

# AMERICAN PROGRESS – 64 YEARS APART

by Benjamin Zera, Project Manager, ORC

On August 6th, 1954, The Akron Expressway held a ribbon cutting ceremony to commemorate Akron's first "super road." With over 50,000 attending the event, hopeful onlookers witnessed American Progress in Akron, OH. The monumental project was more than nine years in the making and displaced over 500 families. The construction of the highway's North Expressway Viaduct, a 1,500-foot-long bridge over the Little Cuyahoga Valley, accounted for approximately one-third of the overall \$9 million project budget (about \$80 million today).

"Each of us is realizing more every day how important fast transportation to our destinations has become," then Ohio Governor, Frank Lausche, told the crowd that afternoon. "We'll spend \$275 million a year for the next eight years to make it easier and safer to travel in this state."

Fast forward 64 years: Despite significant change in the nature of transportation in America, the bridge remains a vital link for commuters and commerce to government, medical, university, and other commercial facilities in downtown Akron and the surrounding region.



A young boy gets a sneak peek of the Akron Expressway before the ribbon cutting festivities on Aug. 6, 1954.

Image credit: Akron Beacon Journal

*inspiring confidence in progress...*



Image credit: Creative Design Resolutions, Inc.

The past six decades have seen 12 U.S. Presidents, the passing of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act (1970), and the slow deterioration of significant American infrastructure constructed during the post-World War II era. As such, the bridge that once attracted 50,000 people to the groundbreaking ceremony now carries over 115,000 vehicles daily, leading to The Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT's) recent determination to replace the bridge after years of continued maintenance.

Among the more dramatic infrastructure changes in the last 64 years is the considerable increase in infrastructure costs. Governor Lausche noted in 1954 that the State of Ohio planned to spend \$275 million on transportation initiatives each year, over eight years. Today, the construction of these two new bridges alone is expected to cost \$121 million, as a part of ODOT's annual budget for transportation that now operates well into the billions. At ORC, our vision is "inspiring confidence in progress." This vision is clearly illustrated by our role on the North Expressway Viaduct bridge replacement project. ■ ■ ■