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 is also increasing NOACA’s involvement in the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium, and expanding 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.”

NOACA has entered the world of social media with Facebook and Twitter. NOACA posts information about the agency’s programs, services and events, publicizes meetings and public involvement opportunities, and asks for feedback on current plans and documents. Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter to get the latest updates on NOACA’s activities. NOACA is also working on a redesign of its website.

Do you know how many trips you make on an average day? Do you always 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 device (GPS) 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 can meet their future needs.”

NOACA is collecting travel data from 4,250 randomly selected households throughout its five-county area. As of October 30, NOACA has obtained 1,825 completed travel surveys, about 43 percent of the goal. NOACA uses travel survey data to update its transportation forecast model, which can forecast future transportation needs. An updated forecast model is a vital component of the long-range transportation plan update, and is necessary for receiving federal transportation funds.

NOACA and the Greater Cleveland RTA are also surveying transit users to gauge their travel patterns. RTA launched the on-board transit survey in October.
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 (SFY) 2014 lockdown list, earmarking the following Lorain County projects for construction in 2013:

1. Resurface Cowley Road and widen the lanes from Crocker Road to SR-82 in Eaton Township, $2.3 million in NOACA-controlled funding
2. Resurface Grafton Road and widen the lanes from SR-57 to the Carlisle Township north corporation line in Carlisle Township, $698,000
3. Resurface LaGrange Road and widen the lanes from US-20 to Oberlin-Elyria Road in Carlisle Township, $189,000
4. Repair and resurface Middle Avenue from Oberlin Road to Broad Street in Elyria, $2.3 million
5. Reconstruct SR-57 and add a turn lane from the CSX railroad tracks to the Grafton Village north corporation line in Grafton Village, $4.7 million
6. Construct an all-purpose trail along Colorado Avenue and the Black River from Henderson Drive to SR-611 in Lorain, $1.2 million
7. Construct a multi-purpose path from SR-57 along West River Road and Ford Road to the south end of the Lorain County Metroparks, $600,000

NOACA-funded Projects Preserve Transportation Facilities

The historic Oberlin Gasholder Building, constructed in 1889 as a storage center for coal gas, is headed for a second life as an Underground Railroad museum. With the help of $917,600 in NOACA-administered transportation enhancement funding, the building is being renovated and will house Civil War-era artifacts and art related to Oberlin’s heritage as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

The building will also serve as a rest stop/shelter for bicyclists enjoying the nearby North Coast Inland Trail.

NOACA funding has also helped preserve and maintain Lorain County roadways. During the past year, the City of Elyria reconstructed and resurfaced West River Road from SR-57 to the

Over the past year the Oberlin Gasholder Building’s conical roof was replaced along with the doors and windows.

NOACA contributed $3 million to resurface West River Road in Elyria.

Elyria north corporation line with $3 million in NOACA funding. NOACA also contributed $395,000 for rehabilitating resurfacing Baunhmart Road from Russia Road to SR-113 in Henrietta Township. A $2.8 million project to rehabilitate Station Road from Columbia Road to SR-82 in Columbia Township is under construction.
**Bicycle Business**

Would you like to see more bicycle paths, lanes and trails in Lorain County? What types of improvements would lead you to use your bike more often for commuting or running errands? NOACA seeks your input on these and other bicycle issues as staff updates the Regional Bicycle Plan. In September 2012, NOACA conducted a public meeting in Oberlin to gather input on bike facilities and issues. Participants discussed how they use their bikes to get around, perceived gaps in the bicycle network, and obstacles that inhibit using bikes for commuting. If you have comments about bicycle or pedestrian issues, contact NOACA multimodal planner Marc Von Allmen and share your thoughts.

NOACA has developed a Regional Priority Bicycle Network (RPBN) that will be adopted as part of the Regional Bicycle Plan update. The RPBN consists of 357 miles of interconnected bikeways, including 63 miles of bike paths, lanes and trails that currently exist. You can see the proposed RPBN on the Transportation System Data Portal on NOACA’s website. Access the data portal to see additional bike information, as well as pavement and bridge condition data and truck counts.

NOACA assesses the use of bicycle facilities through bicycle and pedestrian counts. Volunteers took counts at various intersections in NOACA’s five-county area twice during the past year to record persons walking or biking through an intersection. In September 2012, volunteers took counts at Broadway Avenue at Sixth Street in Lorain, and Lake Road at Avon-Belden Road in Elyria. You can see the results of the Bike Count Program on the NOACA website.

Since 1995, Lorain County bicyclists have enjoyed using a 13.5-mile paved bike trail connecting Kipton, Oberlin and Elyria. This popular trail has become one segment of the North Coast Inland Trail (NCIT), a bikeway that planners envision to eventually stretch from the Indiana state line to eastern Pennsylvania by way of northern Ohio. The Lorain County Metroparks plans to construct additional phases of the trail to fill gaps that exist between the City of Lorain and the Kipton-Elyria portion of the NCIT.

Phase 4A of this trail, which will begin at the NCIT trailhead at the corner of Gateway Boulevard and Woodford Avenue, wind through Elyria and terminate at the north end of Midway Mall, will soon be under construction. NOACA contributed $1.2 million to fund this trail link, and will allocate funding for two additional phases of the NCIT next year:

- $600,000 for a segment of trail from SR-57 along West River Road and Ford Road to Cascade Park
- $1.2 million for a segment of trail along Colorado Avenue from Henderson Drive to the Cromwell Dump site in Lorain, and linking to another trail segment in Sheffield Village completed in 2011

**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: older adults, individuals with disabilities, and people with low incomes. To update the plan, NOACA is gathering input about current specialized transportation services and unmet needs, and recently held public meetings throughout its five-county area, including one in Elyria.

Meeting participants discussed their transportation issues, identified gaps in the transportation network, and noted locations that are hard to reach. This information will be used to develop and target priority areas for project funding. Frequency of transportation service, cost of service, and lack of cross-county connections emerged as the most significant issues at the public meetings.

**ODOT Awards Funding for Special Vehicles**

NOACA works with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to help address the mobility needs of 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. In the fiscal year 2012 program, NOACA and ODOT awarded the following agencies funding for a vehicle:

- Wesleyan Village, in the City of Lorain
- Goodwill Industries of Lorain County, Inc.
- Lorain County Alcohol & Drug Abuse Services, Inc.
While sewers may not be something many people think about, directing sewage flows efficiently to appropriate treatment facilities is important both to water quality and to cost control for communities. NOACA has been updating facility planning area (FPA) boundaries for wastewater management and treatment in conjunction with the Clean Water Plan update. Staff drafted FPA maps depicting all of the Governing Board-approved changes since 2005. The maps show areas currently served by sanitary sewers, areas to be served over the next 20 years and areas that will remain on individual lot systems.

NOACA sent the draft FPA maps to all the Designated Management Agencies (DMAs) requesting updates and revisions. Many boundaries on the old maps cut across parcel lines and did not follow jurisdictional lines well. NOACA has received feedback from all of the DMAs about the maps. The next step involves mapping the results from the DMAs to see where conflict occurs. Changing boundaries will require consensus from each DMA, so NOACA staff will be facilitating discussions about the updated boundaries.

Working for Cleaner Air

The weather in northeast Ohio this summer proved to be hot and dry, leaving faded memories of the record rainfall that deluged the north coast in 2011. The region endured one of the hottest summers on record in 2012, with 28 days of 90-degree or higher temperatures, and for the first time, 90-plus degree temperatures on each of the three traditional summer holidays – Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day.

Hot, steamy, windless summer days are often accompanied by elevated levels of ground-level ozone and fine particle (soot) pollution. NOACA’s Air Quality Programs staff issues air quality advisories when weather conditions prove favorable for ground-level ozone development. 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 encourages people to make voluntary changes in their everyday activities on anticipated high ozone days, including riding the bus, carpooling or biking to work, and refueling vehicles and mowing the lawn after 7:00 p.m.

On 28 days this summer, ground-level ozone exceeded 75 parts per million over eight hours, an air quality standard established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. On five of those days, Lorain County air quality monitors recorded ozone levels that exceeded federal air quality standards. This is fairly normal, considering the hot, sweltering summer that was experienced in northeast Ohio. The 2012 Ozone Action Day season ended on October 31.

Air Quality Programs staff participate in outreach events to educate the public about the impacts of ozone and fine particle pollution and sign people up to receive air quality advisories. In April, NOACA staffed a display at North Ridgeville’s Green Fest 2012, a family-focused celebration of Earth Day that featured various organizations distributing information about environmental stewardship. NOACA also makes presentations on driving smarter and using commute alternatives such as carpooling, transit, or bicycling to improve air quality.