

# TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT



**Connecting Cleveland  
2020 Citywide Plan**

# TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT

## OVERVIEW

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Like many cities that developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Cleveland grew because of its proximity to good transportation routes: in Cleveland’s case, its location at the conjunction of two navigable waterways, Lake Erie and the Ohio & Erie Canal. The construction of a number of railroad lines in the mid-1800s accelerated Cleveland’s growth. Without these transportation routes, neither raw materials nor prospective new residents could easily have reached Cleveland from outside the region, nor could things produced in the Cleveland area have been shipped to remote markets.

As the city expanded in area, economic activity, and population, its transportation infrastructure was under pressure to keep pace. As a result, much of the infrastructure that remains in place today was built between the late-1800s and the mid-1900s. During that period, industrial and commercial establishments shipped and received goods via the numerous railroads that served the city or by horse-drawn wagon; people moved on foot or by electric trolley. Indeed, much of the city’s development occurred with the conveniences of freight railroads and streetcar routes in mind. These arteries, after all, carried the lifeblood of the city—the one, raw materials and manufactured products; the other, workers and customers—and did so with singular efficiency. Purveyors of goods and services, naturally, wanted to be located along the streetcar routes; industries, along the railroad right-of-ways; and working families, within walking distance of those jobs.

Enter the internal combustion engine. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a large portion of the goods produced in Cleveland were being moved by truck; people, by auto or public transit; and portions of the freight and intra-city passenger rail system were being dismantled. A superior network of local and regional roadways, bridges and rapid transit facilities, as well as Interstate highways, were planned and developed. In the latter part of the century—as non-motorized forms of transportation became increasingly popular—a network of multi-purpose trails, bicycle lanes, and other bike/pedestrian facilities were developed; others are now in the planning stages.

All of these resources, plus its commercial airports and water port facilities, have given Cleveland a sound base of transportation infrastructure on which to build in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Key improvements to this base, including expansion where necessary, and maintenance of the entire system will likely be the thrust of transportation infrastructure investments in the coming decades.



Cleveland developed and prospered due to its proximity to good transportation routes. Served by navigable waterways, several cross-country railroad lines, and regional and Interstate highways. [The Innerbelt (I-90) Bridge over the Cuyahoga River and the Norfolk Southern Railroad in the Flats]

## ASSETS

*The transportation network is a region's life blood and quality transportation facilities can enhance its economic vitality. Fortunately, Cleveland has developed a multi-modal transportation network that provides access to its commercial, industrial, and residential areas. The elements of this network include the following:*

**Streets:** The City contains approximately 300 miles of arterial and collector roadways and 1,000 miles of residential city streets which provide access to all properties. It also includes 499 bridges (with the City bearing responsibility for the maintenance of 126 of them).

**Freeways:** The City is served by nearly 50 miles of limited access highways including three mainline freeways including I-90, I-77, I-71 which provide access from points east, west, and south giving Cleveland direct freeway links to such places Boston, New York, Chicago, and the Pacific Coast. It is also served by I-480, I-490, and SR 176 (Jennings Freeway) which act as important connecting links between the mainlines and which provide access to other portions of the City. In addition, it has access to I-80 (Ohio Turnpike) several miles to the south and I-271 through the eastern suburbs.

**Mass Transportation:** The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) was created in 1975 with the merger of the Cleveland Transit System and several suburban lines. The network currently includes 650 buses serving 101 routes, 108 rail transit cars serving 52 stations on 34 miles of track (3 lines) as well as a fleet of paratransit vehicles to accommodate people with physical or mental disabilities. Countywide, the system serves approximately 55.5 million passengers annually. In 1968, Cleveland was the first American city to connect its Central Business District to its airport via rail rapid transit. In 1996, RTA completed a light rail transit extension from its Downtown terminal to the lakefront and the attractions located there.



Completed in 1996, RTA's Waterfront Line was constructed to connect the City's Downtown mass transit terminal to the new attractions located along the lakefront) [RTA Waterfront Line train near the North Coast Harbor station]

**Railroads:** The City of Cleveland is served by two national mainline freight railroads (Norfolk Southern and CSX) and a number of smaller industrial and switching railroads that provide additional access to local commercial and industrial customers throughout the area. The City is also provided with inter-city passenger service by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) at its lakefront station.



Cleveland Hopkins International Airport handles 259,000 take-offs and landings annually (2005) making it northern Ohio's busiest airport. [A commercial jetliner arriving at Hopkins]

**Airports:** Two general aviation airports are located within the City of Cleveland including Cleveland Hopkins International Airport and

Burke Lakefront Airport. Hopkins was opened in 1925 as the first municipal airport in the United States. It handles nearly 264,000 take-offs and landings and nearly 12 million passengers annually (2004) and is a hub for Continental Airlines. Located downtown, Burke is a general aviation facility that opened in 1947 and handles approximately 84,000 take-offs & landings (2004). Burke also serves as host to two major annual events, the Cleveland Grand Prix auto race and the Cleveland National Air Show.

**Port Facilities:** The City of Cleveland is served by the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority, which is the third largest port on the Great Lakes. It includes significant facilities both along the Lake Erie shoreline as well as along the northerly most five miles of the Cuyahoga River, which is dredged to a depth that allows the passage of bulk carrying ships. Since the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, Cleveland has been connected by water to international markets worldwide. The Port handles 12-16 million metric tons of cargo annually which represents approximately \$1 billion in imports/exports.



The Port of Cleveland, third largest on the Great Lakes, includes facilities on Lake Erie as well as the Cuyahoga River. [A Great Lakes bulk carrier at the Whiskey Island dock on Lake Erie]

## CHALLENGES

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*Cleveland, nevertheless, faces a number of specific challenges in the area of Transportation & Transit, which need to be addressed:*

- **Inadequate Truck Access to Major Highways:** Because many of the companies that made Cleveland a highly successful manufacturing center were (and are) located near rail lines, without direct access to major roadways, both outbound and inbound trucks have had little choice but to utilize local residential streets, thus disrupting formerly quiet neighborhoods and taking a heavy toll on the streets themselves—not to mention often having to navigating circuitous and confusing routes. Despite the fact that the area’s freeway system is now complete and provides excellent access to and from other parts of the state and country, access to that system remains a problem faced by many businesses, especially those located in older industrial areas away from interchanges.
- **Issues Facing Public Transportation:** Despite a high rate of automobile usage and a well-developed roadway network, a large segment of the city’s population is not being adequately served. The reality is that many residents either lack access to a car, are too young to drive, or (with the rising cost of gasoline) choose not to use one for all trips. The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority operates an extensive system of bus and rapid transit lines throughout Cuyahoga County that provides transportation for tens of thousands of such residents each day. However, shifts in residential and employment patterns, and the aging of the transit infrastructure—along with the fact that a smaller share of the traveling public now uses public transportation—constitute trends that must be addressed by RTA and the City in order to provide better service to residents who are



dependent on that resource or would use it if it offered better connections to necessities and opportunities.

- **Growing Desire for Non-motorized Access to Amenities:** Residents who, in growing numbers, seek alternatives to dependence on gasoline-powered vehicles—and/or opportunities for improving personal fitness and good health—are complaining of insufficient means of non-motorized access to Cleveland’s amenities, both natural and built. While a system of multi-purpose trails has been developed in area parks and along certain corridors, many of the city’s attractions still lack adequate bicycle or pedestrian access or are accessible to only the most determined riders and walkers. In order to create a more vibrant, livable urban center, bicycle and pedestrian access to all areas of the city must be given a new priority.



Although the city is served by a number of multi-purpose trails, many area attractions are not adequately accessible by non-motorized means. Priority must be given to the construction of additional facilities to enhance bicycle and pedestrian connectivity. [Multi-purpose trail in the Cleveland Metroparks’ Rocky River Reservation]

- **Deteriorating or Outdated Infrastructure:** Perhaps the most critical of all the issues Cleveland faces as it strives to create the superior transportation infrastructure the city will need to compete in the coming decades, involves outmoded or deficient facilities. Much of the existing infrastructure was constructed before World War II and will need to be repaired or replaced over the next several years. Keeping the existing system in good condition while adding or expanding critical elements is a formidable challenge that must be met.



Much of Cleveland’s existing transportation infrastructure was constructed prior to World War II. In order to ensure that the city is able to remain accessible and economically viable, this aging infrastructure will continue to require ongoing maintenance, upgrading or replacement) [Fulton Road Bridge over the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and Big Creek]

- **Access is Key:** As can be seen from the foregoing, the transportation and transportation infrastructure of a city is, and must be, shaped by the changing needs of its residents and its economy. History also shows that a city’s transportation infrastructure has a huge impact on access—or lack of access—to opportunities and has a direct impact on the quality of life in its neighborhoods. Roads, bridges and public transportation must therefore be planned in the light of those needs and that potential impact. Indeed, the transportation infrastructure Cleveland puts in place or refurbishes over the next decade or so can, if it is wisely planned, support the City’s ability to achieve its goals in other areas of city life, such as providing appealing housing options and “neighborhoods of choice,” better access to

jobs and amenities, a supportive (and attractive) environment for business, and a more vibrant economy. By the same token, certain decisions made in these other areas can strengthen the sustainability of the city's transportation infrastructure.

- **An Integrated Strategy:** What is needed, therefore, is an integrated plan and set of stated policies that pulls together these related interests and uses them to support one another, while addressing the challenges identified above.

## POLICIES & STRATEGIES

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*The goal of the City's efforts in the area of Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure is to provide a variety of transportation options that serve residents of all income levels and that promote economic development while protecting the quality of life in neighborhoods. With this goal and the challenges identified above in mind, the Connecting Cleveland 2020 Plan therefore sets forth a comprehensive set of policies, each addressing a key issue, and strategies through which we might take immediate steps toward their implementation:*

- 1) **Transit-Oriented Development.** Target high-density development in proximity to transit stations and major bus stops in order to support public transit and strengthen the competitiveness of urban neighborhoods.
  - a. Work with the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) to target areas in which large tracts of vacant or underutilized land exist around current and future rapid transit stations, exploring Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities at each.
  - b. Encourage high-density residential development around transit stations.
- 2) **Mixed-Use Development.** Encourage mixed-use development that reduces dependence on motorized vehicles to reach employment and shopping destinations.
  - a. Work with developers to provide residential options that include above-street-level apartments, including lofts and live/work units, in retail districts (mixed use development) and housing within walking distance of shopping areas, major employers or public transit.
- 3) **Mass Transit.** Support improved bus and rapid transit service to serve individuals who require or prefer mass transit and to reduce the pollution and roadway congestion caused by use of personal automobiles.
  - a. Use public funding and employer incentives to strengthen and maintain public transit services across the city and region as alternatives to private vehicles.
  - b. Fund innovative, incentive-based programs (such as tax credits) to encourage the use of alternative transportation modes such as public transit, walking or biking.
  - c. Promote alternative modes of travel, including transit, that are cost-effective and less harmful to the environment than the private auto.

- d. Encourage the use of hybrid vehicles to replace traditional fuel automobiles.
- 4) **Neighborhood Bus Service.** Provide convenient bus service to residents who depend on mass transit to reach such neighborhood destinations as shopping, recreation and medical services.
- a. Encourage RTA to continue, and expand, its “Community Circulator” program.
- 5) **Transit Amenities.** Work with the RTA to upgrade the condition of bus shelters, transit stations, and transit vehicles, and to provide improved information on schedules and routes.
- a. Assist RTA in the implementation of their transit waiting environment improvements program within the City of Cleveland’s borders. (Please contact RTA’s Department of Planning and Programming for further information regarding that program.)
- 6) **Transit Line Extensions.** Consider strategic extensions of existing mass transit lines where significant ridership increases are likely.
- a. Explore the possible extension of the Waterfront Line to connect the northeastern neighborhoods and suburban areas to Downtown.
  - b. Explore the possible creation of new rapid transit lines westerly through the Cudell neighborhood toward the cities of Lakewood and Rocky River and southeasterly through the Corlett and Union Miles neighborhoods.
- 7) **Bicycle Travel.** Develop a citywide and regional network of safe bicycle routes connecting residential areas to work, school, shopping, and recreation destinations; and make bicycle accommodation a routine component of roadway and development projects.
- a. Make Cleveland a more bicycle-friendly city by actively encouraging public and private development and maintenance of facilities that allow easy bicycle access to all of its amenities.
  - b. Provide good bicycling infrastructure and facilities around shopping areas, parks and other attractions to enhance accessibility, improve personal health, and preserve the environment.
- 8) **Pedestrian Travel.** Make Cleveland a model for pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, featuring conveniently located sidewalks and paths, benches and streetside development patterns.
- a. Actively encourage the development and maintenance of facilities that allow easy pedestrian access to all of its amenities.
  - b. Provide good pedestrian infrastructure and facilities around shopping areas, parks and other attractions to enhance accessibility, improve personal health, and preserve the environment.

- c. Plan new pedestrian-friendly developments in areas where people have transportation choices such as rapid transit train and bus service.
- 9) **Maintenance of Existing Infrastructure.** Cleveland’s transportation infrastructure needs to be maintained and updated to accommodate shifts in modes of transportation and in residential, business, and commercial patterns to enable the city and its opportunities to remain economically viable and accessible to all.
- a. Work with regional, state and federal agencies to give priority to the maintenance of existing transportation infrastructure in the allocation of transportation funding.
  - b. Improve the conditions of key transit stations by targeting those in substandard condition and replacing them with updated designs that incorporate new technological features.
  - c. Emphasize greater efficiency and cleanliness in all public transportation vehicles and facilities.
  - d. Enhance the aesthetic quality of all new and rebuilt transportation facilities whenever possible. Such enhancements could include the utilization of special pavement textures and/or colors, adding vegetation, adding unique design elements or paint colors or the inclusion of public art.
- 10) **Ports.** Ensure Cleveland’s long-term viability as a hub for air- and water-based transportation, while reserving appropriately located land for waterfront recreation.
- 11) **Regional Land Use Planning.** Coordinate roadway and transit development planning with land use plans designed to limit the negative impacts of urban sprawl and promote more efficient use of existing infrastructure and community facilities.
- a. Promote regional and statewide planning that combines the transportation, land use, and environmental efforts of all affected parties.
  - b. Support greater public involvement in the transportation and land-use planning process.
- 12) **Industrial Access:** Develop roads that provide direct truck access between freeways and industrial areas, bypassing residential neighborhoods where truck traffic degrades the quality of life.
- a. Implement key access improvements in neighborhoods that make it easier for trucks and other commercial vehicles to access major roadways, bypassing residential neighborhoods, where feasible.
  - b. Implement existing plans for access roadways.
  - c. Plan for new access roads, such as the Bessemer Road (II) Project, in Collinwood, Kinsman, Central and other neighborhoods where industry operates in close proximity to residential areas.



- 13) Job Access.** Provide transit service between central city neighborhoods and employment concentrations in the city and in outlying areas.
- a. Work with RTA, project engineers, and developers to ensure that new and existing places of employment can be accessed by RTA vehicles and encourage RTA to serve these areas on a regular basis.
- 14) Traffic Calming.** Institute “traffic-calming” measures in residential areas and neighborhood shopping districts where existing traffic volumes and speeds create safety hazards and unpleasant conditions for residents and shoppers. Effective traffic-calming measures include lane narrowing, speed humps, rumble strips, curb extensions, small deflector or channeling islands, roundabouts, chicanes, marked bicycle lanes, advisory signage, tighter corner radii, special pavement textures (cobble, bricks, etc.) and markings to designate special areas, and trees planted along the street to create a sense of enclosure and a pedestrian-oriented environment.
- a. Implement traffic-calming measures in neighborhoods where existing traffic levels degrade the quality of life for residents and discourage residential or commercial redevelopment.

Major transportation improvements that are proposed in the Citywide Plan can be found in the [Capital Improvements](#) section.

For more information regarding:

- **The City of Cleveland’s Bicycle Plan:** See the Recreation chapter of this document.
- **Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority’s services and planning activities:** Visit [www.gcrta.org](http://www.gcrta.org).
- **Port of Cleveland & Cuyahoga County:** Visit [www.portofcleveland.com](http://www.portofcleveland.com).
- **Cleveland Hopkins International Airport:** Visit [www.clevelandairport.com](http://www.clevelandairport.com).
- **Key Road & Bridge Construction Projects** for the current year: See City Projects at [www.city.cleveland.oh.us/index1.html](http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us/index1.html).