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.”

New is News at NOACA

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.

Regional Travel Survey Tracks Daily Trips

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 2, NOACA has collected travel data from 2,560 households. 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. The on-board transit survey will be administered by RTA this fall.
Projects Added to the Long-Range Transportation Plan

Keeping roads and bridges safe and in good operating condition is a NOACA priority. If a project sponsor seeks federal funding for a road, bridge or bikeway project, the project must first undergo a comprehensive review and comment process called Project Planning Review (PPR). NOACA places projects in PPR quarterly, and upon successful completion of the process, adds them to the long-range transportation plan and Transportation Improvement Program. Since September 2011, NOACA has added the following projects from Lake County to the long-range transportation plan:

1. Replacing a culvert on SR-608 in Concord Township (plus two locations in Geauga County), $1.1 million total cost
2. Resurfacing Hubbard Road from US-20 to Lake Road in Madison Township, $2.1 million
3. Resurfacing Jackson Street from the Mentor east corporation line to the city of Painesville west corporation line, $900,000
4. Resurfacing McMackin Road from US-20 to Chapel Road in Madison Township, $1.6 million
5. Resurfacing Vrooman Road from Painesville-Warren Road to I-90 in Leroy Township, $1.5 million
6. Resurfacing Madison Avenue from the city of Painesville east corporation line to SR-84 in Painesville and Perry Townships, $1.6 million
7. Resurfacing Morley Road from Pinecrest Road to Hoose Road, and from Prouty Road to SR-84, in Concord Township, $2.1 million
8. Resurfacing Park Road from Madison Road to Hale Road in Painesville Township, $1.6 million
9. Resurfacing Ravenna Road from Concord-Hambden Road to Auburn Road in Concord Township, $1.9 million
10. Bridge maintenance on SR-2, $330,000
11. Resurfacing SR-283 from the city of Mentor east corporation line to the city of Painesville west corporation line in Painesville Township and Grand River Village, $775,000
12. Support for Laketran’s fuel purchases, $1.2 million
13. Support for Laketran’s vehicle replacement program in calendar years 2013–2015, $7.8 million
14. Resurfacing SR-44 from Girdled Road to north of SR-84 in Concord Township, $4.5 million
15. Removing the bridge on St. Clair Street over the Chagrin River in Willoughby, $290,000
16. Constructing a shared use path from the Greenway Corridor Girdled Road parking lot to the Greenway Corridor Ravenna Road parking lot in Concord Township, $3.9 million

Mentor Seeks to Implement Animal-Vehicle Accident Reduction Pilot Project

According to a NOACA study, the city of Mentor tops the list of communities in the region for vehicle-animal collisions. Data collected from 2007–2009 reveals that out of 5,260 automobile accidents in Mentor, 245 of them involved an animal, primarily deer. NOACA staff has been working with Mentor city officials to develop a pilot project that can help reduce these accidents. In a May 2012 addendum to the original study, staff prepared statistics and mapped the concentrations of animal-vehicle incidents on state routes in the city of Mentor. The analysis considered the five roads in the city with the highest number of vehicle-animal accidents.

Mentor officials have narrowed the number of road segments for implementing a pilot project. The project will employ accident reduction techniques such as vegetative barriers, fencing, flashing warning signs for motorists, road overpasses, or high-frequency sound devices that scare deer away from the roadway. NOACA is helping city officials apply for Ohio Department of Transportation safety funding for the project.
NOACA is in the process of updating its Regional Bicycle Plan, and asks the public for input about new bike facilities, bicycle safety and ideas to help facilitate bicycle commuting. This August, NOACA conducted a focus group in Mentor to gather input about bicycle facilities and concerns, and in September, followed up with a public meeting in Kirtland. Participants discussed how they use their bikes to get around and perceived gaps in the bicycle network. They also discussed obstacles that inhibit using bikes for errands or commuting and improvements that could encourage bicycling. Lake County cyclists would like to see more bike lanes on major streets to enhance the existing bike network and safely connect to work and shopping. Share your thoughts about bicycle facilities, safety, or other issues by contacting NOACA multimodal planner Marc Von Allmen.

NOACA assesses the use of bicycle facilities and sidewalks through bicycle and pedestrian counts. Volunteers took counts at various intersections twice over the past year to record persons walking or biking through the intersections and observe patterns of use. In the last session, conducted in September 2012, volunteers took counts at:

- Euclid Avenue west of Lloyd Road in Wickliffe
- Center Street south of Munson Road in Mentor
- Erie Avenue south of Second Street in Willoughby

You can see the results of the entire Bike Count Program on NOACA’s website.

Lake County’s Greenway Corridor is a 4.8-mile paved bike and hike trail that runs through Painesville, Painesville Township and Concord Township. The trail currently has two distinct sections, with a large gap in the middle from Ravenna Road to Girdled Road. Bicyclists can exit the trail and continue south on Ravenna Road, but road conditions make it difficult to negotiate for all but the most experienced riders. The Lake County Metroparks has proposed a trail link that will fill this gap, and in September 2012 the NOACA Governing Board approved the project for the long-range transportation plan and Transportation Improvement Program. When the project is complete, bicyclists will be able to ride uninterrupted from Painesville to the southern Lake County border at Colburn Road via the Greenway Corridor, and connect to Geauga County’s Maple Highlands Trail. In addition to recreational benefits, the trail link will provide access to businesses, restaurants and the Quail Hollow Resort. The trail is scheduled to be constructed in summer 2014, and NOACA is contributing $2.4 million for the project.

The city of Mentor is progressing with plans to install five-foot-wide bicycle lanes on the portion of Jordan Drive from Corduroy Road to Rambler Drive to provide cyclists with a safer and more convenient route from Lakeshore Boulevard to Mentor Headlands State Park. This project is a component of Mentor’s City-wide Bicycle Plan, and NOACA is supporting its construction with $600,000 in transportation enhancement funding.

NOACA Gathers Input at Specialized Transportation Meetings

In March 2008, NOACA’s Governing Board adopted the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for Northeast Ohio. This plan examines transportation options and unmet needs for three special populations: persons with low incomes, individuals with disabilities, and older adults. The plan identifies strategies to reduce gaps in service and prioritizes the most feasible recommendations for improving service.

NOACA is now updating the Coordinated Plan, and conducted public meetings, including a meeting in Painesville, to gather input on specialized transportation services and needs for the three target population groups. “The best way to find out about gaps or redundancy in service is to ask the people who use those services,” says Sara Byrnes Maier, senior transportation planner at NOACA. “By collecting the opinions of all interested parties, we can find better solutions that will meet everyone’s needs.”

NOACA staff will use the information gathered at the public meetings to develop and prioritize projects for federal funding.
On Labor Day, northeast Ohio registered the 28th day in 2012 where the temperature reached 90 degrees or higher. This summer’s hot, dry weather has left northeast Ohio parched and yearning for a little of last year’s rain that caused the region to surpass its annual rainfall record in mid-October.

Hot, steamy, windless summer days are often accompanied by high levels of ground-level ozone and fine particle (soot) pollution. NOACA’s Air Quality Programs staff issued 28 air quality advisories during the summer when weather conditions proved 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 also asks that people make voluntary changes in their everyday activities on anticipated high ozone days by riding the bus, carpooling or biking to work, and by refueling vehicles and mowing the lawn after 7:00 p.m.

On 21 days this summer, Lake County air quality monitors recorded ozone levels that exceeded federal air quality standards, the highest number of exceedences since 2003. Lake County is significantly affected by lake breezes that tend to blow air pollution from Cleveland eastward and up the coast.

Air Quality Programs staff participate in outreach events to educate the public about the impacts of ozone and fine particle pollution, and register people to receive air quality advisories. On June 21, staff partnered with Laketran to promote Dump the Pump Day, asking people to leave their cars at home and consider alternative means of transportation, including transit, carpooling and bicycling. By “dumping the pump,” participants saved money on their work trip and helped reduce the amount of pollutants generated by vehicles.

On August 18, NOACA participated in the Lake County Captains’ Go Green Night at the ballpark. At all of its Go Green events, Captains management encourages fans to make more environmentally friendly decisions for health and sustainability. NOACA staff also encourages people to make more healthy decisions about their transportation choices, in order to reduce northeast Ohio’s pollution and improve the air everyone breathes.

Working for Cleaner Air

NOACA Updates Wastewater Boundaries

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 2000 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 boundary maps to all of 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.

In March, the NOACA Governing Board amended the region’s water quality management plan, Clean Water 2000, by updating the Lake County FPA boundary to accurately reflect the current boundaries of the Madison FPA.