MEMORANDUM

TO: NOACA Board of Directors
FROM: Grace Gallucci, Executive Director
DATE: June 24, 2020
RE: Commitment to Racial Equity

ACTION REQUESTED
No action is requested. This item is for presentation and discussion only at this time.

BACKGROUND/JUSTIFICATION FOR CURRENT ACTION
At the June 12, 2020 Board of Directors meeting, the members were presented with a statement from the American Planning Association concerning “righting the wrongs of racial inequity”, which read “recent grave injustices…must be viewed in light of the historical trauma inflicted on African American communities, including discrimination wrought by the planning profession itself. APA recognizes this reality and is working to center equity in all planning processes in keeping with our mission of creating great communities for all.”

The members had a very thorough discussion regarding equity in all facets of NOACA’s work, including racial equity. Furthermore, the members sought to formally articulate a commitment to equity and develop an action plan. The Board passed approved Resolution No. 2020-028 (attached), which states: The NOACA Board of Directors pledge to create a statement and action steps to reflect NOACA’s commitment to racial equity in planning. As directed, a special Board meeting was scheduled to facilitate a thoughtful and comprehensive discussion around this important topic.

At the June 19, 2020 Special Board Meeting, the members had a comprehensive discussion around elements of a statement and action plan reflecting NOACA’s commitment to racial equity in planning. Based on the conversation at the June 19, 2020 meeting, staff will provide definitions and prepare draft language as a starting point for the members as they construct their message.

FINANCIAL IMPACT
There is no financial impact.

CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS
The members will adopt a commitment statement and action plan addressing equity that will be integrated into NOACA’s work.

GG/ks/3124b

Attachments:
RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY

WHEREAS, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina, and the areawide water quality management planning agency for the same region; and

WHEREAS, NOACA’s guiding mission and values support building an equitable future for our region within a framework that recognizes the ways to facilitate change by connecting our neighborhoods, communities and assets to enhance the quality of life for all; and

WHEREAS, recognizes the need to embrace our differences and become more inclusive to bridge the divide through the advancement of programs, policies and improvements that are inclusive, fair, and benefit everyone; and

WHEREAS, use our existing work with urban core communities, workforce mobility, transit-oriented development, transportation for livable communities, land-use and general transportation access, as well as new initiatives, as a foundation to build a better and more equitable plan for Northeast Ohio; and

WHEREAS, support our local government members across the region as they work to eliminate racism and discrimination, especially the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County in declaring racism to be a public health crisis; and

WHEREAS, at the June 12, 2020 Board of Directors meeting, the members had a very thorough discussion regarding equity in all facets of NOACA’s work, including racial equity. Furthermore, the members sought to formally articulate a commitment to equity, particularly racial equity in planning, and develop an action plan; and

WHEREAS, the Board approved Resolution No. 2020-028, which states: The NOACA Board of Directors pledge to create a statement and action steps to reflect NOACA’s commitment to racial equity in planning; and

WHEREAS, at the June 19, 2020 Special Board Meeting, the members had a comprehensive discussion around elements of a statement and action plan reflecting NOACA’s commitment to racial equity in planning, but required another meeting to continue the thoughtful and comprehensive discussion around this important topic; and

WHEREAS, at the June 26, 2020 Special Board meeting, after a robust discussion, the members developed a commitment to racial equity in planning statement and action steps; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, consisting of forty-six principal elected and other officials of general purpose local government throughout the counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina, that:

Section 1: The NOACA Board of Directors developed a statement and action steps to reflect NOACA’s commitment to racial equity in planning:

NOACA serves 2.1 million racially, ethnically and socioeconomically diverse people across a five county region in Northeast Ohio. Recent events of civil unrest underscore that racial justice remains a prominent issue yet to be fully addressed, but absolutely necessary in order to achieve an equitable society. The NOACA Board of Directors is aware of the consequences
of historic racism and its legacy that has resulted in systemic racism, which is defined as a form of racism, intentional or unintentional, that is embedded as normal practice within society. Consistent with NOACA’s guiding mission and values, we are committed to doing our part to eradicate racism. We commit to justice and equity, taking a stand against the ongoing impacts of racism in our region and across the country. We unequivocally condemn racism, injustice and inequality.

Although NOACA has made advances toward achieving equity in its planning and resource allocation and has realized some success through the process of continuous improvement and best practices, to eradicate racism and its negative effects on our communities of color, we are committed to exploring, listening and learning to further address the impacts that racism may have in decision making and organizational practices. We are committed to understanding, evaluating and measuring how our policies and actions impact equity in our region. We will continue to embrace diversity, strive for equity, and seek inclusion in all our efforts; and, we will ensure that these actions remain explicit values that are always reflected as a core component of our work. We will commit to creating a Subcommittee of the Policy Committee and to developing a plan to ensure racial equity is embedded in all of our work.

NOACA recognizes the historically inequitable results of transportation planning in Northeast Ohio and throughout the country, particularly the development of the highway system, which have facilitated and heightened racially segregated communities and disparate outcomes relative to mobility and access to opportunity. We are aware that there are still inequity implications across the region and nation. We will seek to better understand the root causes of racial disparities linked to transportation and the environment, such as development patterns, and promote a deeper awareness of their correlations, with the goal of eliminating them. We will be more comprehensive in our planning scope, focusing on the relationship of transportation and environmental planning to housing, land use, economic development and health outcomes. We intend to achieve planning solutions that are not only highly equitable but also help correct structural problems that perpetuate racial inequity.

NOACA is committed to be a leader in transforming our region into one where equity is achieved by creating access to opportunity through transportation and environmental planning, focusing on inclusive practices that empower all citizens in our regions. We will apply an equity lens, with a specific focus on racial equity, to the important work that we do, and we will do it with intentionality and transparency. The resulting economic and social outcomes will create a healthier and more prosperous Northeast Ohio region for all.

Certified to be a true copy of a Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency adopted this 26th day of June, 2020.

Secretary:

Date Signed: 7/9/20