

## **1. Applicant**

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## **2. Project Co-Sponsor - Not Applicable**

## **3. Connecting Communities Planning Study**

Planning Study Title – Akron University / Kent State Rail Connection

Brief Description – Development of a comprehensive plan to connect the University of Akron and Kent State University by rail using the Freedom Secondary Rail Line from the City of Kent, through the City of Tallmadge and ending in the City of Akron. This project will parallel the Freedom Secondary Hike and Bike Trail through the City of Tallmadge. This project will also examine the alternatives for providing access to the rail line and the Freedom Secondary Trail for students of both universities and residents from the area.

This access could also provide alternative means of transportation to the various employment centers along the rail line as well as schools, parks and possible connections to multi-model centers.

Summary of Expected Final Products – this project will develop a plan to:

- Connect the two universities by rail
- Connect the City of Kent's Gateway Project to the City of Akron's Central Business District as well as the Downtown Akron Connectivity Study area.

## **4. Project Map – Please see attached**

**5. Describe the planning area boundaries and size. Describe the existing transportation and land use issues. Define the problems facing the area.** – The planning area boundaries will run from Kent State University through the City of Tallmadge and end in the City of Akron at the area bounded by the Central Business District and the University of Akron.

The primary mode of transportation between the University of Akron and Kent State University consists of vehicular traffic running south on to State Route 43 along Interstate 76, through the central interchange to the University of Akron exit on Route 8. A secondary route consists of traveling southwest along State Route 261, through the Tallmadge Circle and following Southwest Avenue into the City of Akron along Buchtel Avenue to the University of Akron.

Land uses in this area primarily consist of urban core and suburban city development including extensive commercial, industrial and residential development.

The problem facing this area is continued vehicular traffic congestion and continued urban sprawl.

**6. Define the purpose of the study, and the expected outcomes (access management, streetscapes, and pedestrian facilities).**

The purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive plan for rail access between the two universities and the urban centers of the City of Kent and the City of Akron as well as to identify various other inter-modal connections to the rail line such as the Freedom Secondary Trail, the Portage Inter-modal facility in the City of Kent and the Metro Transit Authority Intermodal Transit Center in the City of Akron. The plan will also identify access points to be developed to provide increased pedestrian access to the system as well as potential park and ride sites.

The expected outcomes will provide for a plan of implementation including:

- Identify construction costs to refurbish and complete the rail access.
- Access management.
- Identify pedestrian access-ways and access points.
- Identify potential parking facilities and park and ride facilities.
- Identify improvements to neighborhoods to allow for easy access to the system.
- Develop costs estimates for each phase of construction.
- Identify potential safe streetscapes to enhance the various access points.
- Identify potential funding sources for the various aspects of the plan.
- Develop a time line for completion

**7. Discuss how the study addresses the following three principles:**

- a. Provide more transportation choices.

This project will provide an alternate means of transportation between the two universities, the City of Kent, The City of Tallmadge and the City of Akron. This project should help to eliminate many of the individual trips between these two universities and these urban centers. By eliminating individual vehicular traffic between these destinations, this project will help to reduce the nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve the AMATS area air quality and help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region.

- b. Enhance economic competitiveness

This project will help to enhance economic competitiveness through the creation of an alternative system to commute in a timely fashion to educational facilities and to major employment centers. This system should meet the needs of current residents and the needs of future residents. The ease of access between these education centers, employment centers and communities should help to increase business access to these areas.

**8. Explain the public's involvement in the study. What residents or groups will be included and invited to provide input?**

The initial project discussion will take place with various representatives from the City of Tallmadge, City of Akron, City of Kent, the University of Akron, Kent State University, Metro Regional Transit Authority, Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority and the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study. There will be well advertised public hearings to discuss the conceptual design of the system with residents in all the communities as well as students at both universities and the AMATS Citizen Involvement Committee. The project will also be discussed during the conceptual design stages of the project with the Planning and Zoning Commissions of the City of Kent, the City of Tallmadge and the City of Akron. The City of Tallmadge has been very successful in organizing and getting community participation for projects that have a large scale impact on the community.

**9. How will your community plan to implement this planning study? Describe potential funding sources that could be used for implementation.**

The plan that will be developed will identify specific projects, will prioritize the projects, develop costs and identify potential funding sources and the project sponsor. Project funding avenues to be explored include CMAQ, STP, TEP, HSP, CDBG, Safe Route to School and OPWC.