

NOACA Technical Memorandum

Regional Transportation System Status Report



The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is a public Organization serving the counties of and municipalities & townships within Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina (covering an area with 2.1 million people). NOACA is the agency designated or recognized to perform the following functions:

- **Serve as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), with responsibility for comprehensive cooperative and continuous planning for highways, public transit, and bikeways, as defined in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.**
- **Perform continuous water quality, transportation-related air quality and other environmental planning functions.**
- **Administer the area clearinghouse function, which includes providing local government with the opportunity to review a wide variety of local or state applications for federal funds.**
- **Conduct transportation and environmental planning and related demographic, economic and land use research.**
- **Serve as an information center for transportation and environmental and related planning.**
- **At NOACA Governing Board direction, provide transportation and environmental planning assistance to the 172 units of local, general purpose government.**

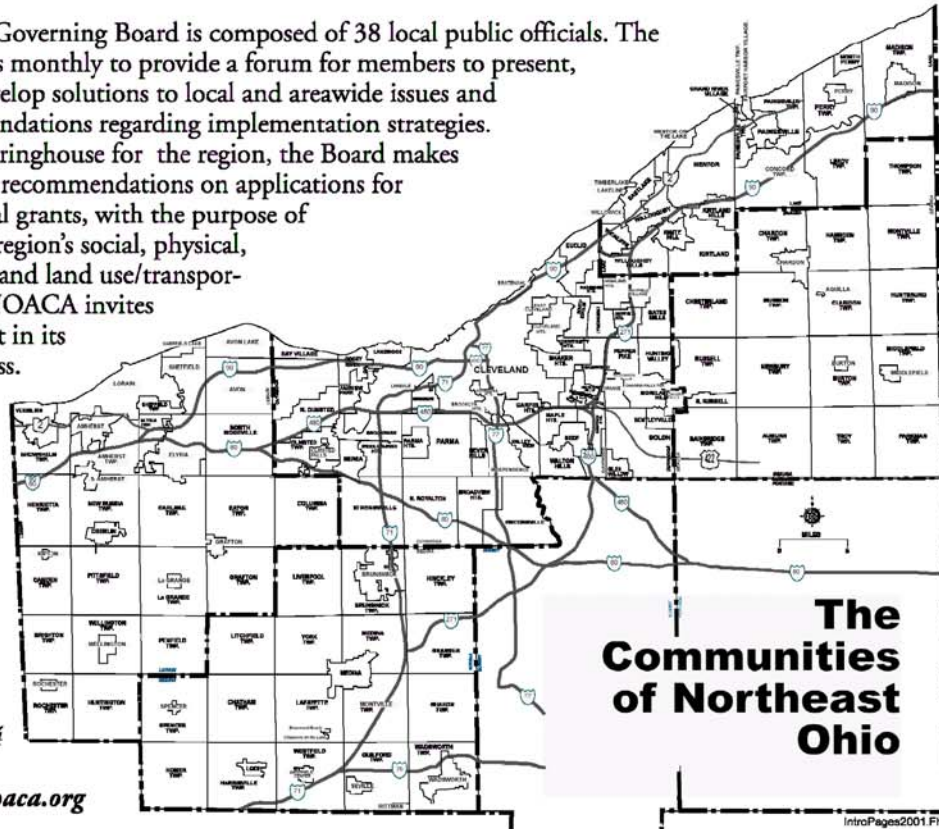
The NOACA Governing Board is composed of 38 local public officials. The Board convenes monthly to provide a forum for members to present, discuss and develop solutions to local and areawide issues and make recommendations regarding implementation strategies. As the area clearinghouse for the region, the Board makes comments and recommendations on applications for state and federal grants, with the purpose of enhancing the region's social, physical, environmental and land use/transportation fabric. NOACA invites you to take part in its planning process.

Feel free to participate, to ask questions and to learn more about areawide planning. For more information, call:

(216) 241-2414

or log on at:

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**Regional Transportation System Status Report
Technical Memorandum**

June 2003

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BOARD PRESIDENT

HOWARD R. MAIER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Abstract

This document provides a summary of the work conducted for the Regional Transportation System (RTS) project. The RTS project was established through NOACA's Overall Work Program to identify the current NOACA transportation system, assess its condition, and make recommendations for future planning. This memorandum identifies the activities conducted during FY 2003 as well as those that will be undertaken during the next fiscal year.

**Regional Transportation System
Status Report – Technical Memorandum
Fiscal Year 2003**

Introduction

Federal regulations require NOACA ensure a multimodal, system-wide approach to regional transportation planning. This means that NOACA must sequentially:

- 1.) identify the current system
- 2.) assess its condition
- 3.) make recommendations for future planning.

The Regional Transportation System (RTS) project was established for staff and stakeholders to perform these activities, and to coordinate the planning for all modes of transportation, including motor vehicles, mass transit, bicycles, pedestrian and rail freight. Recommendations developed from this project will be incorporated into NOACA's next Transportation Plan update, which is due in mid-2005.

System Identification

In identifying the current regional transportation system, it is easy to see that it includes the roads and bridges we travel on by car, bus, truck or bike. However, looking more comprehensively, we see that the regional system also includes the rail transit we ride, the traffic signals and signs that direct our travel, and the pedestrian walkways we use.

Staff approached the system identification task by creating an inventory of the numerous systems and their significant facilities. Data and GIS maps were used to help identify the significant transportation facilities and routes within the region. These maps serve as a tool to verify NOACA data with other agencies. In addition, they provide a venue to focus on individual aspects of the overall system. Some of the maps produced in FY 2003 were:

Federal Aid Functional Class of Highways	Highway Traffic Counts
Number of Lanes of Highways	Rail Freight Lines and Facilities
Traffic Analysis Zone Reconfigurations	Fixed Route Transit Service
Multi-use Paths	Bicycle Transportation
Congestion Management System	Truck Volumes on Highways
Existing Major Employment Centers	Industrial Parks
Proposed Major Development Sites	Park and Ride Lots
Freeway Travel Speeds	Safety Maps on Highways (crash rates)

Samples of these maps are included in Attachment 1 of this memorandum.

Stakeholder Coordination

One major purpose in developing the above maps was to coordinate with other stakeholders in the NOACA region to help identify the existing system and begin discussions regarding the current conditions and future needs. In May and June of 2003, staff met with all five County Engineers that serve within the NOACA region. These meetings provided an opportunity for staff to verify data and inquire about the Engineers' processes for assessing needs within their counties. Staff shared maps, information on the 2000 Census, changes in the urbanized boundaries, and proposed changes to Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ). In addition, maps identifying congested highway sections within each county were discussed at the coordination meetings. Maps highlighting existing employment and proposed commercial development were also reviewed.

The meetings gave insight into the County Engineers' planning processes, which in most cases consisted of yearly pavement inspections, traffic counts, and safety studies. In some cases, expected commercial or residential growth influenced their planning of projects as well. Annual bridge inspections occur in each of the counties, as required by state law. Most counties followed a 5-year plan for maintenance, resurfacing and other improvements.

The stakeholder meetings were helpful to NOACA staff by providing both data and an understanding of the aspects of project planning. The coordination of data allows for more accurate assessment of the system. For example, all County Engineers perform traffic counts on a regular basis. These counts will augment the counts NOACA receives from the State and provide better, more accurate traffic flow maps and congestion evaluation. In addition, NOACA staff have agreed to provide the County Engineers with NOACA's Congestion Management System (CMS) findings in order to highlight the county's congested roadway sections.

System Assessment

NOACA intends to use the results of the above system identification effort to help assess the region's transportation infrastructure. This spring, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) began collecting data on the condition of all roadways that are included on the Federal-Aid system in our region. This effort is being coordinated with NOACA's Regional Pavement Management (RPM) program.

ODOT also maintains a database concerning the condition of bridges throughout the state. This database is also used by agencies other than ODOT to maintain and document a record of bridge inspection and condition on non-state highways. These databases serve as important tools in the assessment of the region's roads and bridges, and will be incorporated into this RTS effort.

In addition to the system preservation perspective, the system must also be assessed by its ability to move people and goods in an efficient manner, in order to develop and retain a sustainable regional economy. Part of this assessment includes an analysis of current and future congestion on the transportation system. NOACA staff completed a CMS manual of practice (Second Edition in September 2002) that provides guidelines for assessing system performance and identifying areas that experience or will likely experience congestion. This CMS manual of practice provides for a systematic process to address traffic congestion on the region's transportation network.

Next Steps

As noted above, the RTS project is tied directly to the 2005 NOACA Plan update. Over the next year, staff will continue meeting with stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the transportation system, its condition and future needs.

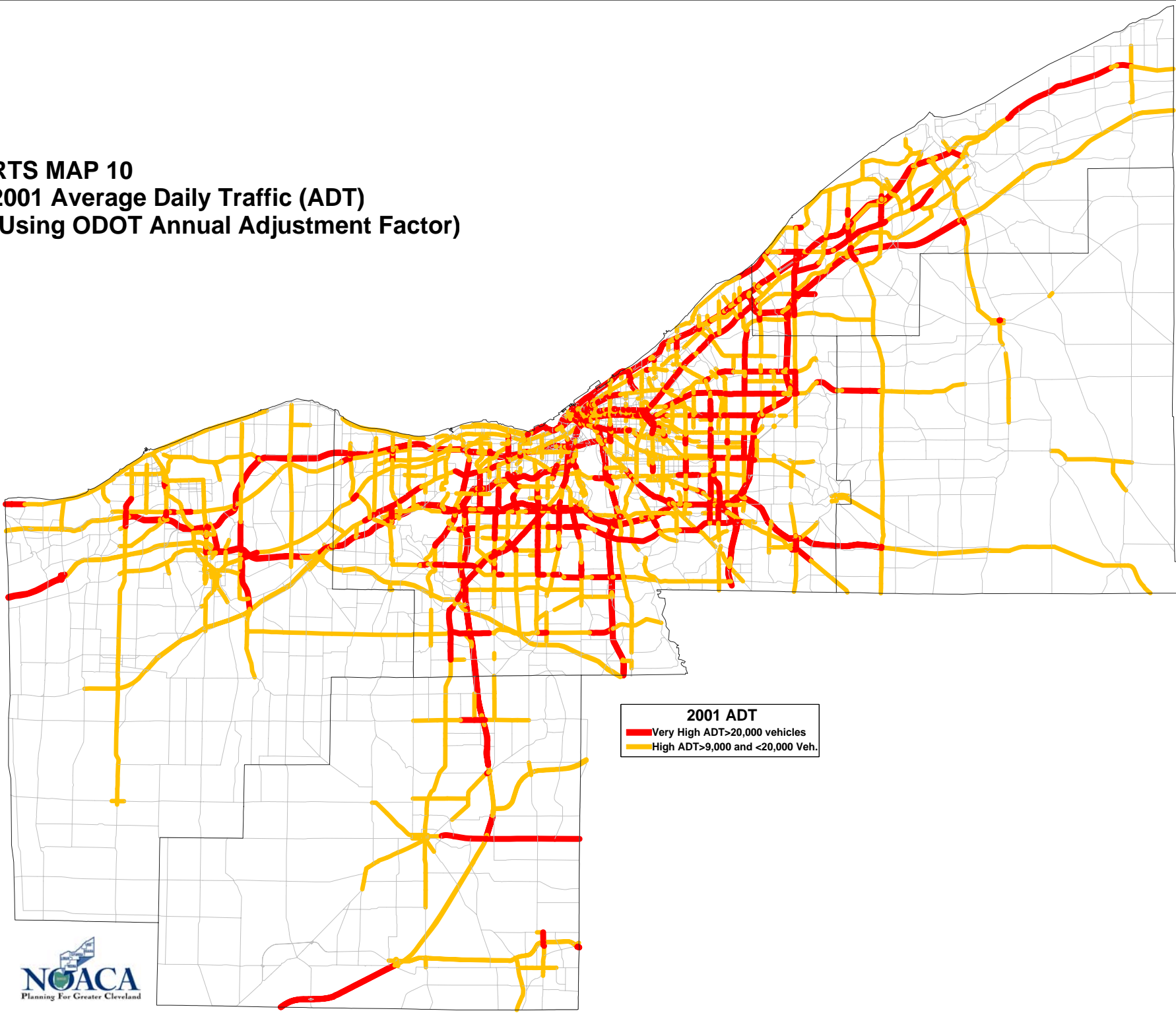
During the next fiscal year, staff will more thoroughly inventory and assess the transit infrastructure within the region. There are a number of potential sources to use. ODOT maintains a Public Transportation Facilities and Equipment Management System or PTMS. This database gathers and reports information concerning condition and cost of all public transit vehicles and other public transit assets. This database will help in determining the needs of the transit agencies within our region. Another potential source of transit data comes from the National Transit Database (NTD). All urban transit systems must complete a NTD report on an annual basis. The NTD gathers operating information of both cost and amount of service provided. Information concerning capital expenditures by the transit agencies is also available. The NTD report may help determine, among other things, annual expenses by transit agencies.

Gaining an understanding of our region will allow for a Plan update that reflects the existing mobility infrastructure and addresses current and future needs. Over the next year, NOACA staff will work to become familiar with the available databases, and will consider the development of additional information to help plan for an effective Regional Transportation System. Ultimately, this project will help NOACA in developing both the Plan update and assist in the prioritization of available federal funds for projects within the region.

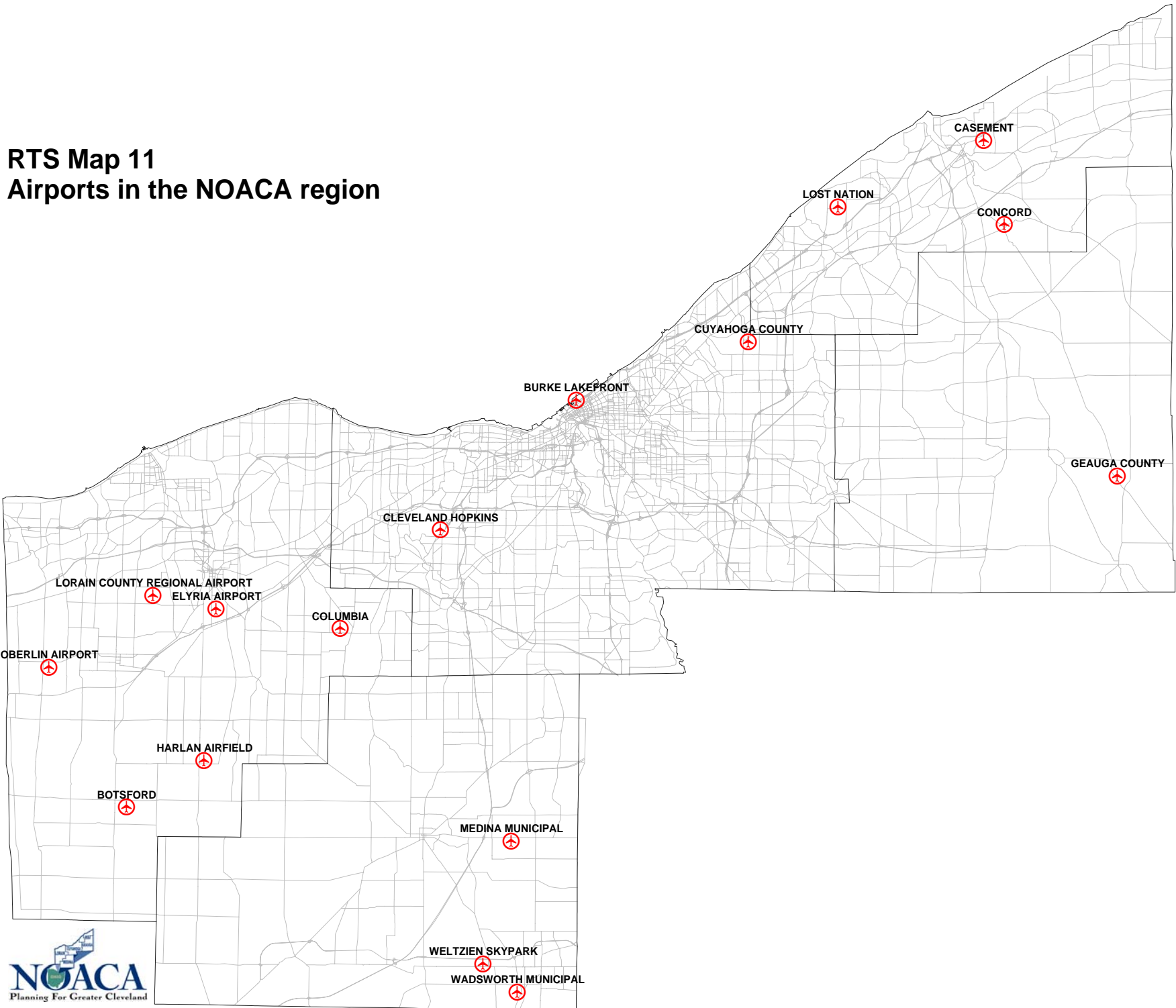
Attachment 1

Samples of county and regional maps created for the Regional Transportation System project

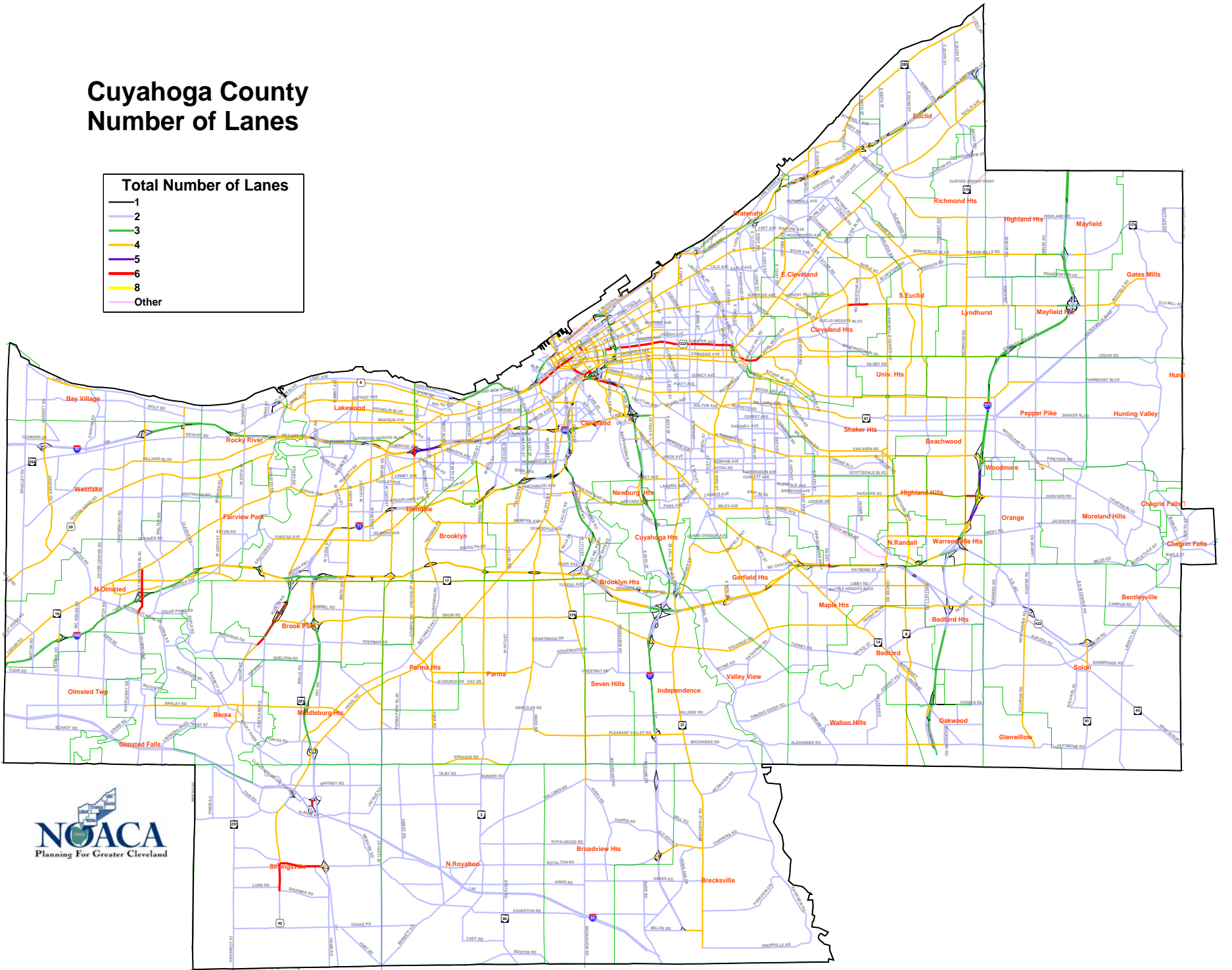
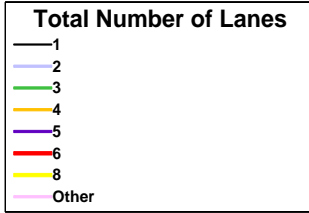
RTS MAP 10
2001 Average Daily Traffic (ADT)
(Using ODOT Annual Adjustment Factor)



RTS Map 11 Airports in the NOACA region



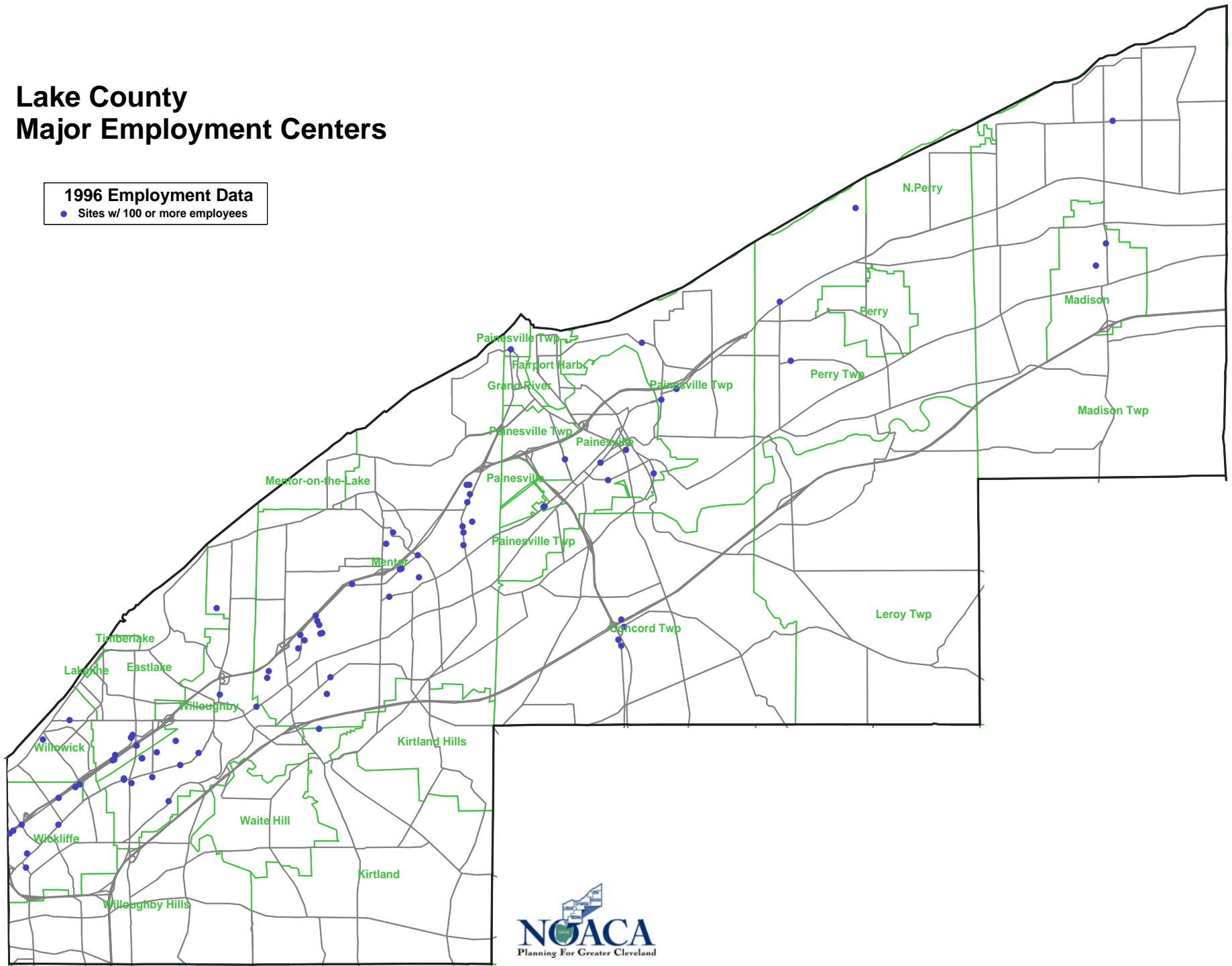
Cuyahoga County Number of Lanes



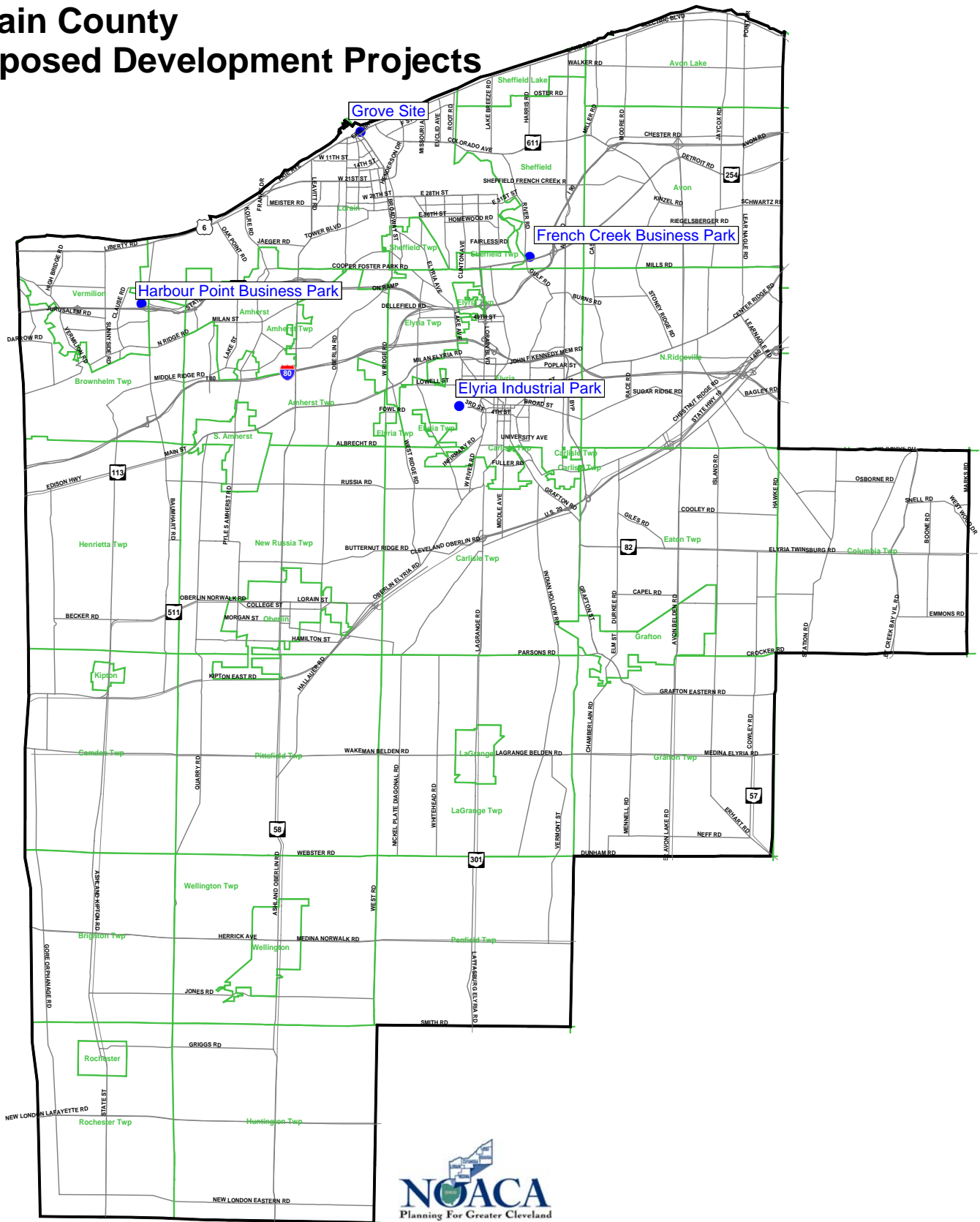
Lake County Major Employment Centers

1996 Employment Data

- Sites w/ 100 or more employees



Lorain County Proposed Development Projects



2000 Medina Tiger Map

