



Planning for Greater Akron **AKRON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY**

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March 24, 2022

Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590-9898

RE: *Reimagining the Gateway* East Main Street Corridor Project, Kent, Ohio
2022 RAISE Grant Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) is pleased to show its support for the City of Kent, in partnership with Kent State University (KSU) and the Portage Area Regional Transit Authority (PARTA), in applying for a 2022 RAISE grant for its *Reimagining the Gateway* East Main Street Corridor project. This project will make significant multi-modal improvements to a nearly one-mile car-centric section of East Main Street that includes KSU, entrances to nearby neighborhoods and many food/retail destinations.

The proposed project includes a tree-lined center boulevard, wider sidewalks with a tree lawn buffer, enhanced and more visible crosswalks, shared use paths for bikes and pedestrians, two roundabouts, enhanced lighting, and new bus pull-offs and shelters. These improvements will also provide easier access to PARTA's Central Gateway transit hub in downtown Kent, which will better serve the city's lower income population that often relies on transit as their means of transportation. These enhancements also integrate well with KSU's Gateway Master Plan. By constructing these improvements along East Main Street, it will provide a safer, more vibrant, more useful, and aesthetic corridor that bolsters neighborhood businesses, while maintaining an important connection between the Kent State campus and the community.

Kent is Portage County's largest city, with 61 percent of its residents in the low-and moderate-income range. KSU is one of Ohio's leading public universities with more than 25,000 students on its main campus. Traffic from the community, the university, and visitors has resulted in a five-lane car-centric road congested with motorists, which conflicts with the numerous busses, bikes, and pedestrians. **The majority of this corridor has been listed as the worst crash corridor in the local MPO region since 2014.**

While some short-term measures have been taken to address the congestion, this multi-year project will provide a long-term solution that focuses on multimodal transportation safety and access to a diverse population. When completed, *Reimagining the Gateway* will significantly improve traffic flow for motorists and transit, while reducing speeds and making crossings safer for pedestrians and cyclists. It will also provide reasonable access and enhanced entrances to adjacent properties and neighborhoods.

As a Metropolitan Planning Organization, AMATS understands the role that transportation improvements can play in community transformation by supporting system preservation, transportation safety, and the promotion of transportation alternatives. These goals are reflected in the *Reimagining the Gateway* East Main Street Corridor project, and we are excited to see the continued momentum toward revitalizing one of KSU's major corridors. The project will provide a safer, more vibrant, and more useful corridor that bolsters neighborhood businesses, while maintaining important links between the KSU campus and our communities and neighbors.



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Reimagining the Gateway East Main Street Corridor project is included in *Transportation Outlook 2045*, AMATS long range transportation plan as well as *AMATS FY 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)*.

Reimagining the Gateway aligns with many key components of the RAISE grant program that is a collaboration of local, regional and state entities including the Ohio Department of Transportation and AMATS, the regional MPO. This project will improve safety in the area, enhance the quality of life for area neighborhoods, increase mobility and community connectivity for adjacent disadvantaged communities, and advance sustainability.

Your support and consideration for this vital transportation project is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Baker", written over a horizontal line.

Curtis Baker
Director