

NOACA

Technical Memorandum

Findings and Recommendations of the NOACA Transportation/Water Quality Task Force

Approved by the NOACA Board September 10, 2004
(Resolution No. 2004-041)



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.**

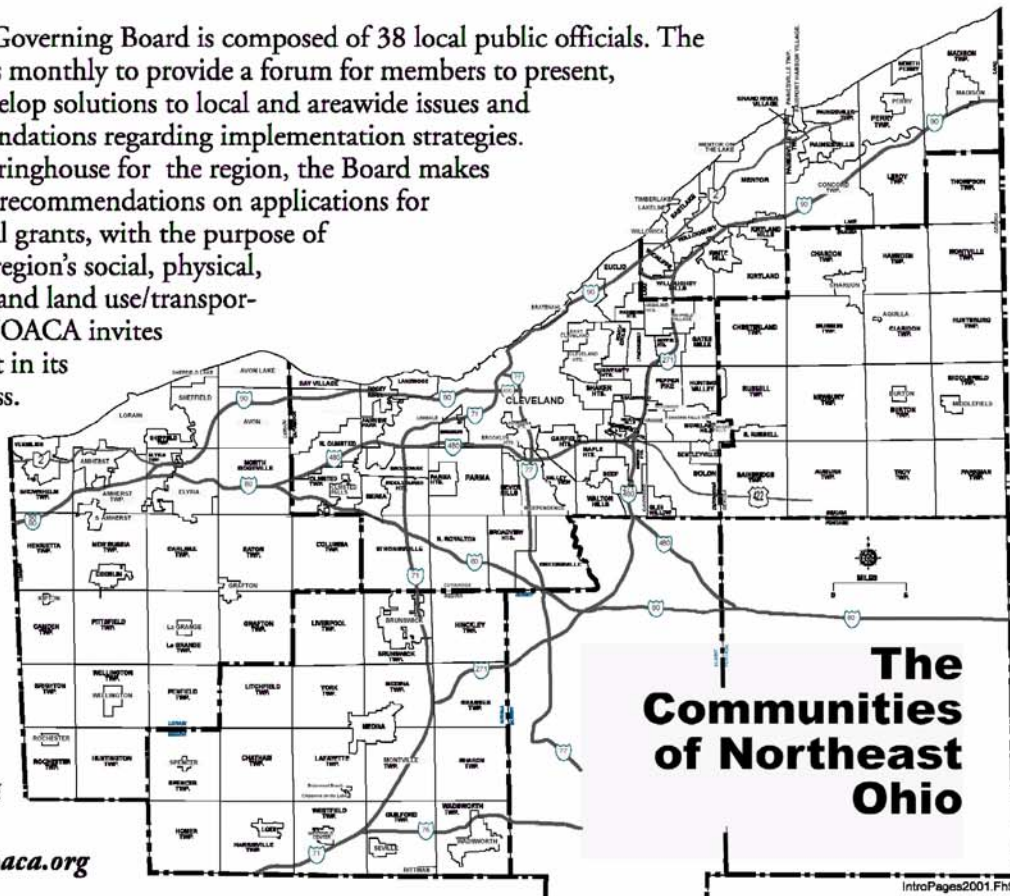
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1) Title & Subtitle: Findings and Recommendations of the NOACA Transportation/Water Quality Task Force	2) NOACA Report No. TM-04-08
3) Author(s) NOACA Transportation/Water Quality Task Force Contributors: John Beeker, Ph.D; Blythe Eaman, Jim Armaline	4) Report Date September 2004
5) Performing Organization Name & Address Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency 1299 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44114-3204 Phone: (216) 241-2414 FAX: (216) 621-3024 Web site: www.noaca.org	6) Project/Task No. 6158 (FY 2004)
	7) NOACA Contract/Grant No. ODOT/FHWA
8) Sponsoring Agency Name & Address Ohio Department of Transportation 1980 W. Broad St., Box 899 Columbus, OH 43216-0899	9) Type of Report & Period Covered (July 1 2003 – June 30 2004)
	10) Sponsoring Agency Code
11) Supplementary Notes Federal funding for this project was provided by the Federal Highway Administration and administered by the Ohio Department of Transportation.	
12) Abstracts This report documents the findings and recommendations of a multidisciplinary task force of the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the NOACA region addressing how water quality and watershed concerns can be better taken into account in regional transportation planning and review processes.	
13) Key Words & Document Analysis A. Descriptors: water quality, watersheds, metropolitan planning, transportation planning B. Identifiers/Open Ended Terms	
14) Availability Statement NOACA	15) No. Pages
	16) Price

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**Approved by the NOACA Board September 10, 2004
(Resolution No. 2004-041)**

Prepared by

NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY

Principal Author: NOACA Transportation/Water Quality Task Force

**DANIEL P. TROY
BOARD PRESIDENT**

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The preparation of this publication was financed through grants received from the Federal Highway Administration and the Ohio Department of Transportation and appropriations from the counties of and municipalities within Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina. The contents do not necessarily reflect official views or policies of the U.S. Department of Transportation or the Ohio Department of Transportation. This report does not constitute a standard or regulation.

Abstract

This report documents the findings and recommendations of a multidisciplinary task force of the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the NOACA region addressing how water quality and watershed concerns can be better taken into account in regional transportation planning and review processes.

NOACA Transportation/Water Quality Task Force Findings and Recommendations

Task Force Objective

To work with staff and transportation implementers on the development of planning tools that can assist in the assessment of water quality impacts of transportation plans and projects.

Task Force Findings

Transportation Related Water Resource Impacts in the Northeast Ohio Context

1. The NOACA region has a number of important environmental resources—wetlands, class 3 headwaters streams, and other high quality aquatic environments that are relatively undisturbed.
2. Concerning NOACA’s regional population, over the next 30 years big shifts in population are expected to occur to the region’s periphery, especially along interstate corridors. In consequence, demands for transportation infrastructure can be expected to follow shifts in the region’s population.
3. NOACA’s most recent 208 Water Quality Management Plan update concluded that during the next twenty years much of the population growth at the community level will be occurring in areas of relatively low development and high but vulnerable water quality. This has implications for public infrastructure investments that encourage this development.
4. NOACA’s transportation system is largely built out. Much of the focus will be on reconstruction of the existing infrastructure. Future transportation capacity projects are expected to be relatively limited: not many new highway corridors, not many new freeway interchanges, and some new lanes.
5. Transportation construction in the NOACA area has adversely impacted water resources. Among these impacts are direct impacts such as alterations to streams caused by bridge crossings, stream discontinuities caused by drop structures and culverts, increases in volumes and rates of storm water runoff caused by increased in pavements and alterations to the natural drainage systems in highway rights of way, degraded water quality from storm water runoff, and indirect impacts associated with new development enabled by the public investment such as loss of wetlands, degraded high quality streams, and adjacent riparian zones.
6. Given the primary focus of much of the future transportation investment on rebuilding infrastructure, there is an opportunity to mitigate past water quality impacts and to reconnect fragmented aquatic and terrestrial habitat.

Transportation Planning Environment

1. NOACA is currently reforming its project acceptance and review procedures through the RTIP and internal project review process to better take into account multi-modal, quality of life and environmental impact issues.
2. Within the state's current transportation project planning process, project sponsors tend to gather limited and general environmental data early in the process, and this creates challenges for the meaningful consideration of environmental concerns by NOACA and other project stakeholders. Environmental concerns tend to be taken into account after the planning phase and only after projects are fairly well defined. This is in part due to the way in which the NEPA process is followed, but in part due to imperatives to develop projects that are responsive to travel demand, economic and completed in a timely fashion.
3. ODOT and local project sponsors are now required to comply with Ohio EPA's recently established Phase II Storm water program requirements. This provides an opportunity to raise the level of awareness in the transportation community concerning the issue of direct and indirect impacts on water resources caused by transportation construction.
4. Federal transportation policy has made water quality mitigation an eligible element in federally funded transportation projects.

Task Force Recommendations

1) Education of Transportation Community

Education of the region's transportation community on the impacts on water resources, and the benefits of avoiding or ameliorating those impacts should be emphasized as a critical element in encouraging new practices that address this problem. Education should be the first step in the implementation of any new strategy.

2) NOACA RTIP

Water quality impacts should be explicitly identified in the NOACA Regional Transportation Investment Policy (RTIP) as a focal concern to be addressed in transportation projects approved and invested in by the NOACA Board. See Exhibit 1, RTIP Statement on Regional Water Quality Concerns. Tools such as the water quality questionnaire should be referenced in the RTIP (See Recommendation below). NOACA's WIN agreement process provides another opportunity for advancing transportation project planning and development that is responsive to the region's water quality concerns.

3) NOACA Project Sponsor Interaction and Project Review

Enhancements to NOACA Project Reviews are imperative if these issues are to be meaningfully considered. NOACA's new review procedure provides several opportunities for enhancements.

a) Early Coordination

Water quality concerns should be included as an element in early coordination meetings. Concerns may encompass direct or indirect impacts or retrofit issues. These meetings provide an opportunity for education of local community representatives and to give notice about project review concerns NOACA may raise down the line.

b) Sponsor Project Application

Project sponsors should be asked to address water quality issues in project applications as a condition for further consideration by NOACA. See Exhibit 2, NOACA Water Quality Questionnaire. The initial focus of this tool is to identify streams affected, environmental problems that may exist, but not on solving issues.

c) Project Sponsor Incentives

NOACA should look into incentives for project sponsors to develop critical data on potentially impacted resources to assist NOACA consideration of projects in areas of concern. NOACA's new Livable Communities Initiative is one method of encouraging local implementation.

d) Project Planning Review

Project specific issues of water quality impacts should be taken into account during project planning review. See Exhibit 3, NOACA Project Review Guidelines. Tools for project screening and evaluation should be developed that enable this process. Consultation with Local Water Quality and Watershed Expertise should be a part of this phase.

e) NOACA Monitoring of Some Key Projects

As a feedback mechanism to facilitate Board understanding of the impact of this initiative, NOACA should monitor certain projects that embrace important retrofit ideas, or that involve regional environmental resource issues, to ascertain the degree of success with addressing critical issues identified. This can be accomplished through the NEPA process and should provide important insights about implementation experience.

4) Water Quality Benchmarks Study

A Task Force Work group has been charged with developing a strategy for understanding the secondary impacts of transportation investments and proposing a mechanism for providing feedback to the NOACA Board on these impacts. See Exhibit 4, Charge to Water Quality Benchmarks Study Design Team. The work group has worked on understanding a) which resources are of most critical importance, and of these which are vulnerable because they lack a protective regulatory framework, and b) which areas of the region are of particular concern because of likely development including transportation investments. This group has determined a critical need for systematic data on critical resources in the NOACA region and provision of feedback to the NOACA Board, and is developing a framework for a pilot study to address these issues. The efforts of the Benchmarks Work Group is still a work in progress and it is expected that its recommendations will be forthcoming later this year.

Regional Resource Data Development

Data on some of the most critical environmental resources in the region is sketchy. NOACA should encourage the development of a comprehensive robust set of data, especially data on class 3 wetlands and headwaters streams to under gird objective systematic analysis of impacts on critical resources.

Benchmarks Pilot Study

A pilot study should be undertaken that inventories critical environmental resources on one or more areas of development concern, benchmarks water quality resource conditions, and tests a NOACA Board feedback mechanism.

5) Piloting of CRCPO-USGS GIS Decision Tool

CRCPO and USGS are developing a GIS-based planning tool in the NOACA area with funding from the Ohio Lake Erie Protection Fund and USEPA that should be available for beta testing in the summer of 2004. This tool includes a number of features that should aid transportation project planners and local development project planners to understand the potential environmental impacts of projects under consideration and possible best management practices. The Task Force recommends that this tool be tested and evaluated by transportation project sponsors of a variety of different project types. Users should be asked to share their experience with NOACA so that refinements to the tool can be suggested to enhance its value to local sponsors and NOACA.

6) Evaluation of Water Resource Impacts in Long Range Plan 2005 Update

NOACA is preparing a 2005 update to its long range Transportation Plan. This provides an opportunity for an ongoing water quality/transportation collaborative approach. There are several theoretical means of providing input to the plan concerning water quality impacts to better integrate 208 Plan concerns and Transportation Plan concerns:

- a) Elaboration of water quality impact concerns in the plan vision.
- b) Input to the travel demand model. There are difficulties with this given absence of a robust data set on water quality resources, limitations of the NOACA model and the lack of a national example.
- c) Evaluation of the outputs of the travel demand model on water quality resources. This may be possible but work is needed on a methodology.
- d) Narrative discussion concerning the importance of water resources to the NOACA community and the potential for guiding development that is protective of these resources.
- e) NOACA plan policies or goals that encourage transportation investments that are protective or restorative of the region's water resources.

7) Continuation of the Water Quality/Transportation Collaboration

A number of tasks have been identified that warrant consideration of a continuation of the collaboration between water quality and transportation concerns embodied by this task force. The Task Force is recommending the establishment of an ongoing committee or council consisting of NOACA Board members, members of both the Transportation Advisory Committee and the EAC Water Quality Subcommittee, the members of which should be appointed by the TAC chair in consultation with the Chair of the Water Quality Subcommittee. This group would work with the NOACA staff in the following areas:

- a) assist on infusion of education of transportation community on water quality concerns and assess project sponsor experiences in responding to these concerns;
- b) provide assistance to project sponsors to address Phase II needs;
- c) assist staff in asking and discussing project specific questions during PPR process and formulating recommendations for TAC consideration;
- d) facilitate testing and evaluation of CRCPO/USGS tool;
- e) oversee implementation of benchmarks study;
- f) provide input to the environmental scoping process of major projects in which NOACA has an interest;
- g) oversee drafting of water resources impacts chapter in Long Range Plan update; and
- h) propose further refinements to water quality transportation planning collaboration.

NOACA is encouraged to jointly staff this effort with transportation and water quality program staff. This committee (or council) should provide regular reports to the TAC and the Water Quality Subcommittee.

Attached are the following Exhibits:

Exhibit 1 Proposed RTIP Statement on Water Quality

Exhibit 2 NOACA Water Quality Questionnaire

Exhibit 3 Water Quality Review Guidelines for Project Planning Review and Scoring

Exhibit 4 Charge to Water Quality Benchmarks Work Group

Exhibit 1

Proposed Amendments to the NOACA Regional Transportation Investment Policy

1) On Page 17 in the section describing documentation needs for Transportation Plan Application, add the following item:

“Water Quality- What are the water quality impacts of the project (See NOACA Initial Water Quality Questionnaire and Appendix 10: Water Quality Impacts of Transportation Projects.”

2) Add new “Appendix 10: Water Quality Impacts of Transportation Projects” adapted from the report of the NOACA Water Quality/Transportation Task Force.

Exhibit 2

NOACA Initial Water Quality Questionnaire

Preface:

This questionnaire is intended a model for use by NOACA in its project application process. The intent is for project sponsors to address water quality issues in project applications as a condition for further consideration by NOACA. The initial focus of this tool is to identify streams affected, environmental problems that may exist, but not on solving issues. Note items with asterisks have been defined in the glossary of terms provided below.

Purpose:

To understand project water quality and watershed impacts.

To provide project sponsors an early indication of watershed issues of concern.

General project information

Project description –Use existing project summary information.

Number of lane miles added or reduced (what about median).

Likely stream crossings.

Estimate of area of grassed or wooded space lost or gained

Potential environmental impacts

Identification of wet lands or head water streams crossed

Applicable environmental controls

Is the project located in a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) Phase 2 Storm water regulated area?*

Is the project subject to a storm water construction permit?

Are there any discharges to Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) regulated waters?*

Are there any discharges to a Section 303(d) listed stream segment?*

Are NOACA 208 Water Quality Management Plan identified sensitive waters affected?

Are Clean Water Act Section 404 and 401 approvals likely to be required?*

Does the project have the potential to contribute significant increases of storm water to a receiving stream?

Will the project trigger coastal zone management consistency review under Ohio Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Program?

General planning information

For analysis zone, provide description of current land use and zoning.

Is there a description of sanitary and storm sewer system in the above described analysis zone?

What does NOACA 208 study show relative to plans for sewerage of the area? What plans exist for water supply system in the area?

Are there any programs are in place to minimize impacts such as changes to ground water recharge, loss of headwater streams, warming of storm water, loss of riparian buffers?

Identified environmental issues and anticipated mitigation

Are there areas in project right of way anticipated for storm water management practices?

Stakeholder involvement

Has a general description of project impacts that identifies environmental differences between alternatives been provided for public review and comment?

Have any stakeholders expressed environmentally related concerns or issues?

Have down stream communities on potentially impacted streams been notified of the project?

Glossary of Terms

Phase II of the NPDES Storm Water Permits Program - Rules recently promulgated by USEPA which will require municipalities in urban areas to implement a series of measures to control polluted runoff from separate storm sewer systems.

Section 303(d) List Stream Segment - The Clean Water Act requires each State to identify those stream segments where effluent limits imposed on point source discharges are insufficient for the stream to attain water quality standards.

Section 401 Certification - A state (Ohio EPA) certification required by the Clean Water Act for any activity which discharges dredged or fill materials into the waters, including wetlands, of the United States whereby the State identifies that water quality standards will not be violated by the subject activity. A Section 404 Permit from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is also required for these activities. If Ohio EPA does not issue a 401 permit, the Corps may not issue a 404 permit. There are a number of activities involving "de minimis" (negligible) discharges that are covered by general permits.

Section 404 Permit - See "Section 401 Certification".

Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) - A TMDL is the amount of pollutant that can be assimilated by a water body without a violation of a water quality standards, and includes wasteload allocations for point sources, load allocations for nonpoint sources, and a margin of safety.

Exhibit 3

NOACA Project Review Guidelines Water Quality Issues

Preface for Task Force Review:

These guidelines represent the discussion of the Task Force pertaining to guidelines for NOACA staff project reviews. This material is supplemental to the questionnaire developed for distribution to project sponsors at the outset of project development. The Task Force recognizes that review guidelines will be evolving, and are to be further developed in the course of actual review practice. This discussion is intended to inform that process.

Purpose:

Understand project water quality and watershed impacts environmental impacts and identify opportunity to remediate existing watershed ecological issues in coordination with proposed project. Also to generally raise the quality of discussion regarding policy issues related to transportation planning. Provide information to understand overall water quality and watershed project impact and to understand significant differences between alternatives.

General project information

- Area disturbed.
- In general terms what is expected project work at each stream crossing.

Potential environmental impacts

- Description of current stream morphology and hydrology at crossing location. Provide photos of existing conditions.
- Added storm water load based upon unit load modeling from added lane miles and other transportations related features.
- Loss of current pollutant removal features --- e.g., grassed swales/median strip presently providing environmental benefits.
- provide general description of anticipated work at each stream crossing.

Applicable environmental controls

Describe any local storm water ordinances anticipated to affect project design?

Please identify environmental permit requirements.

regulated waters of TMDL identified and targeted pollutants? Describe how the project intends to comply with TMDL targets and how the project impacts TMDL identified issues. For 303(d) listed stream segment, how is the project expected to affect impaired stream segments?

What general standards and guidelines will be used to control erosion during construction?

What permit and permit requirements are applicable?

Provide general description of project activity that are likely to trigger Clean Water Act Section 404 and 401 requirements?

Have any flooding and erosion problems been identified for down stream segments receiving increased storm water?

General planning information

- For area within ½ mile of interchange, (i.e., analysis zone) what is description of current land use and zoning? (Note that greater anticipated traffic count of intersection use may create a larger analysis zone.)
- Where drainage to a stream or river is increased are there any known down stream flooding problems? What is the source of this information? (i.e., NEORS Regional Intergovernmental Drainage Evaluation (RIDE) study.)
- If the project is being designed to handle expected increased traffic flow what is the projected land usage change associated with this increase?
- Is the above land use change consistent with expected land use change as expressed in sewerage plans included in the NOACA 208 plan?
- What are the environmental impacts expected from these land use changes?
- Are there increased loads of chemicals attributed to urban uses, such as nutrients and insecticides?

(Note: To most effectively link transportation projects and long term secondary impacts one should consider ways to understand to better understand the links between transportation projects and land uses changes that either drive or result from transportation projects. From projected changed land uses one can begin to project induced hydrologic changes and other urban stressors such as pollutant loading.)

Identified environmental issues and anticipated mitigation

- Provide general information concerning any anticipated mitigation actions.
- Provide calculations of cost estimates for mitigation of environmental impacts.
- Identify non right of way areas that could be used for storm water management.
- For bridge crossings does the project anticipate collection and treatment of storm water from surface of bridge deck? What are the loads and water quality impacts from anticipated discharges?
- Are low impact deicing practices anticipated? Describe.

Exhibit 4

Charge to Water Quality Benchmarks Study Design Team Draft as of April 6, 2004

Background

In its recent discussions concerning I-71 widening in Medina County, the NOACA Board discussed the impacts that freeway improvements in this area have had on water quality and land use. In the resolution approving the I-71 widening, the Board directed the Water Quality/Transportation Task Force to continue its development of recommendations regarding how to more thoroughly assess the water quality impacts of transportation projects, including a strategy for water quality benchmark/monitoring to assess secondary impacts, and to complete this by June 2004.

The NOACA Clean Water 2000 Plan identified a number of areas of concern in the region where development is anticipated to occur in high quality stream locations.

Ohio EPA has embarked on a program of headwaters stream evaluations to ascertain critical areas for protection.

Charge to Work Group

The Task Force Chairman is forming a technical work group to formulate a study design and a funding implementation strategy for a program of water quality benchmark/monitoring to assess secondary impacts in major transportation/development corridors in the region. The intent is to establish a foundation of critical information to assist the NOACA Board in understanding the impacts of its regional transportation planning decisions on the area's critical water resources.

The charge to the work group is to:

- Concerning major transportation corridors expected to have more rapid growth and that traverse critical resources (as defined in the attached), consider the following issues:
 - what resources are most at risk;
 - what protective strategies are most appropriate;
 - what data gathering strategies are most likely to be effective with respect to providing adequate information for decision making;
 - acknowledges that a critical gap exists in knowledge about the location and extent of certain critical resources, that an inventory of resources is a necessary first step that must precede monitoring
 - what are the pros and cons of a pilot area approach to the problem.
- Recommend a framework for water quality assessment that can assist in understanding the impact of future development/land use changes. Development of a protocol will require more specificity in terms of site-specific causes and effects and relative risks.
- Recommend a framework for identifying growth corridors.

- Include a feedback mechanism that utilizes information gathered, informs and provides a basis for protective actions by local communities and the NOACA Board.
- Identify funding sources and stakeholder organizations that can be approached for support of this effort and assistance in its implementation.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2004-041
(ACCEPTANCE OF NOACA
TRANSPORTATION/WATER QUALITY
TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS)**

**RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD
OF THE
NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY**

WHEREAS, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is an organization of local public officials of the five Ohio counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina established to perform certain regional planning functions under local direction and in accordance with federal and state mandates; and

WHEREAS, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the five Northeast Ohio Counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina, is presently engaged, through Governing Board action and staff technical work, in the continuing phase of the cooperative, comprehensive planning process designed to meet needs, requirements, goals and objectives of national, state and local governmental levels, all within this nation's federal transportation system; and

WHEREAS, NOACA is the areawide planning agency designated by the Governor of Ohio pursuant to Section 208 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, as amended, to engage in water quality management planning in the Northeast Ohio Lake Erie Basin, including the Cuyahoga, Chagrin, Grand, Rocky and Black River basins, on behalf of the counties of and municipalities and township within Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina; and

WHEREAS, the Chairman of the Transportation Advisory Committee at the request of the NOACA Governing Board appointed a Task Force consisting of members of the TAC and the Water Quality Committee and chaired by Bill Skowronski, NOACA Board member and Chief, Ohio EPA Northeast District Office to investigate the impacts that transportation projects have on watersheds and water quality, and to make recommendations for addressing these issues.

WHEREAS, the Task Force met a number of times over a period of two years and has now completed its work with a report summarizing its findings and recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the NOACA Transportation/Water Quality Task Force Findings and Recommendations have been reviewed and recommended by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and by the NOACA EAC Water Quality Subcommittee.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Governing Board of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, consisting of thirty-eight principal officials of general purpose local government throughout and within the Counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina that:

**RESOLUTION NO. 2004-041
(ACCEPTANCE OF NOACA
TRANSPORTATION/WATER QUALITY
TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS)**

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Section 1: The NOACA Transportation/Water Quality Task Force Findings and Recommendations are hereby accepted for implementation by NOACA.

Section 2: The Executive Director is hereby authorized to transmit a certified copy of this resolution to appropriate Federal, State and local agencies.

Certified to be a true copy of a Resolution of the
Governing Board of the Northeast Ohio Are-
awide Coordinating Agency adopted this 10th
day of September 2004

Secretary: _____



Date Signed: _____

9/10/4

NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY

MEMORANDUM

TO: NOACA Governing Board

FROM: Bill Skowsonski, Chair,
NOACA Transportation/Water Quality Task Force
John Beeker, Environmental Planning Director
Blythe Eaman, Plan Forecasting Team

DATE: September 1, 2004

RE: NOACA Transportation/Water Quality Task Force Findings &
Recommendations

Background

The Transportation/Water Quality Task Force formed in September 2002 in an effort to investigate the impacts that transportation projects have on watersheds and water quality, and to make recommendations for addressing these issues. The Task Force was chaired by Bill Skowronski, District Chief of Ohio EPA's Northeast District Office, and included representatives of NOACA's Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and Water Quality Subcommittee, as well as NOACA staff from both the Transportation and Environmental divisions.

The objective of the Task Force was to develop planning tools that would assist in the assessment of water quality impacts of transportation plans and projects. During the first year that the Task Force met, the focus entailed learning about the scope of the water quality problem in Northeast Ohio. Through invited speakers and a field study, the Task Force gained a better understanding of the issues and resources. During the second year, the focus was to formulate strategies to address the identified problems and opportunities. The Task Force has now completed its work and is seeking TAC approval of its findings and recommendations.

Conclusion

The Transportation/Water Quality Task Force's two-year study and final product provides reference and guidelines for NOACA to better incorporate transportation and water quality planning. The outgrowth of the Task Force will provide further opportunity for education, facilitation of the development of new tools, incorporation of new findings into transportation project planning, and further development the transportation/water quality connection.

Task Force Members:

William Skowronski, Chair
Brian Driscoll, Cuyahoga County Engineer's Office

James Gills, Lake County Engineer
Charles Hambley, CRCPO
John Januska, Ohio EPA
John Mottl, ODOT
Thomas Linkous, ODOT
Lester Stumpe, NEORS
Lynn Luttner, USEPA
William Watkins, Lorain County Engineer's Office

Jim Armaline, John Beeker, and Blythe Eaman, NOACA staff