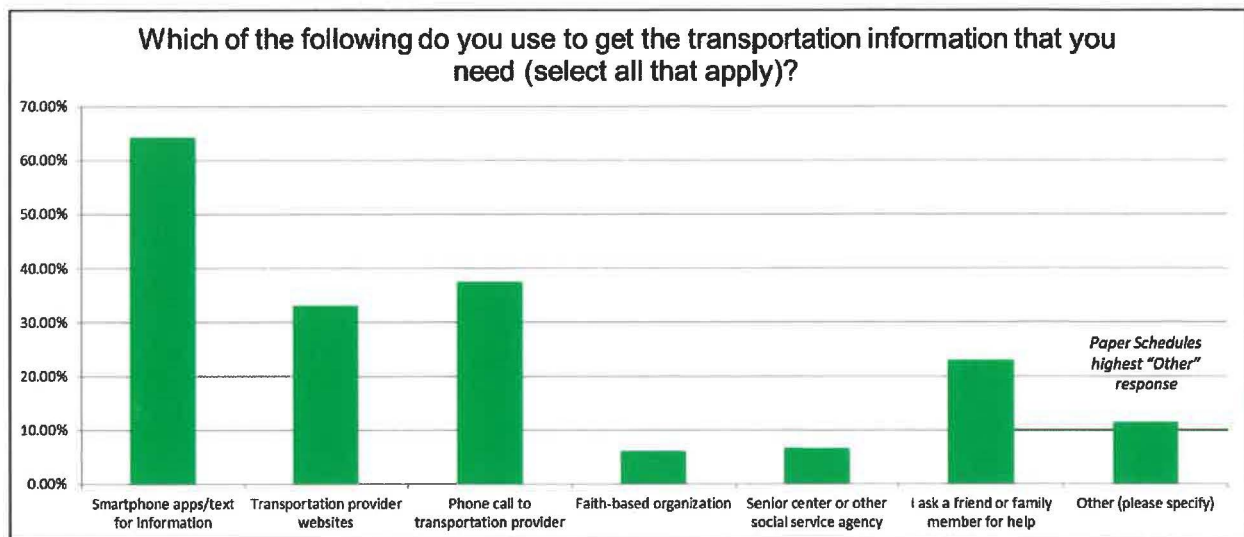
Better service at non-peak times and better connections from one county to another appeared to be the highest-priority changes citizens would like to see, as noted on the following chart. In fact, nearly 40% of respondents (online and paper survey results combined) reported that they have difficulty obtaining transportation services to other counties.



Asked about where riders travel when utilizing transportation services, medical appointments, shopping, and work were by far the top three answers.



Finally, respondents were asked how they get their information on transportation services such as learning about their options or scheduling trips. Interestingly, the current survey shows a high comfort level with the higher-technology options such as smartphone apps, texting, and provider websites. This proportion will likely be higher in the near future as *PARTA* gets ready to transition to app-based ride scheduling options. On the paper survey, many respondents also noted that they ask friends and family for help with scheduling rides in addition to the popular options listed in the following chart.



5.3 Customer Phone-Based Survey

Survey of METRO/PARTA Paratransit Customers

METRO and PARTA conducted a short 3-question survey of their paratransit customers to engage demand response riders in the planning process and learn what their transportation needs are. PARTA conducted their customer survey in May 2023 and received 79 responses. METRO conducted their survey in August 2023 and received 128 customer responses. The surveys were conducted when customers called in to schedule their demand response trips.

- A majority of respondents (93%) indicated that they felt the transportation services provided in Portage/Summit counties suit the needs of individuals with disabilities and older adults.
- A higher number of METRO customer respondents, 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 (73%) indicated that they would use fixed route service if it was available to them, which is expected since the fixed-route service in Portage County is concentrated in the more populated urban areas. Most of the county is 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
 - Inability to request a trip less than one day in advance
 - Service is not late enough in the evening or early enough in the morning

5.4 Public Comment Period

In addition to the methods described above, AMATS shared and discussed the draft plan with their CIC on September 14, 2023. AMATS will share the final draft plan with their remaining committees in December. Specifically, highlights of the Coordinated Plan will be presented to the AMATS Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) on January 18, 2024, and the Policy Committee on January 25, 2024. Both committees will receive information on the Draft Coordinated Plan in their mail packets and AMATS Approval will be requested at the Policy Committee meeting.

In addition to the CIC announcement, AMATS, METRO, and *PARTA* directly contacted 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 Planning Committee stakeholder for review and to add additional comments on the details of the plan.

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.

6 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 of these communities 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.

6.1 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.

Public Transit Service Constraints

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in reduced demand response services, but now, as the region continues to recover, the community has asked for increased demand response transportation services due to the changing demographics and the continued increase in older adults and persons with disabilities. While the regional economy continues to recover from the pandemic, and driver-shortages diminish, METRO and PARTA will work to restore demand response service to pre-pandemic levels. However, increasing demand response service may not be a feasible option for the foreseeable future. Demand response service is extremely expensive to operate. For example, in 2022 METRO’s demand response cost per trip was \$76.80 and PARTA’s was \$72.82 per trip. Passenger fares cover only a fraction of the cost, and agencies within large, urbanized areas are not usually eligible for operating funds which makes the sustainability of providing demand response service a significant challenge.

Public transportation, by nature, is designed to provide the widest, most efficient service to as many riders as possible. While METRO and PARTA strive for continuous improvement in meeting the needs of all riders, it is not economically or logistically feasible to offer fixed route line service throughout all neighborhoods within each of their counties.

Historically, travel training has focused on the use of fixed routes. Jointly METRO and PARTA acknowledge that there is a need for travel training on small buses, typically for demand response and ADA service. Collectively, METRO and PARTA offer individualized service to persons with disabilities that utilize a mobility device and will work to further accommodate these passengers by providing travel training on demand response service.

Finally, even in areas where fixed route coverage exists, there are additional gaps created when the sidewalk infrastructure does not fully and safely connect destinations and bus stops. Lack of sidewalk coverage and difficulty in traversing sidewalks and bus stops in winter weather should be considered an additional gap. Collaborative solutions to this gap are required as sidewalk construction and snow removal responsibilities do not fall solely on the public transportation providers. Typically, municipalities lead the construction of sidewalks, and snow removal usually falls as the responsibility of the adjacent property owners. Often, commercial property owners prioritize snow removal for personal vehicle traffic, which sometimes comes at the expense of pedestrian access.

Because of the constraints faced by public transportation providers, a primary purpose of the Coordinated Plan is not only to identify gaps in transportation services, but also to highlight and fund other government and social service agencies that are providing vital services that bridge these gaps.

6.1.1 METRO RTA

Fixed-Route Service Gaps

1. **Geographical Gaps** – These gaps may be identified using the maps on pages 10 and 12. 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 operates an innovative solution to serving low



density areas such as these – branded as “Call-A-Bus.” METRO’s Call-A-Bus service is an 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. Requests for expansion of this service into other suburban areas have been made as a way to meet transportation needs in outlying areas. Additionally, there are limited opportunities for cross-country transfers via fixed-route services.

It should be noted that a gap created due to workforce shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic will be filled beginning August 20, 2023, which is the return of grocery bus service. The grocery bus is a fixed route providing a direct connection between apartment buildings and nearby grocery stores, reducing the need for SCAT or ADA trips to fill the same need.

2. **Operational Gaps** – With the implementation of Reimagine METRO in June 2023, operating days and hours have become more standardized across most METRO fixed routes. Most routes operate seven days a week with the same span of service. However, the Sunday span of service continues to be limited (9:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.) with frequent requests for expanding service in the earlier morning hours. While most routes run on this standard schedule, the ones that do not are the more regional cross-county routes, which have a more limited span of service and weekend service. While METRO has introduced high frequency routes through the recent bus network redesign, requests for additional high frequency corridors to reduce travel times are often heard.
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 people with a disability. Northcoast 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.

Demand-Response Service Gaps

1. **Geographical Gaps** – METRO operates three demand-response services: SCAT Senior for passengers aged 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 ¾ 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 service is not available and holiday service is limited. 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 fixed route 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 “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.), is 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. An additional gap identified through this process was created during the pandemic when SCAT trip purposes and number of trips were limited due to a national workforce shortage. For those individuals who are not ADA-eligible or live outside the ADA corridor, limitations on trip purpose limit their ability to travel freely throughout the county; elimination of this gap allows for greater access when fixed route services are not available or feasible.

Given the above description of eligibility and the varied demand response services offered, there is also an understandable gap in the general awareness and understanding of the nuances of each program. The opportunity for additional travel training to fill this gap should be considered.

6.1.2 PARTA

Fixed-Route Service Gaps

1. **Geographical Gaps** – Portage County is predominantly rural, which is not conducive to fixed-route transit service. However, in addition to PARTA’s urban routes through Kent and Ravenna, fixed-route service is provided to the smaller communities of Windham, Garrettsville, and Hiram in the northeast portion of the county. The northern portion of the county, with job-dense commerce centers in Aurora and Streetsboro cities, is located far from areas where potential shift workers are likely to reside and largely lack pedestrian and transit safety and accessibility amenities. Streetsboro is serviced along the Cleveland Express and job-rich Brimfield has limited service via the Akron Express. Neither the Village of Mantua, Deerfield, or the southern 1/3 of Portage County have fixed-route service. PARTA is well ahead of many transit agencies when it comes to providing service beyond its home county borders. Express service to Akron and Cleveland is

provided Monday through Friday and *PARTA*'s Interurban route services several stops in Stow located in Summit County, allowing for easy transfer to the METRO transit system.

2. **Operational Gaps** – *PARTA* provides two categories of fixed-route bus service: Kent State University campus service, which connects to *PARTA*'s county service; operating through Kent, Ravenna, Windham, Garrettsville, and Hiram with express routes to Akron and Cleveland. Campus service is frequent, with headways between 8 and 15 minutes. In addition, several campus routes provide late-night service. Gaps include limited weekend service and reduced service during university breaks. *PARTA*'s county routes operate less frequently and provide limited evening and weekend service. Yet, since the 2018 Coordinated Plan was published, *PARTA* has extended evening service on county routes with some routes operating until 11:30 p.m. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent driver shortages, there remains a reduction in service on multiple county routes for the foreseeable future.
3. **Eligibility Gaps** – All *PARTA* buses are accessible to passengers assisted by mobility devices. Fares are relatively low as passengers ride fare-free on campus routes via an open-door revenue service contract with Kent State University and bus fare on local county routes is \$1.00 per trip. Seniors and persons with disabilities are eligible for reduced fare of 50¢ per trip. Express service to Akron is \$1.00 per trip. The fare for the Cleveland Express is \$5.00 per trip, which may be cost prohibitive for some lower income households. In 2023, *PARTA* introduced fare capping on its local fixed-route service by enhancing its technology to ensure fare equity. Room for improvement remains regarding access to bus stops as approaches to some stops are difficult to navigate. Efforts to enhance riders' abilities to comfortably access stops continues to be a priority. Finally, some riders face challenges understanding how to use bus schedules, so there is an on-going need for simplified schedules as well as travel training.

Demand-Response Service 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 the larger Portage County communities, service to the more remote villages and townships is only available certain days of the week. Since the 2018 Coordinated Plan, *PARTA* has implemented a new Dial-A-Ride service model with extended hours between 5:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. Monday - Friday and 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Saturday. 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.
3. **Eligibility Gaps** – Dial-A-Ride service is available to all Portage County residents, and *PARTA*'s vehicles are all accessible to individuals traveling with mobility devices. The cost of the service is

\$6.00 each way, with a reduced rate of \$3.00 for seniors and persons with disabilities, and \$2.00 for ADA service. The full fare could prove cost prohibitive to low-income individuals and households. Finally, while *PARTA* provides demand response travel training when it is requested, the residents of Portage County would benefit from greater awareness of the demand response services available to them. Opportunities for both marketing and conducting travel training should be considered to fill this gap.

6.2 Neighboring RTA Service 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 that does not provide 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, Wayne County, 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. Since the creation of the last AMATS Area Coordinated Plan, WCT has been formed in partnership with SARTA and Community Action Wayne/Medina to provide demand response trips within Wayne County. Cross-county connections remain unavailable.
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.

6.3 Government Agency Service 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, Veterans 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 is no longer able to provide transportation to their clients. With varying timetables established by each county, a segment of the population, for which public transportation is not an option, no longer has safe, reliable, affordable transportation. Private and public organizations have entered this new market to help fill the gap and provide the specialized transportation needed.

6.4 Not-for-Profit Transportation Provider Service 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, but 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.).

6.5 Private (For-Profit) Transportation Provider Service Gaps

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

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 services 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 people with mobility devices.

7 Recommendations

7.1 Financial Recommendations

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. State OTP2.

2) Connect Transit Stops to Passenger Destinations

Transit ridership could be increased by improving the connections between bus stops and passenger origins and destinations. Adding or improving transit amenities would benefit all riders, but especially those with disabilities who would have a hard time navigating a bus stop that's not ADA accessible and/or trying to get to a destination that's not connected by a sidewalk.

Although 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. Encouraging and incorporating transit into the design of roadways has clear safety benefits for both pedestrians and motorists. Encouraging communities to collaborate with transit agencies can help to identify where the greatest needs for transit amenities exist and implement projects that improve mobility and accessibility, especially for individuals with special transportation needs. The AMATS regional Safety for All Plan highlights improving transit stop locations including shelters that:

- 1) Prioritize lighting improvements to transit stops and nearby areas.
- 2) Work with municipalities to complete sidewalk gaps up to a one-mile/20-minute walk of a transit stop to increase the population served.
- 3) Stripe, reconfigure, or create accessible crosswalks, and install pedestrian control devices and high intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) beacons to improve pedestrian safety near transit stops.

Additionally, to address the difficulty of accessing bus stops during winter weather events, some recommended actions to help collaboratively solve this gap are: (A) Form a taskforce comprised of

transportation providers, planners, municipal officials, and potentially commercial property owners to further explore the issue and reasons why snow removal does not occur, and come up with better solutions than currently exist; (B) Work with partners to initiate creative, volunteer-led efforts (such as adopt-a-stop shoveling) to remove snow at higher pedestrian traffic locations; (C) Have agencies partner together to monitor snow removal within an area, identifying regularly offending property owners. Then engage property owners and/or municipal officials to work toward more effective winter maintenance processes; and (D) Educate senior and disabled riders about shared-ride transportation options, which typically provide door-to-door services, thus reducing risks associated with walking through snow and ice.

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: Safe Streets 4 All, 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. State OTP2.*

3) Expand the Reach and Hours of Fixed Route Transit and Demand Response Service

The expansion of fixed route transit service, both geographically as well as with more frequency of service and longer hours, is an ongoing need in the AMATS region. METRO and PARTA face different challenges in providing additional service to the region, including funding, staffing, and the difficulties of providing fixed route service to rural communities. Despite these challenges, METRO and PARTA will continue to work towards providing the most efficient and beneficial fixed route transit service possible.

While both METRO and PARTA provide fixed route service to Cleveland, PARTA provides service to Stow and Akron in Summit County, and METRO provides service to Brimfield in Portage County, outreach and stakeholder feedback has identified the need for additional cross-county transit service. With inter-agency collaboration, new innovative means of connecting riders to cross-county destinations can be researched, developed, and implemented.

The expansion of demand response services for both METRO and PARTA has been a top discussion point among the gaps in transportation services made by the planning committee. As highlighted in previous sections cost of demand response trips for these agencies are high and legitimate constraints do currently exist that have kept both METRO and PARTA from expanding this service. If an increase in funding is realized and adequately planned for sustainability, expansion for demand response services would be considered by both agencies.

Project Examples: Route studies; new fixed-route bus service to areas that have been historically underserved; shared-ride shuttle service; late-night service; weekend service; increased bus frequency on existing fixed-routes serving both low-income and high-employment communities; cross-county

service. Increased operational funding to expand the hours and capacity of the demand response program.

Eligible Funding Programs: FTA 5310 (as “other eligible capital & operating expenses”) and 5307.

4) Funding Innovative New Public Transit Service to Key Employment Areas

Public transit is an important means 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 9-to-5 hours and on weekends, when most fixed-route bus service is infrequent or non-existent. Communities and transit agencies are encouraged to work together to identify the region’s work transportation needs and explore solutions and opportunities to fill these gaps.

METRO and PARTA work with employers to ensure that fixed-route transit service is designed to connect workforce members to employment centers; however, there remain significant employment centers in the region that are underserved. A new ODOT program, The Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Program may provide the agencies with opportunities to explore the viability of new workforce transit services. However, ODOT has notified both METRO and PARTA that they are not eligible for the first round of funding. METRO is working to implement a new service that will provide work trips to areas that are not served by fixed-route service. PARTA is developing plans to connect underserved employment centers with new fixed-route service.

In addition, 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: Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Program, 5310 (as “other eligible capital & operating expenses”), and 5307.

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 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 that would allow for more streamlined cross-county trips.

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.

Significant strides have been made toward filling this gap through the NEORide-led EZFare project. EZFare is a mobile ticketing platform used by various RTAs throughout the Northeast Ohio and surrounding region; both METRO and *PARTA* are EZFare users – in addition to other surrounding RTAs such as SARTA, GCRTA, Laketran, and MCPT. Passengers can create an EZFare account on their mobile device and pay their fare for any of the participating agencies by tapping their device on the mobile ticket validator on the transit vehicle. EZFare accounts can be funded via credit card or cash at select RTA and retail locations. Additionally, many agencies (including METRO and *PARTA*) have rolled out an EZFare smartcard that can be used in the same manner for those without access to a mobile device with internet access. While having a mutual payment platform is a great step in the necessary direction to fill this gap, there is still work to be done in creating a standardized or unified fare structure that would allow for simplified revenue and trip sharing between multiple agencies.

Project Examples: Enhanced payment application and dispatching platform that allows for trip and revenue sharing across agencies.

Eligible Funding Programs: FTA Federal 5310, 5307, and 5339. State OTP2.

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 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.

In 2023, PARTA implemented a major ITS infrastructure update that includes new scheduling software that provides better ridership data that will improve service efficiency. The ITS update includes a mobile app, PassioGo, that riders can use to track their bus in real time. METRO has expanded the use of real-time arrival screens at each of their transit centers. Additionally, real-time information is provided through a variety of customer-facing apps including Google Maps, Transit App, and MyStop. Because technology advances quickly, investing in ITS infrastructure remains a priority for advancing the mobility of the region.

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 services agencies and transportation providers, etc.

Eligible Funding Programs: 5310 (as “support facilities & equipment”), 5307 (as “associated transit improvements”), and 5339 (as “bus-related equipment”). State OTP2.

7) Provide Same-Day Service

One barrier frequently identified in the surveys, as well as by the Planning Committee, is the gap created by the inability to schedule same-day trips for demand response services. This limits the flexibility for riders that do not have access to fixed-route service to take a trip when the need arises within the same day.

Both the need and demand for same-day service have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic also resulted in reductions in service and personnel. The number of drivers the agencies can hire has increased as our economy recovers from the pandemic. However, staffing has not yet returned to pre-pandemic service capacity.

Both METRO and PARTA are committed to providing same-day service and are actively engaged in strategic planning to meet this recommendation. However, the timing of implementation is dependent on the transit agencies having enough drivers and funding to add new services. In addition, the agencies need specialized Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) software and equipment to provide same-day service.

METRO is looking into implementing ITS technology to provide same-day service. METRO plans to procure updated demand response dispatching software that allows for the re-optimization of resources within the same day to accommodate new trip requests. Similarly, a customer-facing mobile application for trip scheduling will allow the scheduling of same-day trips, as well as real-time tracking of vehicles with predicted arrival times. Procuring and implementing this technology will allow METRO to provide same-day service.

In 2023, PARTA implemented new ITS software and equipment that can facilitate same-day service. Once PARTA has enough drivers and funding, PARTA will introduce micro-transit options, including a customer-facing app with same-day service trip scheduling capabilities.

Project Examples: Demand Response dispatching software that allows for same-day trip scheduling; customer-facing mobile application with trip scheduling capabilities.

Eligible Funding Programs: FTA Federal 5310, 5307, and 5339. State OTP2.

8) 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. For demand response services, it can be difficult to navigate the varied programs that are offered, each with specific eligibility and/or geographic coverage areas.

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 charge and is individually designed to fit each person's needs. In addition, METRO and PARTA have 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 and PARTA's services, they essentially translate to any other public transit service. These videos can be accessed at: <http://www.akronmetro.org/metro-how-to-ride.aspx>
<https://www.youtube.com/@portagearearta6034/videos>.

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 on how to expand the reach and breadth of travel training include: 1) Increasing METRO and PARTA travel training presence at Ohio Means Jobs Centers, Immigrant and Refugee Centers, and social services agencies and developing a “train the trainer” approach, 2) Providing additional emphasis on providing translation to the Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations of the region, and 3) Expanding the focus of travel training to include both fixed route and demand response. Both transit agencies are always looking to market their services

and will continue efforts and make sure our information is clear, informative, and accessible to all. METRO has established a “Friends of Transit” program to reach riders where they are through a “train the trainer” program. METRO is maximizing efforts within specific communities, as well as training agency personnel to successfully ride the bus. Trusted, known members within a community will be teaching public ridership skills to their clients. Recipients of this training will learn from people they are familiar with rather than learning from a video or someone employed through METRO, hopefully increasing their independence throughout the region. METRO will continue to roll this program out to agencies who have already expressed interest in helping their constituents, thereby expanding METRO’s reach while increasing independence within our community, whether English is not your first language, you have never ridden the bus before, or haven’t ridden in years.

Promoting an increased dialog between transit agencies and large human services providers could also address current gaps in cross-county trips for carless individuals. Improved cross-county transportation service coordination could be achieved by human service providers becoming more aware of existing transportation options and sharing information about their services. In addition, the transportation providers could develop greater awareness and connections with similar organizations and agencies in the surrounding counties.

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. 149

Eligible Funding Programs: FTA Federal 5310, State OTP2, ODOT Workforce Program.

7.2 Non-Financial Recommendations

9) Increase Dialogue Between Transportation Providers and Significant Regional Employers/Medical Centers

As discovered in previous analysis, 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, a work-force development non-profit agency, 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.

10) Maintain a Standing Committee to Address Coordination Issues

The Planning Committee responsible for drafting this Coordinated Plan will continue to provide guidance and direct any annual updates to the Plan, as needed. In addition, members of the Planning Committee will assist in outreach activities with their clients and other agencies and employers. The Planning Committee will continue to share available data on elderly and disabled needs, as well as transportation assets.

11) Promote Ridesharing

Another mobility option that may be feasible for certain trips is ridesharing. Gohio Commute is a 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 (of which AMATS is a member). 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 unable to be served efficiently by fixed route bus service. The Gohio Commute website can be found at <https://morpc.gohio.com/>.

8 Available Funding Programs (includes Funding Apportionments 2018-2023)

8.1 Federal Funding Programs

Federal Transportation Legislation

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, otherwise known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), is the current national transportation legislation. It was signed into law on November 15, 2021. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$550 billion in federal funds over fiscal years 2022 to 2026 for all forms of transportation. This includes funding for programs overseen by the FTA.



Available Funding Programs

The FTA currently administers three major formula grant programs to assist with the public transportation funding needs of metropolitan areas. These annual programs provide a regular 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.

FTA Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities Program

(Section 5310)

Grants under the FTA Section 5310 program are available to finance capital and, on a limited basis, operating expenses. Funding may be awarded to qualified public agencies, RTAs, and for-profit providers of shared-ride transportation. Eligible projects include (but are not limited to):

1. Capital Rolling Stock & Related Equipment – accessible buses, vans, and other vehicles, on-board communications equipment, and computer hardware and software to aid in the efficiency and coordination of transportation for the elderly and those with disabilities.
2. Capital Projects to Increase Access to Transportation – public transportation projects exceeding ADA requirements, construction of accessible shelters, infrastructure to improve access to transit stops that are not currently accessible, and similar projects.
3. Operating Assistance – feeder services to provide access to fixed-route bus stops, new service to meet the needs of seniors and the disabled in areas where existing services are insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable, and alternatives to public transportation.

In previous funding cycles, this funding has been used to purchase vans, paratransit buses, and

communications equipment for not-for-profit 501(c)(3) providers of transportation throughout the AMATS region. The ODOT Office of Transit solicits, reviews, and scores the applications of participating organizations. A full discussion of this process can be found in the ODOT Specialized Transportation (5310) Program Guidance & Application Instructions. Final funding awards are approved by the AMATS Policy Committee as part of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process.

The 5310 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 Area Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan to be eligible for funding.

FTA 5310 Funding Allocations to the AMATS Region

Year	Amount	Annual % Change
FY 2018	\$552,133	-
FY 2019	\$558,729	1.19%
FY 2020	\$568,914	1.82%
FY 2021	\$588,799	3.50%
FY 2022	\$845,879	43.66%
FY 2023	\$845,267	-0.07%

METRO RTA and PARTA are direct recipients of FTA funds, and consequently are eligible to receive Section 5310 funds. Social services agencies are also eligible to receive Section 5310 funds and will receive those funds through ODOT acting as the designated recipient of funds. ODOT's Program Management Plan (PMP) describes the designated recipient's policies and procedures for administering FTA Section 5310 funds. The PMP is discussed in the ODOT Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan. The PMP also describes the competitive selection process.

FTA Urbanized Area Formula Grant Program (Section 5307)

The FTA Section 5307 program funding is apportioned to each urbanized area as a transportation block grant. These funds are flexible and may be used for a variety of transportation projects. However, these funds tend to be used for transit projects such as bus replacements and other transit capital projects. For

urbanized areas over 200,000 in population, such as Akron, Section 5307 funds may only be used for capital expenses. The exceptions to this restriction include expenses for preventive maintenance and the capital cost of leasing, planning, and complementary ADA paratransit service. The funding participation rate is generally 80% federal and 20% local. See the FTA circular for program guidance.

Grants under the Section 5307 program are available to finance planning and capital projects. Capital projects include acquisition, construction, improvement, and maintenance of facilities and equipment for use in public transit. Eligible purposes include planning, engineering design, and evaluation of transit projects and other technical transportation-related studies; capital investments in bus and bus-related activities such as replacement of buses, overhaul or rebuilding of buses, security equipment and construction of maintenance and passenger facilities; and capital investments in new and existing fixed guideway systems including rolling stock, overhaul and rebuilding of vehicles, track, signals, communications, and computer hardware and software. All preventive maintenance costs are considered capital costs. This formula grant program provides a large part of the funding for METRO and PARTA's capital expenses (i.e., new buses).

Currently, the only designated recipients of Section 5307 funds in the AMATS area are METRO RTA in Summit County and PARTA in Portage County. Both METRO and PARTA receive the bulk of their Section 5307 funds from the Akron Urbanized Area's apportionment and receive smaller suballocations from the apportionment to the Cleveland Urbanized Area.

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.

The table below illustrates the Section 5307 funding allocated to the Akron Urbanized Area (UZA) in recent years:

FTA 5307 Funding Allocations – Akron UZA

Year	Amount	Annual % Change
FY 2018	\$7,411,944	-
FY 2019	\$7,886,299	6.40%
FY 2020	\$8,128,041	3.07%
FY 2021	\$8,194,015	0.81%
FY 2022	\$10,536,012	28.58%
FY 2023	\$10,724,246	1.79%

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 discussed in the federal program guidance.

Funds are allocated by formula to the Akron UZA in accordance with the grant requirements established by the FTA Section 5307 program. The designated recipients of program funding are operators of fixed-route bus services, which include METRO RTA and PARTA in the AMATS region. Public agencies or private non-profit organizations engaged in public transportation are eligible subrecipients. The funding participation rate is 80% federal and 20% local. METRO and PARTA receive the bulk of their Section 5339 funds from the Akron UZA's apportionment and receive smaller suballocations from the apportionment to the Cleveland UZA.

FTA 5339 Funding Allocations – Akron UZA

Year	Amount	Annual % Change
FY 2018	\$997,463	-
FY 2019	\$962,443	-3.51%
FY 2020	\$1,012,016	5.15%
FY 2021	\$940,047	-7.11%
FY 2022	\$900,715	-4.18%
FY 2023	\$924,986	2.69%

8.2 State of Ohio Transit Funding Programs

Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2)



The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) instituted the Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2) to provide state funds to the rural and urban transit systems in Ohio beginning in state fiscal year 2020. This replaces the Ohio Transit Preservation Partnership Program (OTPPP), which had provided federal funds to urban systems since 2012. The OTP2 is a discretionary program and projects are selected on a competitive basis with an emphasis on preservation in Tier I with preservation defined as the process of working to maintain, sustain, or keep in a good sound state the transit systems in Ohio. Tier II projects are focused on regionalization, coordination, technology, service expansion, workforce initiatives, and healthcare initiatives.

Eligible applicants include RTAs, county transit boards, municipalities, or counties that own or operate public transportation systems. Transit systems must be recipients of FTA Section 5307 or 5311 funds in order to apply for OTP2 funds.

OTP2 Funding-Akron UZA

Year	Amount	Annual % Change
FY 2020	\$2,073,152	
FY 2021	\$2,701,575	30%
FY 2022	\$1,865,418	-31%
FY 2023	\$1,911,200	2%

The Urban Transit Program (UTP)

This funding is formula-based, administered by the Office of Transit for transit service in Ohio's urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or greater. The program's goal is to facilitate the most efficient and effective use of state funds in the provision of transportation services. There are 26 urban transit agencies in Ohio. Eligible applicants include RTAs, county transit boards, municipalities, or counties that own or operate public transportation systems. Transit systems must be recipients of FTA Section 5307 funds in order to receive UTP funds.

UTP Funding-Akron UZA

Year	Amount	Annual % Change
FY 2020	\$1,242,054	
FY 2021	\$1,259,685	1%
FY 2022	\$1,260,225	0%
FY 2023	\$1,285,223	2%

ODOT Workforce Development

This new program offers \$15 million of federal flex funds each SFY for projects that easily and efficiently transport resident workforce members to economically significant employment centers or to places of employment outside of their service area. It is important to note that ODOT is still awaiting formal FHWA authorization for the funding before the source of federal flex funds can be determined. Recipients of the funds must be rural or urban transit systems as outlined in sections 306.30 to 306.53 of the Revised Code. In the first round of funding, METRO and PARTA were deemed ineligible for this funding.

9 Conclusion

Just as previous coordinated planning processes have illustrated, this process revealed that the needs of those who rely on outside sources to meet their transportation requirements are substantial. Consider, for example:

- Over 15% of the Greater Akron population has some form of physical or mental disability, up from approximately 13% when this plan was updated in 2018. Many of these disabilities preclude the ability to operate a personal automobile.
- The senior citizen population is growing at a high rate, both nationally and regionally. Nationwide, this population group 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. While shifts toward semi-autonomous vehicles may help to keep drivers safer and may even keep elderly populations driving longer, the need for alternative transportation options will only increase for the growing senior population.
- Nearly 8% of low-income households have no access to an automobile in the Akron metropolitan region. While the highest concentrations of these households are in dense, urban communities like Akron with myriad transit services, many rural areas further away from these services also have high concentrations of carless households. Given that so many of the older populations live in these outlying areas, demand for rural transportation options is likely to increase over the coming years.
- While medical facilities and other public services still have a strong presence in traditional city centers, many newer facilities are being built in outlying suburban areas. Both transit agencies and many other transportation drivers do an admirable job of providing services to newer suburban frontiers, but the level of service in lower density areas cannot practically be the same as in high-density neighborhoods with high levels of transit-loyal riders.



Collectively, these points demonstrate not only that the current needs are both great and complex, but that such challenges will likely increase within the life of this plan and over the coming decades.

The recommendations proposed in this AMATS Area Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan are intended to meet these challenges head-on. They were born out of



statistical and demographic analysis, 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 the region’s existing transportation assets, allow agencies to use any new assets more effectively, and to build upon the already strong public, private and non-profit partnerships within the Greater Akron area. 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.

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	dot.state.oh.us
FTA Region 5 Office	Midwest	312-886-3704	transit.dot.gov
Public Transportation Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
METRO RTA	Summit	330-564-2281	akronmetro.org
PARTA	Portage	330-678-7745	partaonline.org
MCPT	Medina	330-723-9670	medinaco.org/transit
GCRTA	Cuyahoga	216-566-5100	riderta.com
Geauga County Transit	Geauga	440-279-2150	geaugatransit.org
SARTA	Stark	330-477-2782	sartaonline.com
Wooster Transit	Wooster	330-234-3650	woosterhospitalitytransit.com
Laketran	Lake		laketran.com
Lorain County Transit	Lorain		loraincounty.us
Western Reserve Transit Authority (WRTA)	Mahoning		wртаonline.com
Non-Profit Transportation Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
Vantage Aging	Summit	330-253-4597	matureservices.org
The Arc of Summit & Portage Counties	Summit/Portage	330-836-5863	
Coleman Behavioral Health - Summit County	Summit	330-379-0667	colemanservices.org/services
Community Action Council of Portage County	Portage	330-297-1456	cacportage.net
Community Support Services	Summit	330-253-9388	cssbh.org
Emmanuel Ventures	Summit		ccwhc.org
Easter Seals of Southern Ohio	Summit	440-324-6600	easterseals.com/noh
Faith in Action	Summit	330-922-1900	fiaakron.org
Family & Community Services, Inc.	Portage	330-297-7027	portagefamilies.org
Greenleaf Family Center	Summit	330-376-9494	greenleafctr.org
Hattie Larlham	Summit/Portage	330-274-2272	hattielarlham.org
Haven of Rest Mission	Summit	330-535-1563	havenofrest.org
Independence of Portage County	Portage	330-296-2851	indport.org
Jewish Services			
Jin Huo Community	Summit		
Open M	Summit		

Non-Profit Transportation Providers (Continued)			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
United Disability Services (UDS)	Summit	330-762-9755	udsakron.org
United Way of Portage County	Portage	330-297-1424	unitedwayofportage.com
United Way of Summit County	Summit	330-762-7601	uwsummit.org
Scenic-View	Summit		
Summit County Children's Services	Summit	330-379-9094	
Human Services Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority	Summit	330-376-7963	akronhousing.org/index2.aspx
Portage County Board of Developmental Disabilities	Portage	330-297-6462	portagedd.org
Portage County Department of Job and Family Svcs.	Portage	330-297-3750	co.portage.oh.us/jfs
Portage County Veterans Service Commission	Portage	330-297-3545	co.portage.oh.us/veterans.htm
Portage Metropolitan Housing Authority	Portage	330-297-1489	portagehousing.org
Summit County Department of Job and Family Svcs.	Summit		summitdjfs.org
Summit County Veterans Service Commission	Summit	330-643-2830 330-64	vscsummitoh.us
Summit Developmental Disability Board	Summit	330-634-8082	summitdd.org
Wayne County Board of DD	Wayne	330-345-6016	waynedd.org/company.asp
Wayne County Job & Family Services	Wayne	330-287-5846	wayneohio.org/jobandfamily
Wayne County Veterans Service Commission	Wayne	330-345-6638	waynecountyveterans.org/index.htm
Wayne Metropolitan Housing Authority	Wayne	330-264-2727	waynemha.org
Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities		234-206-4205	
Private-Non-Ambulance Transportation Providers			
Organization Name	Area Served	Phone	Website
TL Worldwide	Summit	330-733-5372	thomaslimousine.com
City Yellow Cab	Summit	330-253-3141	cityyellowcab.com
Active Transportation	Summit	330-818-7474	
Falls/Suburban Cab Company	Summit	330-929-3121	
		330-753-8294 (330)	
Magic Taxi LLC	Summit	848-4955	
Life Care	Summit/Portage	866-998-3999	
	Summit, Stark,		
Provide A Ride	Portage	888-288-7050	
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 the Exceed the Requirements of the ADA
 1. Enhancing paratransit beyond minimum ADA requirements
 - a. Expansion of paratransit service parameters beyond the ¾ 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)

RESOLUTION #2024-02-02**A RESOLUTION BY THE PORTAGE AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (*PARTA*) BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVING THE PUBLIC TRANSIT AGENCY SAFETY PLAN (PTASP) AND UPDATES TO THE PLAN AS REQUIRED BY THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA).**

WHEREAS, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued a rule in 2018 requiring recipients of Urbanized Area Formula Grants (5307 funds) to develop safety plans that include the processes and procedures to implement Safety Management Systems (SMS); and

WHEREAS, *PARTA* prepared the Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) and the Board of Trustees approved the PTASP via Resolution #2020-11-04 on November 19, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the guiding principle of the PTASP is to increase safety of the transit system by identifying, assessing, and controlling safety risks by establishing and enforcing a comprehensive framework to oversee the safety of public transportation and by measuring safety performance, strategies, and training; and

WHEREAS, the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law made changes to 49 U.S.C. § 5329(d) applicable to recipients receiving financial assistance under section 5307 based upon urbanized area service population; and

WHEREAS, *PARTA* is a recipient receiving financial assistance under section 5307 that is serving an urbanized area with a population of 200,000 or more; and

WHEREAS, *PARTA* has updated the PTASP to include required safety performance criteria, safety training programs, transit operations risk reduction programs, and risk reduction performance targets consistent with the revisions outlined in 49 U.S.C. § 5329(d) and applicable regulations; and

WHEREAS, *PARTA* has presented the updated PTASP plan to its employee safety committee for its approval and now requests approval of the PTASP plan and updates by the Board of Trustees.

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED by the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (*PARTA*) Board of Trustees that:

The attached Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) and updates to the agency safety plan be accepted and approved by the Board of Trustees effective February 22, 2024.

CERTIFICATION:

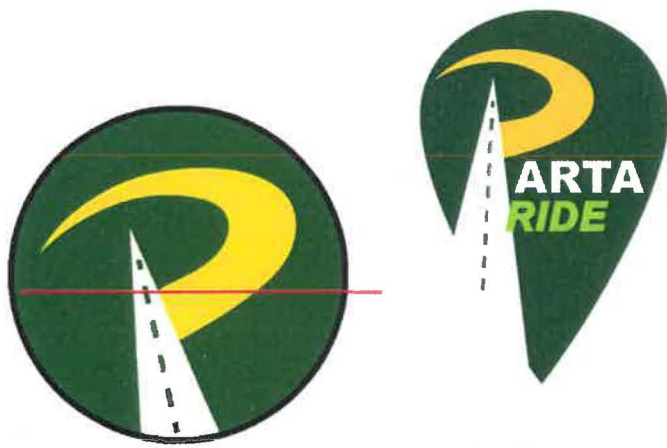
The undersigned duly qualified Board President, acting on behalf of the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (*PARTA*), certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Board of Trustees held on February 22, 2024.

Date

David Gynn, President
Board of Trustees

Attested

PUBLIC TRANSIT AGENCY SAFETY PLAN (PTASP)



Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority

2000 Summit Rd., Kent, Ohio 44240

February 1, 2024

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PREFACE

The Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (*PARTA*) is committed to providing safe, dependable, courteous, and affordable public transit service in Kent, Ohio, and throughout Portage County Ohio. *PARTA*, established in 1975, is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees representing municipalities, townships, and villages within the county and the county government. *PARTA* directly operates all services from a single operations center located at 2000 Summit Road in Kent, Ohio. The population of the service area is approximately 161,791. *PARTA* operates 15 fixed routes, including Kent State Campus bus routes, ADA complementary paratransit, and general public demand response service. Services operate Monday through Friday from 5 a.m. to 3 a.m.; Saturday service operates between 7:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.; and Sunday service operates from 3:45 p.m. to 3 a.m. *PARTA* operates a fleet of 38 buses in its fixed route service, all of which are either low-floor or wheelchair lift-equipped. *PARTA* also operates a fleet of 35 accessible small buses and vans in its demand response service.

Portage County falls within the Akron Urbanized Area (UZA) with a population of 557,021. *PARTA* works with the Akron UZA's Metropolitan Planning Agency (MPO), AMATS, to secure federal funds. With voter approval in 2001 of a 5-year, ¼ percent sales and use tax dedicated to transit in Portage County, *PARTA* was able to increase its level of service. This funding source, which was made permanent in 2006, provides approximately \$5 million annually to *PARTA*'s budget. In addition, *PARTA* receives funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) through 5307, 5310, 5339, 5339 (b), CMAQ, and DERG. *PARTA* is also contracted to complete transportation for various local human service agencies and is the primary transportation system for Kent State University.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) grants the FTA the authority to establish and enforce a comprehensive framework to oversee the safety of public transportation throughout the United States. As a component of this safety oversight framework, MAP-21 requires recipients of FTA Chapter 53 funding to develop and implement a Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) that addresses performance measures, strategies, and staff training opportunities.

MAP-21 expands the regulatory authority of the FTA to oversee safety, providing an opportunity for the FTA to assist transit agencies in moving toward a more holistic, performance-based approach to **Safety Management Systems (SMS)**. MAP-21 puts the FTA and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) in a position to provide guidance that strengthens the use of safety data to support management decisions, improves the commitment of transit leadership to safety, and fosters a culture of safety that promotes awareness and responsiveness to safety risks.

The PTASP for *PARTA* is consistent with and supports an SMS approach to safety risk management. SMS is an integrated collection of policies, processes, and behaviors that ensures a formalized, proactive, and data-driven approach to safety risk management. SMS aims to increase the safety of transit systems by proactively identifying, assessing, and controlling safety risks. The approach is flexible and scalable so that transit agencies of all types and sizes can efficiently meet the basic requirements of MAP-21. The PTASP for *PARTA* addresses the following elements.

<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Statement:	A policy statement establishing senior management commitment to continual safety improvement, signed by the executive accountable for the operation of the agency and the board of trustees.
<input type="checkbox"/> Document Revision and Control:	A description of the regular annual process used to review and update the plan including a timeline for implementation of the process.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Description of Core Safety Responsibilities:	A description of the responsibilities, accountabilities, and authority of the accountable executive, the key safety officers, and key members of the safety management team.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Safety Training Program:	A description of the comprehensive safety training program for agency staff that ensures that staff are trained and competent to perform their safety duties.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Safety Risk Management Approach:	A description of the formal processes the agency uses to identify hazards, analyze, and assess safety risks, and develop, implement, and evaluate risk controls.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prioritized Safety Risks:	A description of the most serious safety risks to the public, personnel, and property.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Risk Control Strategies and Actions for Prioritized Safety Risks:	A description of the risk control strategies and actions that the agency will undertake to minimize exposure of the public, personnel, and property to hazards, including a schedule for implementing the risk control strategies and the primary entity responsible for each strategy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Safety Assurance:	A list of defined safety performance indicators for each priority risk and associated targets the agency will use to determine if it is achieving the specified safety goals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Desired Safety Outcomes or Goals:	A description of desired safety outcomes for each risk using the measurable safety performance indicators established.

1 SAFETY MANAGEMENT POLICY

1.1 STATEMENT OF POLICY - Safety

PARTA is committed to safety management as a systematic and comprehensive approach to identifying safety hazards and risks associated with transit system operations and related maintenance activities. PARTA has adopted a Safety Management Systems (SMS) framework as an explicit element of the agency's responsibility by establishing safety policy; identifying hazards and controlling risks; and goal setting, planning, and measuring performance. Furthermore, PARTA has adopted SMS as a means by which to foster agency-wide support for transit safety by establishing a culture where management is held accountable for safety and everyone in the organization takes an active role in securing transit safety.

To ensure transit safety and in order to comply with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements, PARTA has developed and adopted this Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) to comply with FTA regulations established by Section 5329(d) of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act signed into law by President Barack Obama on July 6, 2012 and as expanded by President Joe Biden through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed on November 15, 2021.

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The General Manager, PARTA's Accountable Executive, PARTA's Safety Committee and PARTA's Board of Trustees have reviewed the PTASP and ensured that its content has met the requirements of Section 5329(d) of MAP-21 through the establishment of a comprehensive Safety Management Systems (SMS) framework. Fundamental safety beliefs guiding our approach include:

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- Safety is a core business value.
- Safety excellence is a key component of our mission.
- Safety is a source of our competitive advantage; our business will be strengthened by making safety excellence an integral part of all our public transportation activities; and
- Accidents and serious incidents are preventable and do not occur out of the blue; they are preceded by precursors (events, behaviors, and conditions) that can be identified, assessed, and mitigated through physical, administrative, and behavioral defense strategies.

Basic elements of our safety approach include:

- Top management commitment to safe operations.
- Responsibility and accountability of all employees.
- Clearly communicated safety goals; and
- Safety assurance and performance measurement for improvement.

Safety Objectives

- Reduce collisions and passenger falls through data collection and training.
- Monitor employee safety concerns; and
- Instill a safety first, top down, mentality.

Copies of this *Statement of Policy* are conspicuously posted throughout the PARTA facility. In addition, the policy statement can be found on PARTA's website at www.partaonline.org

Claudia B. Amrhein
General Manager and Accountable Executive

Date

1.2 ANNUAL PTASP REVIEW AND UPDATE

PARTA drafted our own PTASP and management will review the PTASP annually, with input from PARTA's Safety Committee and update the document, as necessary. The annual review of the PTASP will be conducted by PARTA's Chief Safety Officer and ~~Safety and Security Manager~~ Director of Risk Management by June 1 and approved, as required in accordance with MAP-21 and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Annual self-certification will consist of the General Manager signing and dating the appropriate signature page of this document. Necessary updates outside the annual review will be handled as PTASP addendums which will be incorporated in the body of the PTASP. Reviews of the PTASP ~~by PARTA~~, any subsequent updates and addendums, adoption, and distribution activities will be documented in the PTASP Document Activity Log in this document. PARTA shall provide its public fixed route and complementary paratransit services in accordance with the terms adopted by the Board of Trustees in this policy document that are consistent with and necessary for the execution of this policy.

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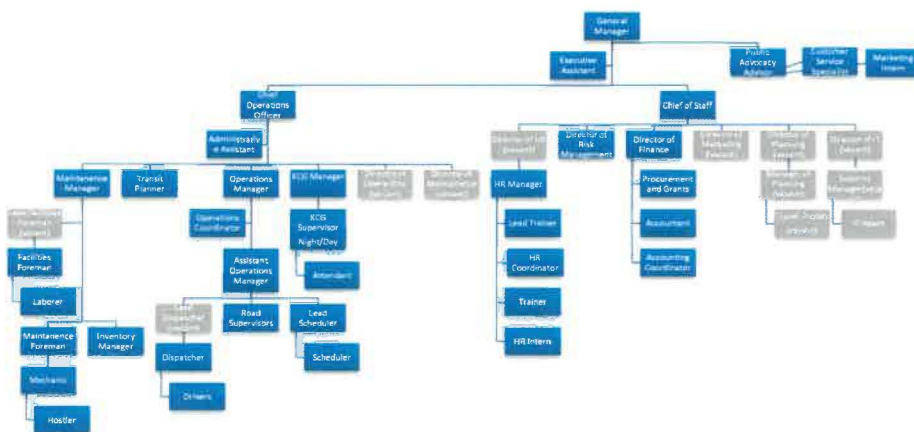
Additionally, PARTA will transmit performance targets to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and AMATS annually.

1.3 ORGANIZATION, STRUCTURE AND SYSTEM SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES

PARTA directly operates multiple modes of transportation, including fixed routes and demand response services. Management has the overall responsibility for the safe and secure operations of PARTA and service operators. Each employee is required to carry out specific system safety responsibilities, depending on his/her position, in compliance with the PTASP. The information provided below describes each position and the reporting structure; the table in Appendix A shows the system safety responsibilities of each position specifically.

See the *Staff Safety Roles and Responsibilities table (Appendix A)*.

PARTA's Organizational Chart



1.4 SAFETY CULTURE

A positive safety culture must be generated from the top down. The actions, attitudes, and decisions at the policy-making level must demonstrate a genuine commitment to safety. Safety must be recognized as the responsibility of each employee with the ultimate responsibility for safety resting with the General Manager and the *PARTA* Board of Trustees. Employees must trust that they will have management support for decisions made in the interest of safety while recognizing that intentional breaches of safety will not be tolerated.

*PARTA's established Safety Committee was created by a joint management-labor process to provide feedback from an equal number of frontline and management employees to evaluate safety hazards, identify safety deficiencies, establish performance targets, develop strategies to minimize exposure to infectious diseases consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Ohio Health Department and promote safety. The primary goal of safety promotion at *PARTA* is to develop a positive safety culture that allows SMS to succeed and provides for continuous improvement.* A positive safety culture at *PARTA* is defined as one which is:

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A. An Informed Culture

- Employees understand the hazards and risks involved in their areas of operation.
- Employees are provided with the necessary knowledge, training, and resources; and
- Employees work continuously to identify and overcome threats to safety.
 - i. Examples of communication include:
 1. Safety bulletin board updated monthly.
 2. Memos, as necessary.
 3. Scrolling TV in the break lounge, updated monthly or as needed.
 4. New hire and annual refresher training; and
 5. Bi-annual operator meetings.

B. A Just Culture

- Employees know and agree on what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior; and
- Human errors must be understood but negligence and willful violations cannot be tolerated.

C. A Reporting Culture

- Employees are encouraged to voice safety concerns and to share critical safety information without fear of repercussion; and
- When safety concerns are reported, they are analyzed, and appropriate action is taken.
 - i. Examples of *PARTA's* safety culture to report problems include:
 1. Report conditions directly to a supervisor.
 2. Quarterly Safety Committee meetings.
 3. Monthly safety toolbox talks.
 4. Bi-annual Operator meetings; and
 5. Management Labor Committee meetings.

D. A Learning Culture

- Learning is valued as a lifetime process beyond basic skills training.
- Employees are encouraged to develop and apply their own skills and knowledge to enhance safety; and
- Employees are updated on safety issues by management and safety reports are fed back to staff so that everyone learns the pertinent lessons.

2 SAFETY RISK MANAGEMENT (SRM)

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PARTA uses the SRM process as the method to ensure the safety of our operations, employees, passengers, the general public, facilities, and vehicles. Through the SRM process, hazards and consequences are identified, and evaluated for the potential of safety risk, strategies are implemented, and risks are resolved. *PARTA*'s SRM process is a holistic approach that looks at all elements of risk to our system, including operations and maintenance, facilities and vehicles, and personnel recruitment and retention.

2.1 HAZARD IDENTIFICATION

Establishing effective hazard identification programs is fundamental to safety management at *PARTA*. A hazard is any real or potential condition that can cause injury, illness, or death; damage to or loss of the facilities, equipment, rolling stock, or infrastructure; or damage to the environment. Hazard identification can be reactive or proactive. Occurrence reporting, incident investigation, and trend monitoring are essentially reactive. Other hazard identification methods actively seek feedback by observing and analyzing day-to-day operations. Common hazard identification activities include:

- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) oversight.
 - FTA Triennial Review; and
 - FTA Random Drug and Alcohol Compliance Audit.
- State of Ohio DOT and BWC (Oversight).
- Ohio Transit Risk Pool (OTRP) Annual Risk Management Audit (Oversight).
- Safety assessments.
- Toolbox talks/safety meetings.
- Trend monitoring.
- Hazard and incident reporting.
- Safety surveys.
- Safety audits.
- Review of video cameras; and
- Evaluating customer suggestions and complaints.

The number of near-miss incidents, known as precursors, is significantly greater than the number of accidents for comparable types of events. The practice of reporting and learning from accident precursors is a valuable complement to other hazard identification practices. To be successful, hazard identification must take place within a non-punitive and just safety culture. *PARTA* employs systematic safety improvements by discovering and learning of potential weaknesses in the system's safety.

Any identified hazard that poses an immediate threat to life, property, or the environment must immediately be brought to the attention of the Accountable Executive and addressed immediately.

See the Safety Assessment and System Review (Appendix B).
See the Facility Safety and Security Assessment (Appendix C).

2.1.1 Non-Punitive Reporting Policy

PARTA is committed to the safest transit operating standards possible. To achieve this, it is imperative that *PARTA* has uninhibited reporting of all incidents and occurrences that may compromise the safe conduct of our operations. To this end, every employee is responsible for the communication of any information that may affect the integrity of transit safety. Such communication must be free of any form of reprisal. *PARTA* also welcomes anonymous reporting of safety concerns and incidents.

PARTA will not take disciplinary action against any employee who discloses an incident or occurrence involving transit safety unless the employee is directly responsible for the incident or occurrence. This policy shall not apply to information received by PARTA from a source other than the employee, or which involves an illegal act or a deliberate or willful disregard of promulgated regulations or procedures.

The primary responsibility for transit safety rests with the Transit Operators, ~~and~~ Road Supervisors and Maintenance personnel; however, transit safety is everyone's concern.

PARTA's method of collection, recording, and disseminating information obtained from transit safety reports has been developed to protect, to the extent permissible by law, the identity of any employee who provides transit safety information.

2.2 RISK ASSESSMENT

Once hazards have been identified, PARTA will conduct an assessment to determine their potential consequences. Factors to be considered are the likelihood of occurrence, the severity of the consequences should there be an occurrence, and the level of exposure to the hazard. PARTA will assess risks subjectively by experienced personnel using a **Risk Assessment Matrix (RAM)**. This matrix categorizes risks by levels high, medium, or low. PARTA defines the risk as follows:

- High ratings are unacceptable/intolerable and require immediate action to mitigate the safety risk.
- Medium ratings are undesirable, but will be monitored to control the risk; and
- Low ratings may be acceptable but will be reviewed for continuous improvement.

The results of the risk assessment process will help determine whether the risk is being appropriately managed or controlled. If the risks are acceptable, the hazard will simply need monitoring. If the risks are unacceptable, steps will be taken by PARTA to lower the risk to an acceptable or tolerable level or to remove or avoid the hazard.

See the Risk Assessment Matrix (RAM) (Appendix D).

2.3 RISK MITIGATION

The assessment process may indicate that certain hazards have an acceptable level of risk, while others require mitigation to an acceptable or tolerable level. PARTA will further manage risk by completing a **Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Log (Appendix E)** that can help prioritize safety risks. The level of risk can be lowered by reducing the severity of the potential consequences, by reducing the likelihood of occurrence, and/or by reducing the exposure to that risk.

In general, PARTA will take the following safety actions to mitigate risk. These actions can be categorized into three broad categories, including:

- **Physical Defenses:**
These include objects and technologies that are engineered to discourage, warn against, prevent inappropriate action, or mitigate the consequences of events or transit assaults (e.g., traffic control devices, fences, safety restraining systems, transit controls/signals, transit monitoring systems, barriers, etc.).
- **Administrative Defenses:**
These include procedures and practices that mitigate the likelihood of accident/incident (e.g., safety regulations, standard operating procedures, personnel proficiency, supervision inspection, training, etc.); and

- **Behavioral Defenses:** These include behavioral interventions through education and public awareness campaigns aimed at reducing risky and reckless behavior of motorists, passengers, and pedestrians and factors outside the control of the agency.

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2.4 PRIORITIZE SAFETY RISKS

Once hazards have been identified and risk levels assessed, *PARTA* will prioritize safety risks. A **Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Log (Appendix E)** will be used by *PARTA*'s ~~Safety and Security Manager~~ Director of Risk Management and Chief Safety Officer to organize *PARTA*'s safety risks. The Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Log identifies the risk likelihood, a description of the risk, risk type, risk severity, risk rating value, further action required to reduce risk, and responsible staff. In this log, activities or measures taken to correct safety risks will be documented for review to ensure effective mitigations.

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See the **Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Log (Appendix E)**.

3 SAFETY ASSURANCE

Safety assurance provides the necessary feedback to ensure that the SMS is functioning effectively and that *PARTA* is meeting or exceeding its safety objectives. Safety assurance requires a clear understanding of how safety performance will be evaluated, or in other words, what metrics will be used to assess system safety and determine if the SMS is working properly. Having decided on the metrics by which success will be measured, safety management requires embedding these metrics in the organizational culture and encouraging their use for ongoing performance improvement.

PARTA evaluates our compliance with operations and maintenance procedures to determine whether our existing rules and procedures are effective in controlling our safety risks. Effective safety risks must be assessed to ensure that mitigations are appropriate and implemented as intended. *PARTA* evaluates all safety events to identify any causal factors and analyzes the information from safety reporting, including data about safety defects, failures, or conditions.

PARTA has event documentation and procedures that each employee is trained in and can be found in our training manuals. These procedures are carried out by Road Supervisors as well as the ~~Safety and Security Manager~~ Director of Risk Management. This includes all events that occur on transit buses, as well as events involving *PARTA* employees on and off *PARTA* property. An event is defined as any accidental or intentional act that has the potential for property damage or bodily injury.

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PARTA has a Safety Panel that consists of the ~~Safety and Security Manager~~ Director of Risk Management, Human Resource Manager, Operations Manager, and Assistant Operations Manager. The purpose of the Safety Panel is to investigate collisions and passenger incidents to define the causal factors of each incident or collision. The safety panel determines if an incident or collision is preventable or not and if it warrants discipline or retraining.

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PARTA's Safety Committee meets quarterly and is convened by a joint management-labor process. This process consists of an equal number of frontline employee representatives and management representatives consisting of the following *PARTA* employees:

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- ~~The Safety and Security Manager~~ The Director of Risk Management;
- The Maintenance Manager;
- The Lead Trainer;
- One Union appointed driver representative; and
- Three drivers were duly nominated and elected by the drivers.

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~~All employees are welcome to attend the Safety Committee meetings. PARTA's Safety and Security Manager completes minutes and provides a copy to the Chief Safety Officer to evaluate any safety hazard reports, as well as minutes are posted on the Safety Board.~~

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PARTA will update the Standard Operating Procedures (Appendix F), as needed, for the prevention and control of infectious diseases within the workplace, consistent with the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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PARTA's Director of Risk Management establishes and maintains the Safety Risk Register and Safety Event Log to monitor and analyze trends in hazards, occurrences, incidents, and accidents. The Director of Risk Management also completes, maintains, and distributes minutes of the safety committee meetings providing a copy to the Chief Safety Officer to evaluate any safety hazard reports. The minutes are then posted on the Safety Board.

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PARTA retains all required SMS documentation for at least three years, and this documentation is available upon request by the FTA or other oversight agencies.

See Standard Operating Procedures (Appendix F).

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3.1 MONITORING PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATING RESULTS

PARTA monitors compliance with operations and maintenance safety procedures through internal audits, records, reviews, and observations. All employees undergo annual refresher training that includes safety issues per their job responsibilities and duties. Drivers are evaluated annually, specifically around safe vehicle operation. This documentation is kept by the training department and in drivers' personnel files and is available to the appropriate personnel upon request.

The following procedures are monitored and used for the basis of investigations of accidents, incidents, and safety occurrences (as needed per the event):

- Revenue and non-revenue vehicle operation.
- Adherence to PARTA-regulated vehicles and building maintenance and cleanliness.
- Regular vehicle inspections.
- Regular building and maintenance facility inspections.
- Safety audits.
- Review of camera footage.
- Investigations of safety incidents.
- Safety meetings; and
- Safety assessments.

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PARTA utilizes a system of checks and balances with pre and post-trip vehicle inspections, as well as frequent, documented inspections of maintenance facilities and tools.

The Chief Safety Officer and the ~~Safety and Security Manager~~ Director of Risk Management are responsible for reviewing the results of the monitoring, for the measures taken when non-compliance or insufficient procedures are identified, and how the information is documented and tracked. Monitoring will be addressed quarterly and documented for the Safety Committee. The Safety Committee, along with the ~~Safety and Security Manager~~ Director of Risk Management, will discuss results from safety reports and audits of safety assessments.

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The Safety Panel will discuss the results of accident investigations. Accident reports are completed by Road Supervisors to determine any factors that may contribute to a safety event, such as equipment failures, weather, human, organizational, and outside factors. Pictures and video footage of accidents are captured and used during a Safety Panel hearing. The ~~Safety and Security Manager~~ Director of Risk Management maintains all documentation of PARTA's investigations, including forms, checklists, and results. The ~~Safety and Security~~

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Manager, Director of Risk Management prepares a copy of necessary documents for the Chief Safety Officer. If safety risk mitigation needs to be implemented, the Chief Safety Officer will assign mitigation and monitoring activities to the appropriate director, manager, or supervisor. These activities may include tracking a specific performance target weekly, monthly, or quarterly through performance evaluations or other activities. The Chief Safety Officer will work with the director, manager, or supervisor to determine the appropriate course of action to modify or manage the safety risk.

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Performance measurement is the regular, systematic collection, analysis, and reporting of data that tracks resources used, work produced, and whether specific outcomes were achieved. In other words, it is a tool to quantify and improve performance and engage and communicate with *PARTA* staff and external stakeholders. The two core functions of performance measurement include monitoring and evaluating progress. Performance can be measured in terms of inputs, outputs, outcomes, and efficiency among many other criteria. *PARTA* utilizes **Safety Performance Targets (Appendix H)** to monitor performance improvement and evaluate progress.

Uses of Performance Targets include:

- Focus attention on performance gaps and trigger in-depth investigations of what performance problems exist.
- Help make informed resource allocation decisions.
- Identify needs for staff training or technical assistance.
- Help motivate employees to continue making program improvements.
- Support strategic planning efforts by providing baseline information for tracking progress; and
- Identify best practices through benchmarking.

Performance targets will be made available to ODOT and AMATS to aid in the planning process. *PARTA* will coordinate, to the maximum extent practicable, with ODOT and AMATS to support the selection of transit safety performance targets. *PARTA* retains all required SMS documentation for at least three years, and this documentation is available upon request by the FTA or other oversight agencies.

See the Safety Performance Targets (Appendix H).

4 SAFETY PROMOTION

PARTA believes safety promotion is critical to the success of SMS by ensuring that the entire organization fully understands and trusts the SMS policies, procedures, and structure. It involves establishing a culture that recognizes safety as a core value, training employees in safety principles, and allowing open communication of safety issues.

PARTA's comprehensive safety training program applies to all *PARTA* employees, as safety is everyone's responsibility. *PARTA* employs dedicated trainers to conduct our training program. The scope of the training received, including annual refresher training, is appropriate to each employee's individual safety-related job responsibilities and their role in the SMS. All employees receive a training manual, which includes appropriate safety training and *PARTA*'s policies and procedures. Each employee is provided classroom and hands-on training during their new hire training.

4.1 Training

During the initial implementation of an SMS, specific training will be required for all employees to explain the agency's safety culture and describe how SMS works. The ~~Safety and Security Manager~~ Director of Risk Management is the resource person for providing a corporate perspective on *PARTA*'s approach to safety management. Once the SMS is implemented, safety training needs will depend on the safety responsibilities of the individual staff members and the nature of tasks performed.

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