A new chapter in NOACA’s history began July 1, 2012 with the arrival of Executive Director Grace Gallucci. Gallucci left the Regional Transportation Authority in Chicago to lead NOACA, but she is familiar with northeast Ohio’s transportation network and economic climate through previous employment at the Greater Cleveland RTA. One of Gallucci’s priorities at NOACA is to create a strategic plan that will guide the agency’s future. “I’m meeting with all of the Governing Board members to get feedback and launch a visioning process for the strategic plan,” says Gallucci. She also intends to increase NOACA’s involvement in the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium, and expand the agency’s communications and outreach efforts. “It’s imperative that we engage the public and help them more actively participate in the regional planning process,” she notes. “We’re looking to obtain input from a broad cross-section of people throughout the region. These outreach efforts are particularly critical now as we update our bicycle, transit/human services and long-range transportation plans.”

Regional Travel Survey Tracks Daily Trips

Do you know how many trips you make on an average day? Do you drive to your destinations, or are some of your trips on transit or by bicycle?

NOACA is conducting a Regional Travel Survey that tracks the daily trips of volunteer households over a three or four day period. Survey participants use a global positioning system (GPS) device that collects data about the users’ travel habits, including where and how far they travel, how many trips they make, and travel modes used.

“This travel data will help NOACA understand how, why and where people travel in our region,” says Executive Director Grace Gallucci. “Knowing where people travel and the routes they take will help us identify transportation improvements that will meet their future needs.”

NOACA is collecting travel data from 4,250 randomly selected households throughout its five-county area. Through December 2012, 3,552 households completed the survey, which is 84 percent of the desired total.
The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) provides bus and rail service to thousands of commuters daily in Cuyahoga County and Cleveland. RTA also serves older adults and persons with disabilities through specialized transportation programs. In addition to supporting projects that preserve roadways and bridges, NOACA commits funding for maintaining transit service and operations. In 2012, NOACA supported the following RTA projects with its annual funding allocation:

- SFYs 2012–2015 Bus Improvement Program, first year - $5 million to purchase RTA replacement buses. NOACA also has committed $5 million per year for the next three years for RTA bus purchases under this program.
- SFYs 2012–2015 Americans with Disabilities (ADA) service, first year - $2.5 million to support special transit service for the elderly and persons with disabilities. NOACA has also committed $2.5 million per year for this service over the next three years.

RTA Expands Trolley Service

RTA’s popular fare-free trolley service has served Clevelander and visitors alike, shuttling people around the city’s business district, to and from entertainment venues and museums throughout the day. With the opening of the Horseshoe Casino, progress on the new Medical Mart/Convention Center, and thriving programs at Playhouse Square, the need arose for the same kind of shuttle service late into the evening and on weekends. With the help of $2.8 million in NOACA-controlled federal funding and support from local businesses, RTA expanded its trolley lines this past September. The new trolley service not only fills the void in evening and weekend service, but also conveniently connects to the Red Line Blue Line and Green Line rail lines and the HealthLine to increase transit opportunities throughout the city.

RTA Breaks Ground for Cedar-University Rapid Station

RTA continues progress on reconstructing transit stations along its rapid transit Red Line. The latest facility being rebuilt and upgraded is the old University Circle station, renamed the Cedar-University Rapid Station. In September RTA broke ground for the new $18.5 million structure, which will feature a sleek contemporary glass façade, an enclosed waiting environment for riders, a new bus transfer area and access for people with disabilities.

NOACA Helps Fund West 73rd Street Extension Project

The City of Cleveland has a goal of connecting neighborhoods to the Lake Erie shoreline, giving people access to one of northeast Ohio’s most desirable assets. The City developed the Waterfront West Plan to expand public access to the lake, improve community livability and spur economic development in neighborhoods.

The overall plan includes transforming a 2.5-mile portion of the West Shoreway into a tree-lined boulevard that will calm traffic and permit public access to the shoreline. Some phases of this project have already been completed, including a tunnel under the West Shoreway that leads to Edgewater Park. The West 73rd Street project will extend the road on the north end, and construct a railroad bridge/tunnel under the Norfolk Southern tracks to access the West Shoreway and Edgewater Park. A new roadway with bicycle and pedestrian access will be built to connect the extended West 73rd Street with the existing tunnel under the West Shoreway, increasing multi-modal opportunities.

In June, the NOACA Governing Board voted to allocate $15 million to the project. NOACA is committing $1 million of this total from its Surface Transportation and Transportation Alternative funding programs. Four million will come from a State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) loan taken out by the City of Cleveland and repaid from NOACA’s annual funding allocations over the next four fiscal years. SIB loans have been used to help major projects in NOACA’s planning area get implemented without straining limited NOACA resources. Other projects constructed with SIB loans include the West 117th reconstruction in Cleveland, SR 40 reconstruction in Mentor-on-the-Lake and US-20 reconstruction in Elyria. The project will also benefit from $12 million in Ohio Department of Transportation Major New Program funding directed through the Transportation Review Advisory Council.

NOACA Funding Supports Transit Projects in Cleveland

NOACA at Work

Cleveland Projects Locked Down for SFY 2014

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) requires that NOACA annually prepare a list of projects that will be ready to implement in the next fiscal year. This project list is referred to as the lockdown list because NOACA federal aid is ‘locked down’ and committed to those projects. NOACA has developed its state fiscal year 2014 lockdown list, earmarking the following Cleveland projects for construction in 2013/2014:

- Purchasing right-of-way for Stage 3 of the Towpath Trail, from Steele Yard Commons to the I-490 trailhead, $1 million
- Purchasing right-of-way for Stage 4 of the Towpath Trail, from the Tremont/Literary Avenue trailhead to Canal Basin Park, $200,000
- Extending West 73rd Street and constructing a tunnel under the Norfolk Southern tracks, $1 million (State Infrastructure Bank reimbursement)
- Rehabilitating Larchmere Boulevard from MLK, Jr. Drive to North Moreland Boulevard, $2.4 million
- Enhancing Larchmere Boulevard with curb extensions, landscaping, decorative sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities from MLK, Jr. Drive to North Moreland Boulevard, $587,000
- Implementing pedestrian enhancements at RTA’s new Mayfield Red Line rapid transit station, $800,000
- Repairing and resurfacing Triskett Road from Lorain Road to West 177th Street and Warren Road from Lorain Road to Munro Road, $4.9 million

In 2012, the NOACA Governing Board also approved adding 20 projects totaling $91 million, to the long-range transportation plan.

- Enhancing Clifton Boulevard from Lake Avenue to the Cleveland Hopkins airport, $3 million
- Conducting a preliminary engineering study to reconfigure US-42 from State Road to Wildlgy Way, $122,000
- Purchasing right-of-way for reconstructing and enhancing Waterlo Road from East 162nd Street to East 152nd Street, $25,000
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RTA’s L-Line trolley takes riders from Cleveland’s Public Square to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame on weekends.

RTA and public officials break ground for the new Cedar-University Red Line rapid transit station.
Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative Boosts Cleveland Neighborhoods

NOACA’s successful Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (TLCI) has helped communities obtain federal funding and technical assistance for planning projects that strengthen and enhance livability. The TLCI has three components:

• Planning Grant Program – federal funding for planning studies, up to $75,000 per study

East 55th Street and Euclid Avenue Crossroads Study

MidTown Cleveland, Inc. and the City of Cleveland secured a $75,000 NOACA TLCI planning grant to develop a master plan for rejuvenating an underutilized area of the city near the East 55th Street and Euclid Avenue intersection, which was once a bustling transit hub. East 55th Street is a major north-south travel corridor offering good transportation access, but it currently divides the MidTown neighborhood into east and west sides, which limits opportunities for growth on both sides. The report identifies strategies for unifying and improving the area, and for making it a more attractive. Strategies for the corridor include:

• Defining and creating a neighborhood identity
• Redeveloping vacant land and buildings, and adding green space to use as gathering areas for the community
• Investing in bicycle/pedestrian facilities and connections between usable spaces to encourage walking and bicycling
• Capitalizing on the RTA HealthLine transit service to spur business growth and economic development

The study calls for a series of transportation and economic development improvements to provide the framework through which the neighborhood, uniquely located between downtown Cleveland and the medical campuses of Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals, can see new life as the Cleveland Health-Tech Corridor.

West Park/Lorain Avenue Transportation and Redevelopment Plan

In fiscal year 2010, NOACA awarded the City of Cleveland a $55,000 TLCI planning grant to prepare the West Park/Lorain Avenue Transportation and Redevelopment Plan. The plan outlines a vision for the neighborhood that will direct public investment, private redevelopment and multi-modal transportation initiatives along Lorain Avenue from West 160th Street to RTA’s West Park Red Line rapid station. The plan calls for revitalizing five priority sites in the Lorain Road corridor with residential and retail redevelopment, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and addition of green spaces. Streetscaping, improved storefronts and enhancements will also help bolster transportation opportunities and unify Kamm’s Corners and Lorain Avenue.

The plan also examines reconfiguring the Lorain Avenue/Tiskett Road intersection and adding amenities that would improve safety for pedestrians and create a meaningful neighborhood activity node. Other transportation recommendations include crosswalk treatments, decorative sidewalks, planters, trees, transit waiting environments, and an all-purpose trail from the rapid station to Lorain Avenue.

Ohio City Vision: Inter-Modal Urban Design and Wayfinding Plan for the Market District

Ohio City is one of Cleveland’s oldest and most vibrant neighborhoods. It is a diverse cultural community, located a stone’s throw from the Cuyahoga River, and serves as home to the popular West Side Market, which celebrated its centennial in 2012. The City of Cleveland and the Ohio City Near West Development Corporation received a $60,250 TLCI planning grant from NOACA to develop the Inter-Modal Urban Design and Wayfinding Plan for the Market District. Goals of the plan include:

• Improving connectivity and navigation in the Market District to ensure ease of access
• Creating a wayfinding and signage system to facilitate navigation in the District
• Promoting “green streets” and pedestrian/bicycling facilities
• Relieving the current parking shortage within the District
• Establishing a destination in Cleveland that employs residents and attracts visitors

The plan recommends projects that can improve access and circulation in the neighborhood, create and enhance public facilities, beautify transit waiting environments, and add landscaped green space. The plan also looks at multi-level parking structures as a way to improve land use in the District.

NOACA at Work

NOACA Hosts Public Meetings for Specialized Transportation

NOACA is updating its Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Northeast Ohio with the goal of developing strategies and prioritizing projects that can improve transportation for three special populations: the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and people with low incomes. To update the plan, NOACA is collecting input about current specialized transportation services and unmet needs. In September, NOACA held public meetings throughout its five-county area, including one at the public library in downtown Cleveland. Meeting participants discussed their current transportation issues, identified gaps in the transportation network, and noted locations that are hard or impossible to reach. This information will be used to target priority areas for project funding. Frequency of transportation service, cost of service, lack of cross-county connections, and lack of service on nights and weekends emerged as the most significant issues at the public meetings. In November, NOACA hosted a specialized transportation stakeholder workshop as a follow-up to the public meetings.

ODOT Awards Funding for Special Vehicles

NOACA works with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to improve mobility for special populations through the Specialized Transportation (Section 5310) Program. This program awards federal funding to eligible social service agencies and nonprofit organizations to purchase wheelchair lift-equipped vehicles, computers, software, and other equipment. The federally funded share is 80 percent of the vehicle or equipment cost, and the receiving agency contributes the remaining 20 percent. In the fiscal year 2012 program, NOACA and ODOT awarded the following agencies funding for vehicles:

• Eliza Bryant Village
• HELP Foundation, Inc. (2 vehicles)
• Jewish Family Service Association of Cleveland (2 vehicles)
• United Cerebral Palsy Association of Cleveland (2 vehicles)

Vanpools Meet VA Employees’ Commute Needs

Vanpooling has proven to be a successful way of commuting for many employees of the Louis Stokes Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Cleveland. When the VA moved their facilities from Brecksville to the University Circle neighborhood in 2011, many employees faced a much longer commute and more limited parking. With the help of NOACA staff at an in-house campaign, VA employees registered their commute information with OhioRideshare, northeast Ohio’s onlineridesharing program, and connected with co-workers with whom they might share the ride. This focused effort resulted in eight vanpools traveling daily from throughout the NOACA region to the Medical Center. Vanpools can carry seven to 15 people and help riders save money on commute costs. Vanpools also benefit regional air quality by removing single-occupant vehicles from the road.

The OhioRideshare registration page for VA employees allows them to match exclusively with vanpools. NOACA, along with vanpool provider Vanpool Services, Inc., has also conducted OhioRideshare campaigns at the Cleveland Clinic and Eaton Corporation. Staff created unique OhioRideshare registration pages for employees of these organizations to help them establish carpools or vanpools with co-workers that have similar schedules.

Employees of the Veterans Affairs Medical Center meet at SouthPark Mall in Strongsville and vanpool to University Circle.

... in Cleveland

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NOACA at Work

Bicycle Business

The City of Cleveland is committed to becoming a more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly community, and its Bicycle Week activities, installation of facilities such as the Lake to Lakes Trail, and investment in the Towpath Trail support this desire. Cleveland City Council has adopted an ordinance requiring implementation of Complete and Green Streets policies, including adding bicycle and pedestrian facilities, to roadway construction projects within the public right-of-way.

The City also recently partnered with the Downtown Cleveland Alliance to build and operate The Bike Rack, northeast Ohio's first full service bicycle parking and commuter center.

The Community Bicycle Business Program on the NOACA website.

NOACA Governing Board Approves Enhancement Projects

• Fleet Avenue Streetscape Enhancements
  NOACA is allocating $1.2 million in transportation alternative funds to improve sidewalks and curbs, add decorative crosswalks and mast-arm traffic signals, and provide landscaping along Fleet Avenue between Independence Road and Broadway Avenue. Along with these improvements, the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORSD) will incorporate storm water management features into the streetscaping in order to remove and/or delay runoff into combined sewers. The Sewer District will also finance the project’s “green” infrastructure, including infiltration or detention basins.

• Mayfield Road Red Line Rapid Station Pedestrian Improvements
  RTA intends to build a new rapid transit station near Mayfield Road and East 109th Street in 2013. The new University Circle-Little Italy Rapid Station will more adequately serve residents in the surrounding neighborhoods and will be located a short walking distance from the Case Western Reserve University campus and University Hospitals. The project includes improving the sidewalks and lighting under all the bridges on both sides of Mayfield Road, new railings, signage and landscaping, to provide a safer environment for people using the station. The NOACA Governing Board approved $800,000 for these enhancements, which developed from two NOACA-funded TLCI studies, the East 120th Street Station Master Plan (2007) and the Mayfield Road Streetscape Improvement Plan (2008).

Opportunity Corridor Moves Into Design Development

University Circle, home to museums, universities and world-class health care institutions, is a popular educational, cultural and employment destination. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and City of Cleveland seek to improve access and support economic development in this thriving section of the city with a new roadway. The proposed project, called the Opportunity Corridor, will extend I-490 at East 55th Street as a six-lane, signalized boulevard that will terminate at East 105th Street and Chester Avenue. The project also includes pedestrian and bicycle paths, trees, landscaping, and access to RTA buses and trains. At the city’s request, NOACA serves on the technical advisory committee for this project, and provided traffic analysis and traffic volume projections for the proposed road. ODOT conducted public meetings and gathered input to determine the recommended preferred alternative for the new roadway. The project has secured $16.5 million in Major New Program funding through ODOT’s Transportation Review Advisory Council for an Environmental Impact Study and preliminary engineering.
Now that the winter months are here, high ozone days have gone with the summer winds. Northeast Ohio is, however, impacted by fine particle pollution all year long. Fine particles are generated by motor vehicle exhaust, industry, outdoor fires and other sources, and accumulate in the air, where they can build to unhealthy levels. NOACA’s air quality programs staff issues air quality advisories when weather conditions prove favorable for ground-level ozone or fine particles. The advisories inform the public about unhealthy levels of pollution and encourage the elderly, young children, and people with asthma or other respiratory diseases to stay indoors or limit outdoor activities. NOACA also encourages people to make voluntary changes in their everyday activities on air quality advisory days, including riding the bus, carpooling or biking to work, and avoiding outdoor burning, to reduce air pollution.

The hot and dry summer in northeast Ohio served as a precursor to a warm fall. In November, NOACA staff issued air quality advisories four straight days as temperature inversion conditions led to haze and excessive fine particle pollution in Cleveland. NOACA encourages motorists to refrain from idling their vehicle engines to reduce fine particles in the air. Air quality staff have distributed aluminum anti-idling signs for organizations to post, reminding employees and vehicle fleet drivers to avoid unnecessary vehicle idling.

**Air Quality Awareness and Outreach**

The public can monitor northeast Ohio’s air quality conditions daily by visiting the airnow.gov website and accessing the Cleveland-Akron-Lorain link. This web page also has a link to the Cleveland HazeCam, a camera that generates a live image of the downtown Cleveland skyline every 15 minutes. The public can watch how smog increases during the day. The Cleveland HazeCam was featured in an article in the September 2012 edition of *The American Journal of Public Health*.

Air Quality Programs staff conduct an active outreach program to educate the public about the impacts of ozone and fine particle pollution, and encourage commuters to embrace cleaner alternatives to driving alone to work. NOACA participated in the Cleveland Clinic’s Driving Change Event in October 2012, staffing a display and distributing information, including air quality fact sheets, alternative commute information and news about NOACA’s bike planning efforts. This event featured vendors and businesses that promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles. Staff also participated in several other outreach events in Cleveland, including:

- EarthFest at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
- WDKO Soft Rock Free Lunch Events
- American Lung Association Fight for Air Week
- 2012 Fight for Air Climb
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service 2012 Outdoor Job Fair
- Hermes Health & Lifestyle Expo
- Warehouse District Festival
- Burning River Fest

**2012 Commuter Challenge**

Air quality staff helps plan and execute the annual Commuter Challenge, a two-week clean air campaign encouraging people to try a sustainable commute alternative instead of driving alone to work. Alternatives can include walking, biking, carpooling, telecommuting, or using public transportation. Staff asks that employers support Commuter Challenge by offering special benefits to their employees during the Commuter Challenge period, by “challenging” other organizations to secure the most participants. Commuter Challenge participants help reduce congestion and help decrease the amount of air pollution churned out into the region’s air. The 2012 Commuter Challenge took place July 15 - July 30, and was embraced by several Cleveland employers. Key Bank in Cleveland registered 205 employees for Commuter Challenge, the most of any participating organization.

Commuter Challenge participants rode the bus, biked, and walked to work.