Public Interaction Policy

- Public Involvement
- Public Information
- Public Access

Updated April 2011
The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is a public organization serving the counties of and municipalities and 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 current transportation law.
- 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 44 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:
http://www.noaca.org
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Planning and Programs Division Directors:  
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Jonathan Giblin, Director of Programs  
William Davis, Associate Director of Planning
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| Public Interaction Policy  
Public Involvement, Information and Access | TR-11-02 |

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| Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency  
1299 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44114-3204  
Phone: (216) 241-2414  
FAX: (216) 621-3024  
Website: www.noaca.org | 6252 |

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| Ohio Department of Transportation  
1980 W. Broad St., Box 899  
Columbus, OH 43216-0899 | FY 2011 |

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<td>The NOACA Public Interaction Policy (PIP) contains policies related to public involvement, information and access. The PIP is essential to the management and development of the agency and its programs. The intent of this policy is to comply with the public involvement guidelines prescribed in the SAFETEA-LU.</td>
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I. Introduction

What is NOACA?

NOACA is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina counties. As the MPO, NOACA is responsible for coordinating transportation planning for northeast Ohio and for developing policies, plans and programs that manage federal transportation funds for road, bridge, transit, bicycle and pedestrian projects in the region. NOACA is also required, under federal surface transportation law, to inform and educate the public about transportation issues, involve the public in its planning processes, and solicit public comments on the agency’s work.

What is the Public Interaction Policy?

The Public Interaction Policy (PIP) outlines NOACA’s policies related to public involvement, public information and public access in compliance with the proactive public involvement requirements of title 23 Code of Federal Regulations section 450.316, the public participation plan requirements of the federal Safe, Accessible, Efficient Transportation Act—A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and other applicable federal regulations and guidelines on transportation planning (see Appendix A for the most recent federal regulations). It spells out how NOACA engages and informs the public in metropolitan transportation planning, how the public can become involved in the planning process, and how they can access NOACA’s information and services.

The Public Interaction Policy includes the required “Public Participation Plan” that describes the processes and tools NOACA uses in its communications, public outreach and public involvement efforts.
II. Public Interaction Policies

NOACA Public Interaction Policy Statement

NOACA’s policy is to reach out proactively to the regional community, informing and educating the public, and encouraging its participation and involvement in all areas of the agency’s planning work. NOACA makes a concerted effort to include all citizens, groups, agencies and transportation providers within northeast Ohio, especially those who are typically underrepresented in transportation planning and those with special needs.

This section of the Public Interaction Policy includes details about various policies relating to Public Involvement Activities.

NOACA engages the public proactively when the agency develops and updates major planning documents, in particular the 20-year Transportation Plan, the four-year Transportation Improvement Program, and the annual Overall Work Program. NOACA also proactively engages the public when infrastructure projects undergo review. It accomplishes this by:

- Providing information and education to the public
- Public involvement activities
- Giving timely public notice of public meetings, pending Governing Board actions and major documents
- Providing public access to agency documents
- Considering public comments

Information and Education

In its public outreach efforts, NOACA’s policy is to provide timely information and materials to educate the public about the metropolitan transportation planning process. NOACA attempts to include in these efforts all citizens, affected public agencies, transportation agency employees, community organizations, and other groups specified by federal regulations through the news media and other means of communication. NOACA is committed to engaging traditionally underserved populations, including, but not limited to, low-income and minority populations.

Public Involvement

NOACA will conduct its public involvement activities in accordance with its Public Participation Plan (Appendix B). This includes effectively communicating the impacts and possible outcomes related to complex regional transportation project and plan proposals to the participating public.
To enhance this communication, NOACA uses visualization techniques, which may include, but are not limited to:

- Aerial photography or satellite imagery, alone or with mapping overlays
- Photographic depiction or computer-generated simulations of proposed projects
- Photographs of projects illustrating proposed improvements
- Interactive online maps that allow users to:
  - Click for specific project data and information
  - Compare proposals
  - View cost estimates
  - View staff and committee comments and recommendations
  - View project status for Board-approved projects
- Printed, three-dimensional, or raised print maps, diagrams, or architectural figures
- “Before and after” photos, simulations, maps, diagrams or drawings
- Scenario planning exercises

**Timely information**

NOACA maintains a public outreach database to facilitate direct and timely contact with its various audiences, including the general public and the groups indicated in Appendix A. E-mail announcements, e-newsletters, NOACA website postings and postal mail are typical methods of contact.

NOACA maintains a list of print and broadcast media in its five-county area to provide timely information to the general public. The agency regularly issues press releases about monthly Governing Board meetings, actions taken, and news and information about its planning work. Most important, NOACA makes every effort to publicize opportunities for public involvement and comment. All NOACA Board and committee materials are available for public review on NOACA’s website, www.noaca.org.

NOACA attempts to hold public outreach/involvement events in each of its five counties on a regular basis. The goal of these events is to provide the public with opportunities to view and discuss current and proposed plans, programs and projects.

Specific timelines and schedules for public involvement are included in NOACA’s participation plan (Appendix B).

NOACA evaluates its public involvement efforts regularly, including a periodic review of its *Public Interaction Policy*. 
Public Access

NOACA will ensure that access to its offices, meetings, public records, plans and planning documents are consistent with Ohio’s Open Meetings Act and Public Records Act.

Meetings and Meeting Minutes

All NOACA Governing Board, committee and council meetings are generally open to the public; however, NOACA Executive Committee meetings occasionally enter into closed sessions to discuss personnel issues, competitive bidding issues or other issues requiring confidentiality. NOACA conducts all its meetings in accordance with the State of Ohio’s Open Meetings Act.

NOACA will provide public notice (usually one week) in advance of all public meetings through such means as:

- The NOACA website: www.noaca.org
- Direct mailings (e-mail and/or postal mail)
- E-mail newsletters
- Press releases
- Advertising

NOACA staff takes minutes and makes audio recordings at all public meetings. NOACA will make copies of approved, official minutes and recordings available upon request in accordance with its policies.

In compliance with state law, photography and video recording are permitted where such actions do not unduly interfere with the public meeting. The chair of any NOACA public meeting will direct such activity and make all reasonable accommodations.

Requests for Information

Individuals may review past and current transportation and environmental planning studies and materials at the agency during normal business hours.

- Copies of materials are available at reproduction and postage costs consistent with the State of Ohio’s Public Records Act.
- Selected interim products, draft documents available for public comment, and final documents are also available at www.noaca.org.
- While many older documents may no longer be available on NOACA’s website, NOACA will provide the public with electronic versions of these documents upon request at no charge.

The public may also request services and information from NOACA. Examples include traffic data, project status information, accident data and more. Individuals and organizations seeking information should first visit NOACA’s website (www.noaca.org). If unable to find
the information, they should then contact NOACA’s service request specialist at servicereq@mpo.noaca.org, or at 216-241-2414.

NOACA makes every effort to respond to requests for information in a timely manner. Simple requests may take up to three business days, while complex requests may take much longer or be deferred until staff is available. In rare instances, NOACA may decline information requests that require extensive analysis, or charge for such requests.

Formal requests for public records must be in written form and addressed to:
Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency
1299 Superior Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
Attention: Legal Counsel

NOACA Offices

NOACA works to ensure that its building is compliant with the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. NOACA staff tries to ensure, whenever possible, that off-site meeting locations also meet ADA guidelines and are accessible by transit.

Special Needs

NOACA will make every effort to arrange for translation, sign language or other special assistance at meetings for individuals with special needs who request them at least three business days before the meeting.

NOACA’s website includes a link to language interpretation software to assist those for whom English is not the first language.

Speakers’ Bureau and Access to Staff

NOACA staff members are available by appointment to discuss technical and policy information with citizens and other interested parties during normal business hours. By prior arrangement, staff will meet with outside groups after normal business hours.

NOACA staff is available by appointment to present technical and policy information to the public. Individuals and groups can request a speaker by contacting NOACA at servicereq@mpo.noaca.org, or at 216-241-2414 and asking for the service request coordinator.
Public Comments

The public may comment on agenda items at all NOACA public meetings. The policy and process for public comments at these meetings are as follows:

- Individuals who wish to comment at a NOACA meeting must sign in at least five minutes before the published meeting start time.
- All comments must be directly related to an action item on the agenda. If there is a question of applicability of a comment to an agenda item, the Board/committee chairperson will determine if the comment may be made. The intent is not to discourage comment, but to focus comment on relevant action and information items that are before the Board or committee.
- Public comments must occur prior to the related action item on the agenda.
- Individuals are allowed two minutes to speak at a NOACA meeting. The chairperson has the right to ask individuals who talk beyond their allotted time to end their comments.
- Groups of individuals who wish to speak on the same topic may be asked to identify a spokesperson.
- All NOACA meetings have a 30-minute time limit for public comment.
- Individuals wishing to distribute handouts (including petitions) at meetings must provide NOACA staff with copies of handouts at least three business days before the meeting for review and approval. Individuals may not distribute handouts without prior approval. NOACA reserves the right not to permit distribution of inappropriate materials.
- If requested, NOACA staff may copy approved handouts, given sufficient notice. The individual or group will be charged the current reproduction cost.
- Individuals wishing to use NOACA’s presentation software and equipment for their comment must provide NOACA staff with electronic copies of their presentation at least three business days before the meeting for review and approval. NOACA reserves the right not to permit use of its software and equipment for certain presentations.

Members of the public may submit comments by mail, fax, e-mail, voice mail or through NOACA’s website: www.noaca.org.

NOACA strives to give due consideration to public input, and regards such input as integral to the planning process. Public comment guidelines are as follows:

- Written comments that relate to a scheduled meeting agenda item must be received at least three business days before the meeting. NOACA reserves the right to copy and distribute the comments for the Board/committee meeting. NOACA staff will provide the Board/committee a listing of the comments received and may summarize comments for Board/committee use. NOACA will acknowledge receipt of the comment if the author provides a postal or e-mail address, and if time and resources allow.
• Comments that are not related to a scheduled meeting agenda item will be distributed to appropriate staff for review. NOACA reserves the right to copy and distribute the comments for future Board/committee meetings. NOACA will acknowledge receipt of the comment within 10 business days if the author provides an appropriate address, and if resources allow.
• Comments sent by U.S. mail must be addressed to:
  The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency
  1299 Superior Avenue
  Cleveland, Ohio 44114
  Attention: Public Involvement Specialist
• E-mail comments must be sent to publicinv@mpo.noaca.org.
• Comments may also be faxed to NOACA at 216-621-3024.
• Voicemail comments may be left on the TIP Hotline, 216-241-2414, ext. 303.
• Comments may be submitted through NOACA’s website at www.noaca.org.

NOACA will summarize public input received at meetings, along with any action taken, in its official meeting minutes or meeting summaries.

When significant written or oral comments are received from the public on the Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Overall Work Program or other significant planning document, NOACA staff will include a summary and explanation of the disposition of the comments in the final document.

Comment sheets completed by attendees of public meetings will become part of the public record.

In addition to the acknowledgement of receipt noted above, NOACA staff may provide a more detailed written or verbal response to public comments. The goal is to engage in a dialogue to encourage participation, learn from the public and provide additional information.

III. Policies Relating to Title VI and Environmental Justice

NOACA will administer its regional transportation planning process in compliance with Title VI and Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice). See Appendix C for details.

Title VI and Environmental Justice Complaint Process

NOACA will work to resolve all issues/complaints relative to Title VI and Environmental Justice through its public comment process.
Complainants who want their issues/complaints to be handled formally must submit it in writing to NOACA addressed as follows:

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency
1299 Superior Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
Attention: Legal Counsel

The written complaint must be signed and dated, and should identify the alleged violation regarding the regional transportation planning process.

- NOACA staff, with appropriate involvement by the NOACA Board, committees, and federal and state agencies, will investigate the allegation.
- NOACA will send a response within 20 business days of receipt of the complaint.
- If NOACA cannot complete a fully responsive reply within 20 business days, the agency will send an interim response within that time, indicating when a complete response can be expected.
Appendix A

Federal Regulations on Public Involvement
(from Federal Rules for Metropolitan Transportation Planning)

United States Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration – 23 CFR Parts 450 And 500
Federal Transit Administration – 49 CFR Part 613
Statewide Transportation Planning; Metropolitan Transportation Planning
FINAL RULE
As published in the Federal Register Volume 72, Number 30, Pages 7223-7286, February 14, 2007
Effective March 16, 2007

§ 450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

(a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

(1) The participation plan shall be developed by the MPO in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

(i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;

(ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;

(iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;

(iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;

(v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;

(vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
(vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;

(viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;

(ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and

(x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

(2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.

(3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.

(b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs shall be developed with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

(1) Recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53;

(2) Governmental agencies and non-profit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and

(3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 204.

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.
(e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under §450.314.
Appendix B

Public Participation Plan

NOACA is committed to informing and educating the public about its planning work, as well as providing opportunities for members of the public to be involved in developing and implementing that work. NOACA accomplishes this in accordance with federal regulations through such methods as:

- Providing information and education
- Using visualization techniques
- Giving timely public notice
- Enabling public access to key decisions
- Considering significant comments

NOACA will develop a specific participation plan for each of its major planning projects. This applies especially to the three key documents NOACA is required to produce, according to federal mandate, along with its Project Planning Review Process:

- **Transportation Plan**, which outlines the transportation goals, investments and programs for the region with a 20-year planning horizon. Major updates occur every four years.
- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**, which lists all federal-aid transportation projects (roadway, transit, bikeway and enhancements) expected to use federal funds within the next four years in the region. In Ohio, the TIP is updated periodically and may be amended quarterly.
- **Overall Work Program (OWP)**, which identifies NOACA’s staff activities for each fiscal year. The OWP includes NOACA’s transportation, air quality, and water quality planning projects, as well as special programs, studies, local assistance and program administration.
- **Project Planning Review (PPR)**, which is the process of review by staff, committees, the public and Governing Board that projects must undergo before being placed on the NOACA Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Public Interaction Tools and Techniques

NOACA uses a variety of strategies, techniques and tools to engage the public based on the “audience” (the particular segment of the public the agency wishes to reach) and the purpose of the communication (e.g., education, opinion seeking, etc.). This list may be revised from time to time based on the availability of new tools and/or technologies.

These techniques and tools that may be used are listed below, divided into three general categories:
A. **Public Information:** Disseminating information.

B. **Public Outreach:** Increasing awareness of the agency and its activities among those who may be unfamiliar with its services and planning responsibilities.

C. **Public Involvement:** NOACA’s activities to involve the public in planning activities, gather comments and ideas, and provide the means to keep people active and interested.

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<th>Technique / Tool and Description</th>
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<td><strong>Technique / Tool and Description</strong></td>
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<td><strong>B</strong> Public Outreach</td>
<td><strong>C</strong> Public Involvement</td>
<td><strong>Often Used for Major Planning Documents</strong></td>
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<td>• Permits users to leave comments</td>
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<td>• Includes a calendar of Governing Board and committee meetings, public outreach activities and special events</td>
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<td>• Features a language translation tool</td>
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<td>• Provides maps, graphs and other visual tools to better convey NOACA’s projects and activities</td>
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<td>• Provides interactive geographic information system (GIS) tools to share transportation system condition data and other information</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal library/archive of plans, reports, newspaper clippings, maps and reference materials about transportation and environmental planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E-mail Messages</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be targeted to specific audiences in NOACA’s contact and/or outreach database</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technical Memos, Reports, Planning Documents</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafts to comment on, final versions on website for info</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal Notices and Advertisements</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., to announce documents for review; invitation to open house, public meetings, or focus groups; etc.)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Newspaper Inserts</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To feature high-profile projects from NOACA’s viewpoint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Press Releases and Media Advisories</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To advise print and broadcast media of Governing Board meetings and actions, agency news, programs, opportunities for public comment, etc., for broader dissemination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Service Announcements</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To advise broadcast media of free services, opportunities for public comment, open houses, etc., for broader dissemination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Flyers and Posters</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To publicize meetings, open houses, focus groups, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Posted in agency window &amp; sent to planning partners (libraries, ODOT, etc.) to post</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique / Tool and Description</td>
<td>A Public Info</td>
<td>B Public Outreach</td>
<td>C Public Involvement</td>
<td>Often Used for Major Planning Documents</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Publications and E-Publications</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>State of the Region Report / Annual Summit Report:</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Highlights annual accomplishment &amp; status of planning efforts; distributed at NOACA’s Annual Summit</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Work Program Newsletter (3 per fiscal year):</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Highlights progress on OWP projects</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>County Publications (six per fiscal year: one for each county, plus Cleveland):</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Features NOACA planning assistance and activities for the past year in each county and Cleveland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NOACA E-Newsletter</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlights recent reports, studies, maps, graphs and other information, including Board agendas and schedules with links pointing to the NOACA website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collateral Materials (Brochures, Handouts, etc.)</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted by audience (e.g., project sponsors, public, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To explain NOACA’s purpose, work, services, programs, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Articles, Opinion Pieces, etc.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NOACA may develop articles for the newsletters of partner organizations, op/ed pieces or letters to the editor</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speeches, Presentations (PowerPoint, Overhead, etc.)</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted by audience (e.g., public officials, project sponsors, public, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>To explain NOACA’s work, policies, services, programs, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often use photos, video, maps, charts, graphs and other visualization techniques</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conferences, Workshops and Special Events</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be sponsored by NOACA or partner (e.g., planning agencies, transportation operators, county engineers, professional organizations)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity to meet the public and distribute information</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Meetings and Open Houses</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be sponsored by NOACA or partner</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOACA-sponsored events are typically to view draft plans, policies, etc.; discuss projects and issues; elicit comments</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governing Board and Committee Meetings</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer opportunities for public comment on agenda items</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique / Tool and Description</td>
<td>A Public Info</td>
<td>B Public Outreach</td>
<td>C Public Involvement</td>
<td>Often Used for Major Planning Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Summit</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regional forum normally held in June</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Features speakers on transportation, economic development, and environmental issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Often features banners, display tables, mapping, PowerPoint presentations, photos, videos and other visualization techniques</td>
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<tr>
<td>• NOACA invites the public to attend, participate, offer comments and pose questions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Comment Hot Line</strong> (216-241-2414, ext. 303)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to gather comments on major planning documents, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surveys</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can be print, online or by telephone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Used to gather opinions to aid in planning work</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus Groups and Interviews</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To gather public input on specific topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sign-in Sheets</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to document attendance at events &amp; for follow-up (e.g., future correspondence)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Comment Forms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to gather comments on major planning documents from attendees of public meetings and open houses, those who review documents at the library or online, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Force/Committee Participation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>As opportunities arise</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partnerships with Other Organizations</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NOACA works with and through other organizations to disseminate information and encourage participation of the organizations’ membership or clientele</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Examples include public libraries, health &amp; human services agencies, departments on aging, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### General Public Interaction Tools and Techniques to be Used for Major Plans

For the three major planning documents referred to earlier, NOACA will develop a specific participation plan detailing its efforts to inform and educate the public, encourage public participation and invite public comments when the agency produces drafts of the Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, and the Overall Work Program. At a minimum, the participation plan will include the following elements:

- Have a minimum public involvement/review period of 45 days.
- Make copies of the plan(s) available in NOACA’s Information Resource Center and on NOACA’s website.
- Send links to the online document in NOACA’s e-newsletter.
• Send packets to regional libraries and planning partners (e.g., the Ohio Department of Transportation) with copies of the plan(s), a cover letter, and instructions and comment forms for library patrons/visitors.
• Place legal notices in the major newspapers in the five-county region about the review period.
• Send out a press release to the major print publications, and radio and TV stations.
• Include a message on the hot line requesting comments on the plan(s).
• Hold at least one public meeting or open house so the public can view the documents, ask questions and offer comments. In most cases additional public meetings will be necessary to fully engage the public in the process.
• Use visualization techniques to enhance public understanding and encourage public participation (e.g., maps, photos, graphics, etc.).

Project Planning Review

A project or program that is added to the Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must be processed through NOACA’s Project Planning Review (PPR) process. PPR includes staff, public, intergovernmental and committee review, and permits comment from the beginning of the process until the NOACA Governing Board votes. Projects or programs proposed for a quarterly amendment adhere to the following schedule:

• **Month 1:** Staff provides their assessment, and projects are distributed to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) for information. Other appropriate committees may be invited to comment. Projects are published on the NOACA website for public comment, while project information is sent to governmental bodies (Intergovernmental Review and Consultation, or IGRC) and interested public.
• **Month 2:** Staff provides a summary of any comments received via IGRC, public involvement and committees. TAC makes a recommendation to the Governing Board.
• **Month 3:** The NOACA Governing Board is updated on comments received and considers the Plan or TIP amendment.
Appendix C

Environmental Justice

Excerpt from:
“Guidance and Best Practices for Incorporating Environmental Justice into Ohio Transportation and Environmental Processes” August, 2002 Ohio Department of Transportation

A. DEFINITION OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Environmental Justice (EJ) defines EJ as:

“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socio-economic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local and tribal programs and policies.”

EJ applies to all programs and activities of federal-aid recipients, whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not. This means that any agency that receives federal funds must:

- Make a meaningful effort to involve low-income and minority populations in the processes established to make decisions regarding its programs and activities, and
- Evaluate the nature, extent, and incidence of probable and adverse human health or environmental impacts of its programs and activities upon minority or low-income populations.

B. WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

Environmental Justice is not a new concern. The principles it embodies are rooted in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and previous civil rights legislation. Today, because of the evolution of the transportation planning process, EJ is simply a matter of increased awareness of the effects and impacts of transportation decisions on the human environment. There are three fundamental EJ principles:

- To avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision making process
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.
C. WHY DO ODOT AND MPOs NEED TO ADDRESS EJ?

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Ohio’s Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) receive federal funding to support many of their programs and activities. Therefore, both ODOT and Ohio’s MPOs must address the federal EJ requirements as a condition to receiving those funds. Local governments, serving as Local Public Agency (LPA) project coordinators must also comply.

EJ requirements are not new. On February 11, 1994 President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations. However, the need to consider EJ was already embodied in many laws, regulations and policies such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as previously mentioned, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Title 23 of the United States Code (USC) Section 109 (h), and the Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisitions Policy Act of 1970, long before Executive Order 12898.

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act states that, “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Title VI prohibits intentional discrimination as well as disparate impact discrimination (i.e., a neutral policy or practice that has a disparate impact on low income and minority groups).

The 1994 Environmental Justice (EJ) Executive Order amplifies Title VI by providing that “each federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs policies and activities on minority and low-income populations.”

Increasingly, concerns for compliance with provisions of Title VI and the EJ orders have been raised by citizens and advocacy groups with regard to broad patterns of transportation investments and impacts considered in metropolitan and statewide planning. While Title VI and EJ concerns have most often been raised during project development, it is important to recognize that the law also applies equally to the processes and products of planning and environmental analysis. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are to ensure compliance with Title VI in the planning process during their planning certification reviews conducted for Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) and through the statewide planning finding rendered at approval of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).