

“Moving Stark Forward 2050” Transportation Plan

Every four years SCATS staff update the long-range transportation plan. While the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a working plan for the next four years, the Transportation Plan has a minimum plan horizon of 20 years, making it a conceptual plan of how we envision movement of people and goods in Stark County in the future. This plan marks the first time that the plan horizon has been extended to 2050, midway through the 21st century. How do we see movement in our future, what have residents expressed about their needs and wants, what trends in transportation and planning can we expect to see as we move toward 2050?

Let's begin with some of the more significant projects in major categories:

- **Safety:** the most important goal of SCATS planning is to make our travel safer and one of the most hazardous and complicated intersections is US 62 at Harmont Avenue. Although recently extended offset turn lanes on US 62 have helped reduce accidents, the service roads that parallel US 62 and intersect Harmont Avenue continue to complicate this intersection. W. Tuscarawas Street from Canton through Massillon is a candidate for major improvements at a number of intersections. This is the historical route of the old Lincoln Highway, and a number of driveway access problems reflect this. SR 21 through Massillon is another hot spot and one likely to be studied to identify improvements soon. The high speed limit, congestion, and stop lights on a divided highway result in hazardous intersections through the city. Other intersection improvements are spread throughout the county, where high speed limits contribute to fatal accidents. Roundabouts are used to improve traffic flow while also reducing speeds at high accident intersections.
- **Preservation:** maintaining the existing system is SCATS's next priority. It is far less expensive to maintain and repair than to rebuild. Repaving projects are what the public most often encounters- and paving sooner, rather than later, preserves the roadway foundation. Bridges are the most expensive projects and have a limited life due to salt corrosion. The I 77/US 30 interchange is a complicated combination of under and overpasses that routinely need replacing. Increasing capacity also increases preservation costs as two-lane roads become four, five, and six-lane roads.
- **Capacity/Congestion:** capacity projects are increasingly expensive as purchasing right of ways and environmental remediation costs increase. The construction of housing allotments in previously undeveloped areas in northeast and northwest Stark County drives the need to add lanes to existing roads, improve intersections faced with new traffic, and create new roads in order to safely maintain movement. While extending US 30 from Trump Ave to SR 44 is one of the largest projects proposed in this plan, a number of smaller projects add up very quickly: widening Wales from Hills and Dales to the northern county line; Edison in Hartville from Cleveland Avenue to SR 43; widening Whipple, Frank, Pittsburg, Applegate, and Market where they haven't already been widened; creating a Mega/Portage Road connector. These are the projects necessary to meet the needs of the growing sections of the county.

- **Economic Development/Freight:** In Massillon and Navarre, industrial parks have succeeded in attracting major developments that take advantage of the existing transportation system. To complement these developments, improvements are needed on some roads and intersections in the area including sections of Nave, Navarre, Fohl, and Richville roads. These projects are needed to assist the freight needs of existing and future development. Economic development projects of another type result in entirely different projects. The Hall of Fame Village project centered on the Pro Football Hall of Fame will attract large numbers of attendees at events, attractions to be built, and various sports training camps. This resulted in recent improvements to the I 77 and US 62 interchange, but additional projects will be needed for the anticipated traffic. The city of Canton, in order to drive redevelopment and tourism, will be enhancing the Fulton Road Corridor between the HOF and downtown.
- **Multi-modal:** In the past, road and highway projects were almost developed in a vacuum. Now, in addition to environmental and societal impacts, we take into consideration all modes of transportation and how they interconnect. A number of recent projects have incorporated pedestrian, bicyclists, and public transit riders' needs, and, as these types of projects grow, lessen the need to rely on automobiles to move from point A to B. The city of Canton has been active in promoting "road diets," where excess road capacity has resulted in adding bicycle lanes. These types of projects are continuing, as well as development of the countywide trail and greenway network. The city of North Canton is one of the best examples of this as the Hoover Trail expands connecting neighborhoods to recreational, educational and retail areas.
- **Public Transit:** The simplest means to lessen your carbon footprint is to take advantage of public transportation. This becomes a choice for more residents of the county every day as the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) expands their fleet of fuel cell buses and improves transit service throughout Stark County. With the completion of transit centers in major locations and the completion of the area's first bus rapid transit corridor on Mahoning/12th/Cherry and Walnut, SARTA is poised to improve service with additional transit corridors and/or express routes. With technological improvements, SARTA is looking to test additional on-demand and other types of services throughout the region, as well as to expand their infrastructure for maintaining their fleet and services.
- **What Else Do We Need to Watch For?** How will ride share services and self-driving vehicles impact future plans and automobile use? How will sensor equipped vehicles improve safety and our need to improve intersections? How will parking and congestion be affected by rideshare, public transportation, and self-driving buses? We literally don't know what we don't know. Who would have guessed that some automobile manufacturers will be phasing out internal combustion engines as soon as 2030 (Volvo), 2035 (GM), and 2040 (Toyota). Are these realistic, what other changes are coming? Well, that's one reason this plan is updated every four years.

Please go to **tinyurl.com/movingstarkforward** to review the plan as well as the SCATS page on the SCRPC website for more details: <https://www.starkcountyohio.gov/transportation>. We look forward to the continued participation of the public as we revise and update our plans.