3.5.2: Transit
Introduction
Transit is an important aspect of the transportation network, and mobility choices are vital to the health and vibrancy of a region. Public transit options reduce congestion, personal transportation costs, and carbon output. Public transit is not just a form of alternative transportation, but provides options for lower-income households, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Public transit provides access to healthcare, entertainment, and educational facilities, among other daily activities and destinations. The narrative below provides an overview of existing transit services and operators in the NOACA region. Provider characteristics, services and operations are included in the descriptions of each transit agency. A summary of the new Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, projects, investments, and fiscal needs over the term of AIM Forward 2040 as well as regional trends is also included.

Regional Trends - Transit
The region is experiencing a phenomenon known as “sprawl without growth.” Most metropolitan areas have increased in land area, often growing across municipal and county boundaries. As a consequence to this kind of “growth,” the NOACA region faces a continuous challenge associated with providing appropriate levels of public transportation and infrastructure to each geographic area.

Demand for transportation options other than the private automobile is on the rise, largely due to these trends:
- Transit ridership is on the raise in some areas.
- Older adults looking to age in place will increase transit demand.
- Younger professionals are looking to locate in places where transit is rich and accessible.
- The Millennial generation is driving less.
- Millennials tend to prefer walkable urban neighborhoods over suburbs, and prefer public transit, bicycling, and walking to driving.
- Downtown and neighborhoods adjacent to downtown are experiencing population growth and development.
- Development around transit tends to spur economic development.

Impacts of the FAST ACT on Transit
Congress establishes the funding for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs through authorizing legislation that amends Chapter 53 of Title 49 of the U.S. Code. On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, reauthorizing surface transportation programs through Fiscal Year 2020.

Procurement
Section 3019 of the FAST Act changed purchasing Section 3019 of the FAST Act changed purchasing procedures to offer more purchasing options for public transportation systems of varying sizes. Under the Act, multiple states and providers may purchase capital assets through cooperative

interstate procurements. The FAST Act also created a pilot program to allow nonprofit organizations to enter into cooperative procurement contracts. Under the new procurement procedures, transit agencies can lease equipment or facilities such as low- or no-emission components. Finally, the FAST Act established a Joint Procurement Clearinghouse to allow grantees to co-purchase rolling stock within a system that helps them identify procurement partners.

Buy America
The FAST ACT increases domestic percentage content requirements for Buy America through incremental increases. By FY2020, the Buy America requirement for rolling stock will total 70%. The FAST Act also makes important changes to the waiver denial process, requiring FTA to certify the availability and quality of the domestic sources for the product in the denied waiver.

State of Good Repair
The State of Good Repair grants program provides financial assistance to public transit agencies that operate rail fixed-guideway and high-intensity motorbus systems for the maintenance, replacement, and rehabilitation of capital assets, along with the development and implementation of transit asset management plans. These funds reflect a commitment to ensuring that public transit operates safely, efficiently, reliably, and sustainably so that communities can offer balanced transportation choices that help to improve mobility, reduce congestion, and encourage economic development.

Access and Mobility
New under the FAST Act, FTA will distribute funding under a pilot program for efforts that improve the coordination of transportation services that link with nonemergency medical care. Funding, intended for organizations that focus on coordinated transportation solutions, begins at $2 million in FY2016 and increases incrementally each year, topping out at $3.5 million in FY2019 and FY2020.

Research
The FAST Act renamed FTA’s research program the Public Transportation Innovation Program and authorized it to fund demonstration, deployment, and evaluation research projects. The research program features a new low- and no-emission vehicle component testing program funded at $3 million a year.

Bus and Bus Facilities
FTA’s Bus and Bus Facilities program received an increase in funding of $268 million over FY2015 levels, for a total of $696 million for FY2016. This program helps transit agencies fund new buses, replace aging fleets and facilities, and adds a new eligibility to deploy low- or no-emission vehicles.

The FAST Act reestablished a Bus Discretionary Access and Mobility Program that allows states to apply for project-specific funding via a competitive process. Many of the grants are expected to fund replacements for aging fleets or facilities. In FY2016, $268 million in funding will be available. Of that amount, $55 million has been designated for low- or no-emission bus deployment projects.

References
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
There are five different transit agencies operating within the NOACA region: Geauga County Transit (GCT), the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA), Laketran, Lorain County Transit (LTC), and Medina County Public Transit (MCPT). Brunswick Transit Alternative (BTA) merged with MCPT in 2017 and is now one system that operates independently with individual service areas. The additional agencies (Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority, or PARTA; Akron Metro Regional Transit Authority; and Stark Area Regional Transit Authority) also operate in the seven-county Cleveland Metropolitan Statistical Area. The map in Figure 3.5.2-1 displays the routes of each of the five transit agencies in the NOACA region as of 2017. GCT is not depicted on the map because the system provides only demand response. The region’s population density is declining, and the population is expanding outward into townships and previously rural areas. NOACA and the region’s transit systems will need to plan accordingly to meet the needs of the region’s population. It will be necessary to prioritize limited transportation funding. The region must balance transit needs with demands, determining where to expand or reduce service, and where to strengthen core service.
Transit Operators

Public transportation provides mobility and accessibility to all populations by providing travel choices that also reduce environmental impacts over single-occupancy vehicle travel. Mobility options are important to all people, but particularly to senior citizens and people with disabilities, and access to public transportation plays a key role in maintaining their quality of life. Public transit is not limited just to the urban core. In Northeast Ohio, transit also provides access to jobs and daily activities in suburban and rural areas. Where service areas of the five transit agencies in NOACA’s region meet or overlap, a regional fare agreement allows riders to transfer once between systems with no additional cost to the rider, though LCT is not part of this agreement.

Figure 3.5.2-2 was derived from reporting of the Ohio Department of Transportation’s Status of Public Transit in Ohio guide and the National Transit Database (NTD).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Service Area (sq mi)</th>
<th>Population Served</th>
<th>Passenger Trips (Fixed &amp; Demand Response)</th>
<th>E &amp; D Passengers</th>
<th>Fixed Route System Costs</th>
<th>Federal Funds (Operating) Fixed Route</th>
<th>Demand Response System Costs</th>
<th>Federal Funds (Operating) Demand Response</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>$0</td>
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<td>5,154,686</td>
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<td>$32,366,962</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional Transit Authority</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laketran</td>
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<td>240,025</td>
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<td>$742,893,00</td>
<td>$7,816,720</td>
<td>$1,479,638</td>
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<td>Lorain County Transit</td>
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<td>$0</td>
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<td>Transit Alternative</td>
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<td>$276,547</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>50,221,687</td>
<td>5,485,393</td>
<td>$223,761,997</td>
<td>$19,315,483</td>
<td>$43,859,625</td>
<td>$21,122,621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority
- Operates fixed route, demand response, and rail services
- Fares range from $1.00 (seniors and disabled) to $95 for a monthly pass
- Operating recovery ratio for fixed route is 21.9% and 1.5% for demand response
- Operating expense/trip for fixed route is $4.90 and $37.96 for demand response

Geauga County Transit
- Operates a demand response service only, and is a rural transit agency
- Fares range from $3.00 (seniors and disabled) to $8.00 for out-of-county trips

Laketran
- Operates fixed route, demand response, and commuter express
- Fares range from $0.75 (seniors and disabled) to $135 for a monthly pass
- Operating recovery ratio for fixed route is 18.7% and 18.3% for demand response
- Operating expense/trip for fixed route is $10.89 and $30.93 for demand response

Lorain County Transit
- Operates fixed route and demand response
- Fares range from $1.15 (seniors and disabled) to $94 for a monthly pass
- Operating recovery ratio for fixed route is 12.2% and 11.2% for demand response
- Operating expense/trip for fixed route is $8.92 and $80.63 for demand response

Medina County Public Transit
- Operates a demand-response service only
- Fares range from $1.00 (seniors and disabled) to $2.00
- Operating recovery ratio is 23.9%
- Operating expense/trip $17.18
The table in Figure 3.5.2-3 shows the average annual operating and capital expenses over the course of NOACA’s Fiscal Years 2018-21 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for each transit agency. These needs were extended to 2040 to represent long-term transit costs for the region. The projected expenses are not adjusted for inflation. A little more than $271 million is needed annually to operate the region’s transportation systems. The financial forecast of operating expenses through 2040 is $6.2 billion. GCRTA is by far the largest transit system operating in the region and accounts for more than 94% percent of the region’s operating and capital needs.

More information on projections and annualized costs are available in Chapter 5: Financial Plan for the NOACA Region.

**VAN POOL Operators**

Vanpools are an element of the transit system that allow groups of people to share the ride similar to a carpool, but on a larger scale with concurrent savings in fuel and vehicle operating costs. Each rider pays a monthly fee, which covers all the costs gas, insurance, and repairs. Generally a van pool is started by 5 or more persons that generally live in the same area and are employed at the same place or in a location that is adjacent.

GCRTA is starting a new vanpool service. Commuters from some of the regions biggest employers will have this option available as a substitute for single car occupancy trips. The service will be run through GCRTA but be operated by V-Ride. V-ride is a ride-sharing platform that offers work commuting options for those going to the same place of employment. The program is still being developed and project details are not available at this time. Please check http://www.riderta.com/ for more information.

**Impact of Loss of Medicare Revenue for Transit**

Starting in July 2017, the State of Ohio will lose the tax revenue it is collecting from Medicaid managed care organizations. The federal government ended the practice of collecting taxes from these organizations, which allowed Ohio and other states to collect millions of dollars in tax revenue. As a result, the state of Ohio will lose close to a billion dollars in funding. Each of the five counties and the transit agencies in the NOACA region will also lose major funding.

By 2018, GCRTA’s loss will be close to $18 million in sales tax revenue, which will result in service cuts and possible staffing layoffs. Laketran will lose close to $500 million and may also have to cut service. The other smaller systems (Medina, BTA, and LCT) also stand to lose funding depending on the loss from the counties they are located in. If this problem is not fixed, it could result in a significant reduction in public transit services across the entire NOACA region.

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**Figure 3.5.2-3: Average Annual Transit Operating and Capital Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Average Annual Operating Expenses</th>
<th>Projected Operating Expenses Through 2040</th>
<th>Average Annual Capital Expenses</th>
<th>Projected Capital Expenses Through 2040</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geauga County Transit</td>
<td>$1,500,898</td>
<td>$34,520,654</td>
<td>$178,364</td>
<td>$4,102,372</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority*</td>
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<td>$5,825,900,000</td>
<td>$83,685,900</td>
<td>$1,924,775,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laketran</td>
<td>$12,086,000</td>
<td>$277,978,000</td>
<td>$5,010,487</td>
<td>$115,241,201</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lorain County Transit</td>
<td>$1,493,587</td>
<td>$34,352,501</td>
<td>$525,759</td>
<td>$12,092,457</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medina County Public Transit/ BTA</td>
<td>$3,050,000</td>
<td>$70,150,000</td>
<td>$466,650</td>
<td>$10,732,950</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total for NOACA Region</td>
<td>$271,430,485</td>
<td>$6,242,901,155</td>
<td>$89,867,160</td>
<td>$2,066,944,680</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Annualizes $300M of rail cars across 23 years of the plan at $13.2M per year. Actual plan needs cost tables have them scheduled as follows:**

2022 = $50M; 2023 = $100M; 2024 = $100M; and 2025 = $50M
Achieving Increased Mobility for Northeast Ohio

Long Range Planning for Transit Agencies

A part of NOACA’s long-range transportation planning process is to incorporate the long-range planning efforts and goals of the regional transit agencies. Each agency prioritizes goals and projects for transit and establishes a long-range planning vision. Public transit planning is a cooperative process among transit operators; a proactive public participation process; and NOACA, as the region’s metropolitan planning organization. The narratives below provide a brief overview of each transit operator’s long-range planning goals, bus replacement schedule, and projected costs.

Geauga County Transit (GCT)

Geauga County Transit is prepared to meet the growing transportation needs of the county. Increased use of computerized scheduling, billing, and maintenance that uses global positioning, mobile data terminals, and reduced voice traffic for instant communications to each vehicle will help improve customer service, while maintaining each operator’s ability to deliver passengers to their destinations on time in a safer manner. Additional plans are being developed to offer increased service hours of operation, and GCT has a commitment to increase its ability to respond to the demands of residents for transportation services within a changing rural county environment.

Welfare to Work programs, human services, and mental health agencies continue to develop programs that require transportation services for clients. From extended weekday hours to evening and weekend service, GCT continues to strive to serve the needs of all residents of the county through safe and reliable transportation.

Due to the current lack of any local dedicated funding, GCT can only include vehicle replacement in the 20-year plan. GCT currently replaces three vehicles per year at an estimated cost of $75,000 per vehicle. The agency will continue on that course and projects a three-vehicle-per-year replacement schedule. GCT’s hopes to expand service with fixed route, larger vehicles and service to adjoining counties, but this will be dependent on funding.

Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA)

GCRTA presently provides service to 59 municipalities and operates approximately 63 bus, five trolleys, one bus rapid transit, one heavy-rail line, and two light-rail lines. GCRTA bus service includes 454 buses, 1,332 shelters, 8,557 bus stops, and 66 routes for a total of 19.7 million service miles. Rail service includes 60 heavy-rail cars, 48 light-rail cars, 52 stations, and 34 miles of one-way track, providing 2.5 million service miles. In addition, GCRTA’s Paratransit District operates 81 vehicles with a variety of services for persons with disabilities and seniors. The total area served by GCRTA is approximately 458 square miles and contains a population of 1.3 million people. Ridership for 2015 totaled 48.3 million passenger trips.

Over the past several years, GCRTA has worked to refine its performance measurement, budgeting, and business planning activities to ensure that current operations and capital improvements support the agency’s mission and strategic direction. This strategic direction is embodied in the five policy goals identified by its Board of Trustees. These goals are shown below and support the authority’s Mission Statement to provide safe, reliable, clean, and courteous public transportation.

- **Customer focus:** Provide safe, high-quality services to all customers, and support our employees in that endeavor.
- **Expand and reorganize service:** Expand and reorganize service to retain our current riders and attract new riders by providing service that meets customer and community needs.
- **Prepare for the future:** Prepare for the future by forging new partnerships and strengthening existing ones with the public and private sectors to establish policies, funding, innovations, and technologies that support cost-effective public transportation.
- **Improve financial health:** Improve the agency’s financial health through efficient use of resources and the pursuit of new and innovative revenue sources.
- **Provide community benefits:** Provide social and economic benefits to the community through system improvements, and increase community awareness of these contributions.

Laketran

Laketran is the public transit agency that serves Lake County, Ohio. It offers a family of services, consisting of fixed route, commuter express, and Dial-a-Ride (paratransit) service throughout the county. In 2010, Lake County ranked 11th of 88 counties in Ohio in population (230,041 residents), but is, geographically, the smallest at 231 square miles. Lake County is composed of 23 communities including nine cities, nine villages, and five townships, and is part of the Cleveland Urbanized Area.

Laketran’s goal is to provide quality transit service to the citizens of Lake County. Some of the major focus areas included in the agency’s current report, Access to Opportunity 2014-2023, include:

- Extending service on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.
- Providing service on Sundays
- Creating routes to underserved areas of Lake County
- Keeping up with new technology to provide better/quicker customer service to our citizens/communities
- Making fleet and building improvements as necessary

These items are in no particular order of importance or what service area Laketran would provide first, but echo the agency’s mission statement to provide quality public transportation services to all Lake County residents with special emphasis on meeting the transportation needs of senior citizens and people with disabilities. As always, these goals are contingent on future funding.

Lorain County Transit (LCT)

LCT promotes efficient and economic public transportation, which encourages economic development and increases opportunities to enhance independence and the quality of life in Lorain County. Lorain County Transit has four routes and six buses that service the cities of Elyria and Lorain. Due to funding constraints LCT has no major capital projects planned over the next 20 years. Over the past few years LCT and Lorain County has been looking for strategies to increase transit funding to expand the existing service. Multiple studies have shown the need for county residents to have a more robust system than what is currently in place. Lorain County currently is without a dedicated public transportation tax. A few attempts to pass tax levies were proffered but did not pass, other strategies should be explored. LCT recently was granted monies through the TLCI Program to do a transit plan for the county. Planning has yet to begin on the project.

Medina County Public Transit (MCPT) and Brunswick Transit Alternative (BTA)

Since NOACA’s last long-range transportation plan, Connections+ 2035, MCPT has transformed from a rural to an urban system and merged services with BTA. For the past five years, MCPT had been operating, staffing, and taking service calls with BTA, and has performed administrative and maintenance functions. The system is now managed and operated by MCPT. Given the increased need for public transportation and continued population growth, MCPT expects to continue to grow with the needs of the community. Long-range planning goals include the following:

- Created commuter routes to Cleveland and Akron
- Establish additional fixed or deviated fixed routes in Medina and Brunswick
- Establish fixed routes in the City of Wadsworth
- Increase ad revenue
- Install additional bus stop signs to existing routes and future routes
- Install bus shelters on fixed routes
- Replace four to five buses per year

These goals are in line with MCPT’s mission to provide safe, reliable, quality public transportation services to all residents of Medina County.

Vehicle Replacement Schedule Agencies

Vehicle Replacement Schedule Agencies have also provided NOACA, through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), with five-year fiscal projections for operations and capital. Figure 3.5.2-4 shows the bus replacement schedule and associated costs for each transit agency projected to 2040. Based on the information provided, approximately 70 transit vehicles are to be replaced on an annual basis at a cost of more than $36 million dollars. Over the life of the 20-year long-range transportation plan, basic planned bus replacements will cost more than $725 million dollars (unadjusted). This does not include maintenance or upgrades to existing fleets.

### Figure 3.5.2-4: Vehicle Replacement Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Projected Annual Vehicle Replacements</th>
<th>Annual Costs for Vehicle Replacements</th>
<th>Projected Vehicle Replacements for 2040</th>
<th>Projected Vehicle Replacement Costs for 2040</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brunswick Transit Alternative</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (Fixed Route)</td>
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<td>Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (Rail)</td>
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<td><strong>1,514</strong></td>
<td><strong>$725,032,000</strong></td>
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</table>

Data submitted by transit agencies and are estimated costs. No data available for Geauga County.
Achieving Increased Mobility for Northeast Ohio

**Recommendations**

**Vision for Transit**

The overall vision for transit remains similar to the vision described in the previous long-range transportation plan. The primary goal is to serve the needs of the transit-dependent population, while continuing to offer a competitive alternative for all riders throughout the region. Transit is an important factor in contributing to the region's economic prosperity. Shaping the future of transit is necessary as the need for good quality transit increases. In NOACA's 2015 Strategic Plan Going Forward, Together, one of the goals is to "Build a sustainable multimodal transportation system." Objectives identified to help achieve this goal are to:

- Enhance and improve coordination for public transit, rail, pedestrian and bicycle transportation
- Improve access to regional job centers, employment opportunities, and city centers

The purpose of this vision is to highlight the long-term benefits of an integrated transit network that is coordinated with land use, infrastructure, and improved service. The vision’s goals and strategies are drawn from public and stakeholder outreach as well as analysis by NOACA staff and transit agencies to improve overall service as well as pedestrian and bike access to transit.

**Transit Planning Efforts**

A central aspect of the vision is improving the way that we move around the region and provide access to support development through transportation infrastructure. Choice means increasing both the number of destinations that are easily accessible and the use of mode accessed to arrive. All of the region’s transit systems have plans to maintain and possibly expand their respective systems better to accommodate for these conditions.

Expanding public transit requires significant capital investment; however, the potential advantages of a well-planned project are often greater than the costs. Public transit benefits include:

- Connecting people and jobs
- Improving mobility for people of all ages
- Stimulating and focusing new development on sites near transit
- Creating and supporting jobs by providing a reliable alternative to driving
- Moving more people in the same amount of road space
- Improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Reducing household transportation costs

**Public and Stakeholder Input on Transit**

Through initial public outreach, as well as a series of regional discussions conducted by NOACA and, were identified as being important to the future of transit in the region. Some that were mentioned are stated below.

- More funding should be allocated to transit.
- There should be better transit connections between counties.
- Technology should be incorporated into transit services.
- Improved signage and transit amenities (e.g., bus shelters) are needed.
- Add more or new commuter bus routes to downtown for work.
- Buses, trains, and stations need to be safer.
- The State of Ohio conducted a Statewide Transit Needs study in 2014. Part of the process was to gauge the public’s priorities. The activity was called “Build Your Own Transit System.” Participants were given an opportunity to spend dollars on what they thought were priorities to build a transit system.

**Transit Improvement Top Priorities from the online “Build Your Own Transit System” tool from the Ohio Statewide Transit Study include:**

- Build more/different types of transit services
- Increase service in Urban Areas
- Create more regional bus service
- Improve transit overall in the region

**Similar to the Statewide Transit Study, NOACA also launched an electronic survey tool, Crowd Gauge, in fall 2016 to gauge the public’s priorities. The most popular project category under transit was adding new transit service. Below are other priorities and policies that placed high in the rankings.**

- Restore recently cut bus and rapid transit services
- Improve GPS tracking on buses and trains
- Provide more frequent service on existing transit corridors
- Invest in making the transit system more user-friendly
- Encourage new employment centers to locate near existing transit corridors
- Enhance transit system coordination between counties

The priorities of the public and stakeholders are comparable with the goals and long-term planning vision of NOACA. Having similar goals helps with presenting the region’s priorities and plans to state and federal entities.
Implementation Action Areas

Strategies to Enhance Transit

Transit is an important component of the transportation network. Residents, employees, and visitors benefit greatly from transit services, and an opportunity exists to increase the role of transit in the region. Over the coming years, an important goal for transit will be to enhance service to increase attractiveness and more fully integrate services into the multimodal transportation framework of the region.

It takes more than vehicles carrying riders for communities to receive their return on investments in transit. Design policies are integral elements to ensuring that people can identify and access the transit system, while land-use and zoning policies help concentrate people and mix land uses to maximize transit’s effectiveness.

When combined, design and land-use policies increase not only transit’s ridership potential, but also its value as an economic development and sustainability tool. Ultimately, these synergistic efforts help to create a place with the greatest chances for community building.

The following guidelines are recommended to help the communities of Northeast Ohio reap the maximum benefits of the transit investments.

Guidelines

Density

Successful transit generally requires a minimum of seven residential units per acre in residential areas, 25 employees per acre in commercial centers, and about two to four times as much for premium quality transit. Increased population and employment densities place more potential riders within a five- to 10-minute walk of transit stations/stops and higher densities. These densities create adequate transit ridership to justify frequent service and help create active street life and commercial activities, such as grocery stores and coffee shops, within convenient walking distance of homes and worksites.

Mixed-Uses

Traditional, or Euclidean, zoning separates land uses, sets density thresholds and minimum lot sizes, and usually contains explicit regulations such as bulk and height controls and minimum parking requirements. To support transit, however, traditional zoning is often turned on its head (i.e., uses are intermixed, not excluded, and parking caps, rather than parking floors, are sometimes set).

To support transit, especially around high-capacity stations, a municipality can create a special zone or change existing classifications. More common than either rezoning or new designations, however, is the creation of an overlay zone. As its name implies, an overlay zone is placed on the zoning map over a base zone. The overlay modifies, eliminates, or adds regulations to the base zone. Overlays provide for effective land-use control without increasing the complexity of the regulations.

The uses included in a transit supportive community should generate trips throughout the day. This strategy takes advantage of unused transit supply in off-peak hours and results in routes that are more productive than in areas with traditional rush-hour peaks.

Pedestrian Orientation

Pedestrians who can walk to different land uses in less than 10 minutes are more likely to use those sites, including retail establishments, parks, and community facilities. Placing daily goods and services, as well as recreational destinations, within walking distance of residences increases the incentive to use alternative transportation modes, supporting transit use for commuting and other regional travel. See Chapter 3.5c on Active Transportation for more information.

Access and Connections

For transit to be successful, pedestrians must be able to access the service easily and easily walk when they get off the bus or train. When given sidewalks or traffic-calmed streets to walk along, safe and convenient ways to cross streets, and a comfortable and attractive environment, most people are willing to walk farther to reach public transportation. By providing the infrastructure and support services to access public transportation in a variety of ways, the use of the public transportation system will increase and result in smoother mode transition and better connectivity between all modes of transportation.

Transit Infrastructure and Amenities

Transit stops that are easy to find and use are critical to passengers getting on and off the vehicle, regardless of whether the transit mode is a bus or train. Adequate pedestrian accessibility and enhanced passenger amenities at transit stops are critical to attracting people to transit. Provision of stop infrastructure is frequently tied to the number of riders who board and alight at each stop. The greater the number of riders (currently or planned), the greater the capital investment.

Another important component of bus stops consists of safety and security measures, which increase transit effectiveness. Safety and security requires transit operators to provide a predominantly controlled environment so riders feel safe.

Providing a safe and secure environment requires a combination of design features, response plans, evaluation of public perception, and coordination between the multiple transit services and levels of government.

Another goal from NOACA’s 2015 Strategic Plan is to “Encourage transit oriented development in higher-density urban corridors and other higher-density areas of the region and retrofitting transit oriented elements in appropriate lower-density areas.” To accomplish this goal, NOACA must prioritize investments that can facilitate this kind of development. Moreover, these projects should foster better connectivity throughout the region.

NOACA has plans to embark on more transit-related projects in the future and to be a resource and partner to the region’s existing transit agencies. One of the significant initiatives currently underway is a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Scorecard and Implementation Plan. This project seeks to help increase ridership and promote development in and around the region’s transit stations and high-performing bus corridors. NOACA also seeks to remove barriers to, and advance incentives for, equitable TOD in Northeast Ohio for all populations, while increasing public understanding and awareness around the benefits of TOD. Equitable TOD combines place-based and people-based approaches to develop solutions that address the needs of all residents. The TOD Scorecard will be a fluid tool that NOACA will use to prioritize investments and offer as a resource for the region’s communities that are looking to implement TOD strategies in their areas.

**What is Transit Oriented Development (TOD)?**

Transit oriented development (TOD) promotes a mixture of housing, retail, services, workplaces, and open space within walking distance of transit to maximize use of the transit system. By directing compact development to existing developed areas that are well–served by transit, TOD reduces public infrastructure costs over time and preserves regional open space. Pedestrian– and bike–friendly TOD has numerous public benefits, including decreased congestion, a greater range of housing options, fewer emissions, and improved public health by creating walkable neighborhoods that promote physical activity. TOD real estate projects feature reduced parking, increased density, and building orientation toward transit and the pedestrian environment. TOD lowers combined housing and transportation costs by reducing the need to drive and own cars for commuting and daily trips, and promotes economic opportunity by linking residents with employment and service destinations.

**NOACA’s Role in Transit-Oriented Development**

NOACA is neither a land-use jurisdiction nor a transit provider. Most cities and towns in the region have departments of planning and/or community development, which have the most direct day-to-day ability to influence TOD. NOACA, however, can advance TOD by acting as a regional advocate; by providing technical assistance and planning support to localities that wish to embrace TOD; and by targeting public investment and development finance incentives toward specific TOD opportunities.

NOACA already influences TOD through two core activities. Like other MPOs, NOACA plays a key role in allocating federal and state funding for roadway and transit projects within its five-county region, and these investments have an impact on the pattern of land use and economic development. NOACA also operates the Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (TLCI) (see Chapter 3.5 on the TLCI), which helps communities plan the interface of transportation and land use in specific districts or corridors.

**Aging-in-Place with TOD**

Only a small percentage of Americans move after they reach retirement age. Over time, access to daily needs can be problematic for aging populations. Without access to affordable travel options, seniors face isolation, reduced quality of life, and potential economic hardship. TOD can provide mobility choices for seniors. The Regional TOD Scorecard and Implementation Plan is going to focus on identifying potential policies and programs to locate housing and services for seniors closer to the fixed-route transit system to expand transportation choice. This work will be coordinated with NOACA’s 5310 program (see Chapter 3.5b1 on Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities).

**A No-Growth Region**

TOD is generally associated with regions that are growing. Some have grown rapidly and consistently for decades where TOD is embraced as an alternative to continued sprawl. Others, including several older “legacy” markets, including Northeast Ohio, with historically transit-oriented development patterns, have maintained at least some growth at the metropolitan level while their central cities have remained flat or resumed modest growth.
TOD in Northeast Ohio

Northeast Ohio is changing. Central cities that were historically the centers of the region are, for the most part, being abandoned. Once-dense urban neighborhoods now struggle with high rates of vacancy. Outside the cities, working farmland and undeveloped landscapes are being converted to new subdivisions, office parks, and shopping centers as people and jobs move to the suburbs. Region-wide, population and employment growth have been flat. The distance between jobs, schools, homes, stores, and parks are increasing, and transportation options are increasingly limited to personal vehicles. A portion of the population (i.e., choice riders, millennials and seniors) who want true transportation options, however, have been spurring some recent demand for neighborhoods in the urban core near transit. That demand coupled with the momentum from the work of NOACA and its regional partners has opened up a great opportunity for transit oriented development within the region.

Over the next 20 years, the number of Americans age 65 and older will increase to more than 71 million—growing from 12% to 20% of the total population; this is also true for Northeast Ohio. The car and suburb-oriented Baby Boomer generation is coming to the point where neighborhoods that are overabundant in auto amenities and lacking in pedestrian amenities are no longer viable places to age. For this reason, developing new and innovative approaches to meet the changing transportation needs of an aging Northeast Ohio is essential.

Public transportation is a vital aspect to how we help engage and provide means for independence to seniors. But running a bus or train through a neighborhood doesn’t necessarily fix mobility issues. Paratransit, or on-demand door-to-door service, is essential in helping the elderly and the disabled complete their daily tasks.

TOD plans communities around public transportation. The planning is specifically formulated to encourage active living for all ages, but can create walkable communities where seniors can “age in place” with a neighborhood focused around convenient and efficient transit and dense mixed-use development.

In November 2010, Northeast Ohio was awarded a $4.25 million federal grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to fund the development of a regional sustainability plan. To manage the three-year planning process, the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) was established in January 2011. NEOSCC’s Vibrant Neo 2040 report was a result of this process. Vibrant NEO 2040 is a culmination of a coordinated and integrated approach to planning efforts for land use, transportation, economic and workforce development, and infrastructure investments for a 12-county planning area made up of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Summit, Stark, Trumbull, and Wayne counties. Some of the key recommendations from this report that are related to TOD are:

1. Develop a robust network of regional job centers connected by multimodal transportation corridors within and between counties.
2. Encourage higher frequency of mixed-use development and a range of diverse affordable housing options.
3. Enhance and coordinate the region’s bus and rail service.

While TOD most commonly occurs within walking distance of fixed-guideway transit systems, there are areas of Northeast Ohio that are not near a rail stop, but are nonetheless rich with bus, pedestrian, and bicycle amenities and land uses that can support the reduced auto dependence commonly associated with TOD.

Funding for transit and transportation infrastructure is a challenge in Northeast Ohio. Therefore it is more important than ever for the region to be highly strategic in making decisions about directing future investments and ensuring that investments have a catalytic impact on the market for TOD. This effort is one component of a comprehensive TOD implementation strategy that will require the coordination and involvement of many public and private entities throughout the region.

The full report on the TOD Project is on NOACA’s website, www.noaca.org.
Performance Management Techniques promote informed decision making, which allow investments to be objectively planned and prioritized. In a constrained funding environment, it is critical to be able to identify the projects and investments that will provide the highest level of benefit.

Performance management plays a central role in federal, state, regional, and local transportation planning and funding. The FAST Act stipulates that long-range transportation plans (LRTPs) and the overall work program (OWP) must include a description of the performance measures and performance targets used in assessing the performance of the transportation system, and a system performance report that evaluates the condition and performance of the transportation system. NOACA is currently in the process of creating and vetting possible performance measures with the public, transit agencies, and regional stakeholders. Performance measures will help NOACA monitor and plan its investments for better decision making. The current measures that are being vetted are:

- **Accessibility & Mobility**: 100% mobility and access to opportunities and activities on various modes are available for all area residents, visitors, and organizations. The strategic measures are job access, equity, transportation affordability; network completeness; distribution of the population to alternative transportation; and distribution of jobs to alternative transportation.
- **Economic Vitality**: A growing, competitive 21st century economy. The strategic measures are transit proximity and commute mode share.
- **System Condition**: The transportation system is preserved and maintained in a good condition. The strategic measure is the transit system state of good repair.
- **System Performance**: The transportation system achieves reliable and efficient performance at 100%. The strategic measures are transit service effectiveness and transit cost efficiency.

**Transit Asset Management Plan**

In July 2016, FTA published a Final Rule for Transit Asset Management. The rule requires FTA grantees to develop asset management plans for their public transportation assets, including vehicles, facilities, equipment, and other infrastructure. Transit Asset Management (TAM) is a model that uses asset condition to help prioritize funding to achieve or maintain transit networks in a state of good repair. Many of the region’s transit agencies have a TAM or are working on creating one. NOACA seeks to formalize this process and provide a regional framework and/or plan for the transit agencies to use. NOACA is just beginning to focus on this work and will begin the process of developing a Regional TAM in 2017.

**Transit System Resilience**

Resilience (also called reliability and risk management) refers to a system’s ability to accommodate variable and unexpected conditions without catastrophic failure. Resilience reflects uncertainty, our inability to know what combination of conditions will occur in the future. A comprehensive Resilience Program would make the NOACA region’s transit systems and infrastructure stronger and more reliable. Although extreme weather events such as hurricanes and earthquakes are not a common occurrence in the region, Northeast Ohio does deal with harsh winters that can degrade the existing transit infrastructure. Coming up with a regional plan with strategies and performance measures that can help mitigate these problems would increase transit system resilience. More work and research needs to be done to assess the need accurately and to execute a comprehensive resilience program, but the first step would be to start with the metrics and information from the Transit Asset Management Plan and System Performance Measures and progress into an overall comprehensive strategy.

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