NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY

MEMORANDUM

TO: NOACA Board of Directors

FROM: Grace Gallucci, Executive Director

DATE: January 16, 2015

RE: Resolution 2015-004: Regional Strategic Plan

ACTION REQUESTED
The Board of Directors is asked to approve Resolution 2015-004, which adopts NOACA Strategic Plan: Going Forward Together (http://www.noaca.org/index.aspx?page=3374) as the agency’s regional strategic plan. The Planning and Programming, Policy, and External Affairs Committees have recommended various components of the plan during its development.

BACKGROUND/JUSTIFICATION FOR CURRENT ACTION
For more than a year NOACA has been developing a regional strategic plan. This has included the development of a vision statement, goals, objectives and strategies. During late May and early June, we conducted public involvement on these efforts through online forums at the Civic Commons, three public meetings, and a public event at Ideastream.

Most recently the External Affairs and Planning and Programming Committee recommended approval of the objectives. Staff will present a summary of the Plan document at the meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPACT
There is no financial impact to this action.

CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS
Following Board adoption the regional strategic plan will guide the development and completion of future agency work efforts.

GG/bd/2804b
RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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 agency for the same region; and

WHEREAS, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) has engaged in a multi-year effort to develop a regional strategic plan to guide the agency’s work efforts; and

WHEREAS, this effort included significant public engagement activities in addition to the efforts of the Board and its Standing Committees over the course of the development period; and

WHEREAS, the Board approved vision statement, and the Committee approved goals, objectives and strategies will provide a solid guiding framework for future activities at the agency.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, consisting of 45 principal officials serving general purpose local governments throughout and within the counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina that:

Section 1. The NOACA Strategic Plan: Going Forward Together is adopted as the agency’s regional strategic plan.

Section 2. The Executive Director is authorized to transmit certified copies of this resolution to the appropriate federal, state, and local agencies.

Certified to be a true copy of a Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency adopted this 23rd day of January 2015.

Secretary: [Signature]

Date Signed: 1-23-15
Figure 5: Audience During Panel Discussion
Figure 6: Small Group Discussion
Figure 7: Small Group Discussion with Panelists
Figure 8: Small Group Discussion with Panelists and Boards
Figure A-1: Vacant Land in the NOACA Region
Figure A-2: Vacant Land in Current Trend Scenario
Figure A-3: Net Change in Total Families and Total Single Family Detached Homes, 2000-2008
Figure A-4: Difference in Revenue and Expenditure by County
Figure A-5: Revenue-to-Spending Ratio for 12-County NEOSCC Region
Figure A-6: Historical and Projected Population for NOACA Region and Counties
Figure A-7: NOACA Region Population Density (1950)
Figure A-8: NOACA Region Population Density (1970)
Figure A-9: NOACA Region Population Density (1990)
Figure A-10: NOACA Region Population Density (2010)
Figure A-11: 1990-2010 Median Age of Residents in Northeast Ohio Counties, Ohio and US
Figure A-12: Percent of Population by Age Group for 5-County NOACA Region and US 1990-2010
Figure A-13: NOACA Region Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)
Figure A-14: NOACA Region Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)
Figure A-15: Cuyahoga County Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)
Figure A-16: Cuyahoga County Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)
Figure A-17: Geauga County Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)
Figure A-18: Geauga County Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)
Figure A-19: Lake County Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)
Figure A-20: Lake County Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)
Figure A-21: Lorain County Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)
Figure A-22 Lorain County Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)
Figure A-23: Medina County Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)
Figure A-24: Medina County Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)
Figure A-25: 2002-2012 GCRTA Demand Response Annual Unlinked Trips
Figure A-26: Why the Driving Boom is Over
Figure A-27 Total and Per Capita Vehicle Miles Traveled, US
Figure A-28: Median Housing Value of Owner-Occupied Units, US and Northeast Ohio (2011$)
Figure A-29: Median Housing Value of Owner-Occupied Units, US and Northeast Ohio (2011$)
Figure A-30: Downtown Cleveland Unemployment Numbers (2002-2011)
Figure A-31: Regional Non-Farm Employment Positions (1970-2044)
Figure A-32: Regional Total Aggregated Wages for Population (1975-2013)
Figure A-33: Regional Gross Domestic Product (1978-2044)
Chapter 1: Introduction

As a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) charged with developing the transportation system and environmental compliance of the region it serves, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) makes many plans. First and foremost, it develops a short-term transportation improvement program (TIP) and a quadrennial Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which analyze the performance of the transportation network and identify specific regional transportation projects intended to address mobility needs and bring improved integration and coordination to the regional transportation network. NOACA also participates at various levels in the development of more localized plans for transportation improvements. Furthermore, NOACA is the “areawide” agency responsible for air and water quality and subsequently prepares plans to support federal, state and local government solutions to associated environmental concerns.

A strategic plan differs substantially from these types of plans, and is not a replacement for any of those plans. The NOACA Regional Strategic Plan is fundamentally not a transportation planning document, but an organizational development document. It is less concerned with the state of the transportation system, and more concerned with the demographic and economic trends that will shape the region over the next 20 to 30 years. Plans like the TIP and LRTP are tools that NOACA uses to carry out its mission—to carry out transportation and environmental planning under local direction and in accordance with federal and state mandates. However, implicit in that mission and the plans that NOACA uses to carry it out is a vision that provides the impetus to, and guides, NOACA’s activities. A strategic plan captures and documents the ultimate reasons that an agency does what it does, based on input from those who lead, operate, and are served by the organization. It defines the agency’s vision and goals, and identifies strategies for how to allocate resources—money, staffing, and Board and stakeholder activities—in pursuit of the agency’s goals.

Balancing the competing interests of a region of extraordinary diversity, ranging from compact urban neighborhoods to sprawling suburbs and productive agricultural lands, has always been a challenge for NOACA. The NOACA region also faces many challenges related to growth, development and economic sustainability. The regional population is not growing, but is growing older. The regional economy, while showing signs of life in some sectors, has struggled for many years to create jobs and attract outside investment. The region has long experienced expansion in its urban and suburban land uses without growth in its population and employment, resulting in loss in many older areas and gains at the suburban periphery. In addition, changes to the nation’s demographics and job market, constrained governmental funding at all levels, and the changing lifestyles and tastes of the younger generation will challenge transportation planning efforts throughout the country. All of these issues will have far-reaching impacts on the way people and goods are transported in the NOACA region. Meeting these challenges will require change in the way NOACA plans and funds transportation projects.

To meet the goals and realize the vision of this plan, NOACA must align every aspect of its operation, every planning and funding process, and every document and plan it produces with the regional vision and goals. Using the agency’s regional vision in evaluating projects and making funding decisions, as well as meeting many of the goals, will require developing new and creative evaluation methodologies and decision-making mechanisms. It may require increasing the capabilities and changing the composition of the staff to perform different types of evaluations and to support new
functions. And it will require widening the range of voices engaged in the region’s transportation debates, to include representatives of businesses, employers and economic officials, representatives of key stakeholder and advocacy groups, and public officials and members of the public from throughout the NOACA region.
Chapter 2: The Strategic Planning Context and Process

Overview of the NOACA Region & the Need for a Strategic Plan

Between 1970 and 2010 the economy in Northeast Ohio experienced a significant transition in the number of jobs devoted to the basic (manufacturing and related industries) and service industries. In 1970, roughly 52% of jobs were in the basic sector, while only 18% were in the service sector. In 2010, manufacturing had dropped to only 22% and service grew to 60% of the region’s jobs. The retail sector also shrank considerably from 30% of jobs in 1970 to 18% in 2010. These job changes were driven, as were similar percentages across the U.S. economy due to technology attrition and movement of jobs to cheaper and less skilled labor markets.

Over the same 50 year period the population of NOACA’s region shrank from 2.32 million to 2.07 million, a 10% reduction in population during a period when Ohio’s population grew by 8.3% and the nation’s population grew by 52%. Despite these changes, the geographic footprint of the region’s urban/suburban population continues to grow.

These two paragraphs outline the challenges facing NOACA today as it strives to utilize diminishing financial resources to maintain the region’s transportation system and to prioritize where and how funds are spent. They do not address upcoming challenges as the region faces increases in the elderly population in suburban and exurban areas with little or no transit service, changes in the housing and transportation markets, and continued deterioration of infrastructure built for far more people than it currently serves.

Municipalities that make up the population of Greater Cleveland are well managed and the issues of these individual communities are well known. But the understanding of how local jurisdictions work in conflict or in coordination is much less well understood, even though the actions of one community affect the fortunes of its neighbors. Possibly more important is the growing reality that in a global economy the region is regarded as and functions as a single unit in some respects. Certainly it is much easier for the global economy to find and connect with northeast Ohio than it is to find an individual municipality with which to partner. In short, there is an argument to be made that in a globally integrated economy, the identity and productivity of a region may be as important to economic success as the presence of the local jurisdictions themselves.

Without a regional and strategic context for our goals, Northeast Ohio suffers several deficits; the inability to leverage our regional size and economic importance into political clout at the state and federal level; a degraded ability to present ourselves to the world at a time when identity to the world determines our attractiveness as an investment opportunity; and a fundamental inability to understand ourselves and our future potential as an actor in the global economy.

This plan provides the overall guidance and context to direct the agency for the years to come to most effectively operate and lead in the face of current regional trends and anticipated challenges.
Key Steps in the Strategic Planning Process

NOACA began the process of developing new goals and a vision for the agency to coincide with the appointment of a new Executive Director in June 2012. Table 1, below provides a summary of the strategic planning process and plan development, including activities leading up to the formal start of the Strategic Plan and the creation of the Plan itself.

It is important to note that the development of this plan has relied upon the hard work of NOACA’s 45-member Board of Directors, its partners, and its stakeholders, as well as, on the many current and previous agency plans, transportation plans, and strategic plans of other municipalities and public agencies serving the NOACA region. Plans of particular importance in the development of the Regional Strategic Plan have been:

- NOACA’s most recent Long Range Transportation Plan, Connections+ 2035
- The Vibrant NEO 2040 report, released in 2013, and the ongoing work of the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC)
- Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority’s (GCRTA) Strategic Plan 2010-2020, released in 2012
- Broadening Urban Investment to Leverage Transit (BUILT) in Cleveland, developed by the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) in 2011
# Table 1: Summary of Key Steps in Strategic Planning Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>June 2012</strong></td>
<td>New Executive Director Grace Gallucci is appointed and identifies development of strategic plan as goal for the agency.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>July 2012</strong></td>
<td>Executive Director announces development of a strategic plan for the agency at first Board meeting.</td>
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<td><strong>July-December 2012</strong></td>
<td>Executive Director meets one-on-one with Board members. The need for, and thoughts, ideas and opinions about, a strategic plan is among the topics of these meetings.</td>
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<td><strong>November 2012</strong></td>
<td>NOACA conducts a staff retreat, with a strategic plan among the topics discussed.</td>
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<td><strong>December 2012</strong></td>
<td>NOACA conducts a Principles and Goals Workshop with Board members.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>January 2013</strong></td>
<td>NOACA Staff and Board members draft a mission statement based on input from the Principles and Goals Workshop in December. The draft mission statement reads as follows: “NOACA will foster the success of communities with regard to quality of life and economic strength through targeted transportation investments that create a multimodal regional transportation system in the counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina.” Using polling devices, Board members give the proposed mission statement a 70% rate of approval.</td>
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<td><strong>February 2013</strong></td>
<td>NOACA holds a Board Retreat to kick off the Regional Strategic Planning effort. With the assistance of Cleveland State University, Input is collected that is later used to develop initial vision statement, goals and objectives.</td>
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<td><strong>March 2013</strong></td>
<td>BVU is brought in to assist with evaluation of the board committee structure.</td>
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<td><strong>April-June 2013</strong></td>
<td>Board receives results of polling exercise related to the vision statement elements from the retreat and the results of a Board survey related to the Code of Regulations.</td>
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<td><strong>July 2013</strong></td>
<td>The consultant team of Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB) and Organizational Effectiveness (OE) Strategies is selected to assist NOACA in the development of the Strategic Plan.</td>
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<td><strong>October 2013</strong></td>
<td>NOACA staff and the consultant team hold a Board Visioning Workshop in which Board members provide input on elements of a potential vision statement.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>December 2013</strong></td>
<td>Board members select and make minor wording modifications to a proposed vision statement from among three potential vision statements proposed by NOACA staff and the consultant team.</td>
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<td><strong>January 2014</strong></td>
<td>Board approves the vision statement identified and developed in the December meeting. NOACA staff and the consultant team hold a Goals and Objectives Development Workshop to identify potential elements of a set of goals and objectives for the Strategic Plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>February 2014</strong></td>
<td>NOACA Staff, PB and OE Strategies engage in a series of strategies discussions with Board committees.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>February-June 2014</strong></td>
<td>NOACA staff and the consultant team, with the addition of Civic Commons at ideastream, solicit public input on the plan vision statement, goals, objectives and strategies at a series of online and in-person forums around Northeast Ohio, culminating in a community forum held at the Idea Center at Public Square on June 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>July – October 2014</strong></td>
<td>Board review and refining of goals and objectives and preliminary drafting of Strategic Plan Document.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October – December 2015</strong></td>
<td>Final drafting of Strategic Plan Document.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>January 2015</strong></td>
<td>Board approval of final NOACA Regional Strategic Plan.</td>
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Chapter 3: Existing Conditions in the NOACA Region

While the population of Northeast Ohio has remained flat over the past fifty years and while employment volumes have decreased or become less geographically fixed, physical infrastructure for roadways and supporting infrastructure has expanded broadly across the five county region, the maintenance of which will become increasingly burdensome and ultimately unmanageable on a shrinking tax base if current economic, demographic, and development and building trends continue. Furthermore, a continuation of past practices without new employment and population will make it even more difficult to retain and attract companies and jobs.

Notably:

- If recent trends—of further outward development and migration into rural areas—continue, even if the population grows at a higher level than it has in recent years, Northeast Ohio will be challenged financially and the amount of vacant and underutilized land will grow larger than it is today—in both Cuyahoga County and the four outer counties of the NOACA region.

- However, demographic analysis of the region and recent national trends in transportation and residential choice indicates that the future is unlikely to look like the past. The population of the Northeast Ohio region is both shrinking slightly and aging quickly. The region is expected to lose more than 5% of its population between today and 2040—against the backdrop of a growing US population. (See Figure A-6 in Appendix A for a graphic of past and forecast population by county.) While Cuyahoga County will remain overwhelmingly the population center and economic hub of the region, Cuyahoga County will decline in terms of its percentage of regional population. The median age of the four county region is higher than that of the US population and is expected to exceed age 45 by 2040, with the median age in some counties exceeding age 50. A region with a slightly smaller but older population, including a large number of retired people in the Baby Boom age cohort, will have much different transportation needs than it has today. Among these differences are less need for peak hour transportation on the roadway and transit networks, and greater need for paratransit services.

- Meanwhile, the different tastes of the Millennial Generation in both transportation and development also will have an impact on future transportation planning and investment. Members of these younger generations, currently ranging from their late teens to 35 years old, are much more likely to prefer urban over suburban living and prefer walking, bicycling or using transit to driving. Their relatively lower interest in driving, as well as the aging and retirement of the Baby Boom generation, has resulted in a stall in the growth of vehicle miles traveled, which has increased every year since World War II until 2007, but has not exceeded the 2007 level in spite of the recent economic recovery. This change in the propensity of
people to drive also has significant implications for the development of transportation infrastructure and services and the allocation of transportation finances.

- A number of indicators, including a drop in the price of housing, median household income, regional employment, and population indicates the potential for continuing decline in the NOACA region, which would also have implications for the development of the transportation infrastructure as well as the financing of the maintenance of existing infrastructure. Recent projections by the Ohio Department of Development, Team NEO and other institutions, however, project some growth and stabilization of the regional infrastructure and population, however, all existing infrastructure will continue to age, needing continued maintenance and eventual replacement.

Findings
A deep analysis of the region paints a vivid picture of a region at a crossroads, with a number of key issues that will shape transportation funding and policy over the next 20-30 years. A strategic approach to address the needs of the region can be framed into five main themes, which together comprise core elements of NOACA’s Vision Statement.

The Need for Greater Regional Cohesion
Regions are becoming more important as economic forces have presented challenges to cities, counties, and exurbs relative to competiveness, with statewide, national, and international implications. There are inefficiencies resulting from the sheer number of jurisdictions in the NOACA region. Projected declining tax base and revenues mean we can no longer afford to operate so inefficiently. The region needs to find practical ways to coordinate and consolidate the provision of services. Moreover, attracting and retaining jobs and population is very dependent on a regional identity.

NOACA is among the few organizations that has a regional (multi-county) focus. NOACA can serve as a forum and resource for developing opportunities for regional cooperation and collaboration.

The Need to Preserve Existing Infrastructure
The NOACA region has public infrastructure assets (roads, bridges, transit investments, and water and sewer systems) valued in the billions of dollars. Maintaining these systems in perpetuity will cost billions of dollars more over the next thirty years. Over that time period, the population of Northeast Ohio is not projected to grow, but is projected to grow older.

The continuation of current trends (new infrastructure without the population growth to support it) and the simultaneous deterioration of our existing infrastructure is counterproductive. The most prudent use of limited resources is preservation of the region’s existing and most utilized assets and infrastructure investments.
The Need to Build a Sustainable Multimodal Transportation System
Demand for transportation options other than the private automobile is on the rise, largely due to two trends:

- As Baby Boomers reach retirement age, their transportation needs will change, reducing demand for peak period roadway travel and creating an increased demand for transit, and in particular, paratransit services.
- Younger generations, in particularly the Millennial generation (born between 1983 and 2000), drive significantly less than previous generations of young Americans. Millennials tend to prefer walkable urban neighborhoods over suburbs, and prefer public transit, bicycling, and walking to driving.

Future investments must support the multimodal aspects of our transportation system, including transit, bicycling, pedestrian infrastructure and amenities, and support for other forms of motorized transit. Investments in “complete streets” treatments in which existing roadways can be transformed to better serve pedestrians, cyclists and transit, can help create livable places for all people, regardless of age, ability or their preferred mode of transportation. At the same time, the existing roadway networks must be maintained. However expansions of the roadway network and roadway capacity must be examined closely to avoid incurring unnecessary costs to build and maintain infrastructure that might be under-utilized in the future. In addition, reconstruction of existing roadway infrastructure should be carefully considered to ensure that the infrastructure remains vital to the region’s transportation network.

The Need for Economic Development
The Northeast Ohio Region has lagged the rest of the United States economically for more than a generation, but has seen a more severe economic downturn over the past 10 years than most of the nation. Transportation investments and NOACA’s role in the community must be more strategic to improve the economic viability of our region, by supporting the retention of existing businesses, attracting new businesses to areas served by existing infrastructure, and supporting the region’s economic strengths, including manufacturing and health care services.
The Need to Protect Our Quality of Life

The Northeast Ohio region has an admirably high quality of life, much of which is a result of the legacy of our core communities and our industrial past, but which is also under threat from various economic and demographic trends. Strategic investments in infrastructure must support the quality of life in Northeast Ohio, by leveraging our existing assets and maintaining access to them. It is critical to ensure access to educational opportunities, parks and open spaces, cultural, and recreational assets, through increased mobility for all.

Shopping Malls as a Metaphor

The story of shopping malls in the area offers a good metaphor for development and investment in the region.

The region has witnessed a clear pattern of large shopping malls opening, only to be followed by another shopping center, generally further from the core, which, in part, undermines the viability of the first mall. Perhaps the most glaring example of this is Randall Park Mall, which opened in 1976 as the “largest mall in the world,” closed in 2009 and its demolition began at the end of 2014. In addition to Randall Park, the list of major malls that either closed or were or are currently being renovated includes Severance Mall and Euclid Square Mall on the East Side and Westgate and Parmatown Mall on the West Side.

The opening of a major shopping complex in one suburb, only to see a closure of one in a neighboring one, is not true economic development for the region given the lack of overall population growth. While per capita income in the region has advanced beyond cost of living increases over the past several decades, the population of the five-county NOACA region has been relatively flat over the past 50 years. Though the region’s population peaked at the 1970 Census, with 2.32 million residents, in 2010, the five-counties had 2.08 million residents, down 2.2% from the 1960 Census of 2.13. The lack of population growth absent a substantial increase in regional consumer purchasing power has limited the amount of retail that the community can support. (Internet-based shopping plays a role in this change as well.) Hence, the addition of new major shopping centers has, in some part, come at the expense of other, older establishments, given a limited pot of funds for consumer retail.

Furthermore, there is a public cost, such as for roadway requirements that often accompany major retail projects, which entail initial capital investments plus ongoing maintenance, from snow plowing to reconstruction during the years the mall is open and, if such occurs, after it closes.

Just as new shopping centers are developed deeper into the suburbs and less urbanized areas, as a region, we continue to develop new roads and supporting infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, power lines) further and further from the region’s core cities. Like the new malls, we are building at the expense of existing infrastructure. However, unlike shopping centers which can be dismantled or converted to other uses, the roadway and supporting infrastructure must often be continuously maintained. And with a population that isn’t growing (but actually growing older), infrastructure that is aging, and maintenance and replacement costs that are increasing, such development and investment patterns are increasingly financially unsustainable.
Figure 2. The Former Randall Park Mall (surrounded by a sea of parking lots as in 2014 as seen from a satellite via GoogleEarth). The closed mall began demolition on December 29, 2014.
Chapter 4: The Vision Statement

“NOACA will STRENGTHEN regional cohesion, PRESERVE existing infrastructure, and BUILD a sustainable multimodal transportation system to SUPPORT economic development and ENHANCE quality of life in Northeast Ohio.”

--NOACA Vision Statement

Vision Statements
Prior to the beginning of the strategic planning process, NOACA had a previously adopted mission statement which read as follows:

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency is a regional organization of local officials responsible for carrying out transportation and environmental planning under local direction and in accordance with federal and state mandates. The NOACA area encompasses the Cleveland/Lorain-Elyria metropolitan region, which includes the Counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina.

Moving from a Mission Statement to a Vision Statement
Mission statements, like NOACA’s, tend to be matter-of-fact and practical. They are a statement of who we are as an agency and why the agency exists. They are important for clarifying the focus of an agency. However, NOACA’s mission statement should not be confused with a vision statement. Vision statements are aspirational and tie the activities of the agency to higher values that animate, and provide a reason for, the agency’s performing the mission. Vision statements point to where the agency is going—to the future that its stakeholders, public, directors and staff see as its destiny.

The table below contrasts some sample vision and mission statements to illustrate the differences between them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Mission Statements</th>
<th>Sample Vision Statements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meals on Wheels:</strong> To provide national leadership to end senior hunger</td>
<td><strong>Meals on Wheels:</strong> To end senior hunger by 2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CSX Corporation:</strong> To be the safest, most progressive North American railroad, relentless in the pursuit of customer and employee excellence.</td>
<td><strong>VF:</strong> To become the world’s largest distributor of fashionable apparel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Nature Conservancy:</strong> To conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends</td>
<td><strong>San Diego Zoo:</strong> To become a world leader at connecting people with wildlife and conservation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The best vision statements are inspirational, clear, memorable and concise. They are focused, yet flexible, guide decisions, and are ambitious.
Development of the NOACA Vision Statement

The NOACA vision statement was developed with input from various sources. The visioning process began before the formal start of the Strategic Plan, with the visioning exercise conducted at the February 2013 Board Retreat and polling exercise conducted at the following March Board meeting. The consultant used the results of these polling exercises and its review of the vision and mission statements from other organizations within the NOACA region and other MPOs throughout the country to develop a vision and goals worksheet which was distributed to the Board members before the October vision workshop (the first of two vision workshops). The worksheet asked Board members to select from a range of “vision statement elements” or to provide their own suggestions for what elements should be included in the agency’s vision statement. The vision elements selected by Board members who completed the worksheet were presented at the October vision workshop, in addition to the results of the external scan, which included:

- The aforementioned review of vision and mission statements from other organizations within the NOACA region and other MPOs throughout the country;
- A review of demographic trends within Northeast Ohio and across the nation; and
- A review of the economic and financial analyses conducted as part of the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium Initiative (NEOSCC) study.

During the October vision workshop, Board members worked in small groups to select the elements that they felt most belonged in NOACA’s vision statement and to compose a draft vision statement for their group. There was a high degree of agreement among participants regarding which themes or elements should be included in the vision statement. These themes included:

- Regional Cohesion
- Preserving Infrastructure
- Multi-Modality
- Sustainability (environmental, economic)
- Economic Development
- Quality of Life

After the workshop, members of the NOACA staff and consultant team used the materials from the October vision workshop, as well as other themes coming out of the internal and external scans. The four sample vision statements that were developed were as follows:

Group 1: NOACA will foster the success of communities with regard to quality of life and economic strength through targeted transportation investments that create a multimodal regional transportation system in the counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina.

Group 2: Enhance regional cohesion by creating a sustainable, multi-modal transportation system that preserves existing infrastructure and gives people a reason to live, work and play in our region.

Group 3: Build regional collaboration to achieve a sustainable, multi-modal transportation system that preserves existing infrastructure and enhances our region’s economic development and quality of life.

Group 4: NOACA will STRENGTHEN regional cohesion, PRESERVE existing infrastructure, BUILD a sustainable, multi-modal transportation system to SUPPORT economic development and ENHANCE quality of life in Northeast Ohio.
These draft vision statements were considered in the second vision workshop held in December 2013. The fourth vision statement was preferred at the December workshop, and was approved by the Board at the January 2014 Board meeting. The final vision statement reads:

NOACA will STRENGTHEN regional cohesion, PRESERVE existing infrastructure, and BUILD a sustainable multimodal transportation system to SUPPORT economic development and ENHANCE quality of life in Northeast Ohio.

Goals are encompassed within the vision statement

- Strengthen Regional Cohesion
- Preserve Existing Infrastructure
- Build a Sustainable Multimodal Transportation System
- Support Economic Development
- Enhance Quality of Life

Scan of Regional and National Vision and Mission Statements

The consultant team conducted a review of the vision statements of other MPOs around the country, as well as the vision and mission statements of regional transportation agencies, and municipal and regional governmental entities from throughout Northeast Ohio. A list of the organizations whose vision and mission statements were reviewed is provided below.

**Northeast Ohio Entities**

- Cleveland Metroparks
- Cuyahoga County (One Cuyahoga)
- Downtown Cleveland Alliance
- Greater Cleveland Partnership
- Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (Strategic Plan)
- Lake Metroparks
- Laketran (Comprehensive Operational Analysis and 10 Year Transit Plan)
- Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
- Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC)
- Port of Cleveland
- Positively Cleveland
- TeamNEO

**Northeast Ohio Cities**

- City of Chardon Comprehensive Plan
- City of Cleveland
- City of Elyria: Greenway and Trail Master Plan
- City of Medina Comprehensive Plan
- City of Medina Strategic Plan
- City of Mentor Comprehensive Plan
- City of Oberlin, Ohio Comprehensive Plan
- Lorain, Ohio Downtown Urban Renewal Plan
• Painesville Downtown Plan

**National MPOs**
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (Philadelphia)
- Metropolitan Council (Minneapolis)
- Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)
- Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI)
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (Pittsburgh)
- Puget Sound Regional Council (Seattle)

**Other Regional Transportation Bodies**
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
- Metro (Portland)
- Chicago RTA Strategic Plan
- ODOT Access Ohio

Many of the mission and vision statements of other agencies were functional; they simply stated what the agency does, and offered little about what the entity hopes to achieve for the community. Others were more aspirational, and attempted to identify what the agencies hoped to do in the future. Of the many Northeast Ohio communities and organizations whose mission statements and planning documents were reviewed, only three were identified as containing true vision statements, as listed below.

- **NEOSCC’s mission is to create conditions for a more VIBRANT, RESILIENT, and SUSTAINABLE Northeast Ohio** – NEOSCC
- **By sharing the assets with the fifty-nine independent municipalities, we can operate a truly united region** – Cuyahoga County (OneCuyahoga)
- **We are committed to improving the quality of life in the City of Cleveland to make it a desirable, safe city in which to live, work, raise a family, shop, study, pray, and grow old** – City of Cleveland

The vision statements of these organizations became initial touchpoints for the development of the list of potential vision statement elements. While many of the reviewed Northeast Ohio communities and organizations did not have vision statements, per se, their mission statements, goals and objectives tended to fall into common themes which, when taken together, suggested a vision and common goals for an organization serving Northeast Ohio. These themes are identified below:

**Theme: Economic Development/Growth**
- “...mobilize private-sector leadership, expertise, and resources to create jobs and investment and to improve the economic vitality of the region” – The Greater Cleveland Partnership
- “...foster job creation and economic vitality in Greater Cleveland through our maritime services and assets by adding value and results to gain a competitive advantage for regional firms competing globally” – Port of Cleveland

**Theme: Quality of Life**
- “...conserve and preserve the natural resources of Lake County while providing a variety of safe, affordable and enjoyable educational and recreational programs and activities that...”
enhance the quality of life in Lake County now and for the generations to follow” – Lake Metroparks

- “…improve the quality of life in the City of Cleveland by strengthening our neighborhoods, delivering superior services, embracing the diversity of our citizens, and making Cleveland a desirable, safe city in which to live, work, raise a family, shop, study, pray, and grow old” – City of Cleveland

**Theme: Environmental Protection**

- “…lead effective wastewater and stormwater management that protects the health and environment of our region…” – Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
- “…promote a Sustainable Coast and Lake” – City of Elyria: Greenway and Trail Master Plan

**Theme: Transportation**

- “…[link] Ohio to a global economy while preserving the State’s unique character and enhancing its quality of life” – ODOT Access Ohio
- “…make RTA the transportation mode of choice for greater Cleveland [region]” – GCRTA Strategic Plan

The recurrent themes in the mission statements, goals and plans of other organizations serving Northeast Ohio were identified as elements that would serve as building blocks for the development of NOACA’s vision statement, and would ultimately shape the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan.
Chapter 5: NOACA Goals and Objectives

Development of Objectives and Strategies

In support of mission and vision of NOACA, goals and objectives were developed to further guide the agency. Objectives define measurable results for the achievement of each goal. The NOACA goals are encompassed within the vision statement, and are as follows:

- Strengthen Regional Cohesion
- Preserve Existing Infrastructure
- Build a Sustainable Multimodal Transportation System
- Support Economic Development
- Enhance Quality of Life

For example, under the goal “preserve existing infrastructure,” one of the objectives is to “devote approximately 90% of the region’s transportation and infrastructure funding to maintain and preserve existing transportation investments”. The objective transforms the abstract goal into a concrete, measurable outcome.

The objectives under each of the goals were initially developed by NOACA and consultant staff based on input from the Board activities and visioning workshop and the external and internal scans. The objectives were then modified and further refined in a workshop held at the January 2014 Board meeting. The objectives received minor refinements after the public meetings held in May 2014 and at the August 2014 Board meeting.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Strengthen Regional Cohesion

1.1. Foster collaboration on issues of transportation, air and water quality that will lead to greater regional cohesion and cooperation on other issues of regional concern.

1.2. Work with governments in the region as well as state and federal authorities to remove barriers to joint development or maintenance of infrastructure by multiple governmental entities and by governmental and private entities.

1.3. Work with governments in the region as well as state and federal authorities to promote cost sharing, purchasing coordination and consolidation of services to improve the efficiency and reduce the costs of developing and maintaining transportation and water infrastructure.

1.4. Facilitate and promote the sharing of best practices for regional collaboration and cost sharing.

1.5. Ensure infrastructure investments are planned and implemented to maximize transportation benefits across all impacted communities.

1.6. Promote infrastructure investments that enhance the inter-relationships of communities within the region.
Goal 2: Preserve Existing Infrastructure

2.1. Provide funding and other priority and other preferences to infrastructure projects that:
   
   2.1.1. preserve or maintain existing infrastructure that serves currently developed areas of the region
   
   2.1.2. facilitate improvements that connect existing activity centers and reinvigorate existing communities
   
   2.1.3. facilitate development in higher density areas
   
   2.1.4. promote environmental sustainability

2.2. Create mechanisms to monitor the condition of existing regional transportation assets and evaluate the social equity/environmental justice impacts of infrastructure investments.

2.3. Conduct benefit-cost analyses of all projects to insure that life-cycle costs and regional fiscal sustainability are considered.

2.4. Devote approximately 90% of the region’s transportation and infrastructure funding to maintain and preserve existing transportation investments.

Goal 3: Build a Sustainable Multimodal Transportation System

3.1. Provide funding priority and other preferences with scoring criteria to projects that:
   
   3.1.1. enhance and improve coordination for public transit, rail, pedestrian and bicycle transportation
   
   3.1.2. improve access to regional job centers, employment opportunities, and city centers
   
   3.1.3. facilitate intermodal transportation connections
   
   3.1.4. reduce energy use and improve air quality
   
   3.1.5. reduce greenhouse gas emissions
   
   3.1.6. reduce reliance on auto travel
   
   3.1.7. demonstrate an adequate long-term funding stream for operation and maintenance
   
   3.1.8. integrate the control of stormwater, protection and improvement of water quality, and control of development in floodplains
   
   3.1.9. ensure and/or enhance safety

3.2. Assure that the Regional Transportation Plan and TIP reflect a coherent commitment to a balanced multi-modal transportation system and to NOACA’s strategic vision.

3.3. 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.

3.4. Consider strategic abandonment or alternative provision of service for infrastructure elements that are underutilized or whose maintenance or reconstruction costs may exceed their benefit.
3.5. Achieve levels of infrastructure investment that do not exceed the region’s financial capacity.

**Goal 4: Support Economic Development**

4.1. Provide funding priority and other preferences with scoring criteria to projects that:
   4.1.1. provide for the movement of goods essential to the economic viability of the region
   4.1.2. are consistent with state, regional and local economic development priorities, policies and strategies
   4.1.3. support the retention and expansion of Northeast Ohio area businesses in areas served by existing infrastructure and the attraction of new businesses to Northeast Ohio
   4.1.4. support the development of the region’s manufacturing base, health care system, and other areas of regional economic strength and economic development focus

4.2. Ensure that NOACA’s Board of Directors includes the expertise of representatives of the business, medical, higher education and non-profit sectors through their participation in the Community Advisory Council and Business Advisory Council.

4.3. Conduct focused studies that identify ways in which NOACA can direct investments and actions to create realistic opportunities for job retention and economic development.

4.4. Promote regional cooperation in the areas of economic development and job retention.

4.5. Direct investments and actions to create realistic opportunities for job retention and economic development.

**Goal 5: Enhance Quality of Life**

5.1. Provide funding priority and other preferences with scoring criteria to projects that:
   5.1.1. promote the redevelopment of declining and abandoned areas
   5.1.2. provide improved access to primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and other educational opportunities
   5.1.3. enhance the public’s access to and enjoyment of the region’s parks, cultural assets and recreational activities
   5.1.4. preserve agricultural lands, open space and important habitat areas, woodlands, and wetlands
   5.1.5. promote healthy and active living

5.2. Make prudent and necessary infrastructure improvements to minimize the economic burden of transportation investments on the region’s taxpayers.

5.3. Ensure that safety factors are considered in the development of regional infrastructure.
Public Engagement

Regional Public Meetings
A series of public meetings were held to introduce the NOACA region residents to the Strategic Plan’s goals and objectives that were developed by NOACA and the consultant staff and approved by the Board of Directors. The meetings were held on the following dates and locations:

- Tuesday, May 20, 2014, 5:30 PM – 8:30 PM – Tri-C Corporate College, Warrensville Heights, OH;
- Wednesday, May 21, 6:15 PM – 7:45 PM – Elyria Public Library, Elyria, OH; and
- Thursday, May 22, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM – Brunswick Public Library, Brunswick, OH.

The attendees were moderated by NOACA and consultant staff. At each meeting, attendees were shown a brief presentation about NOACA and the strategic planning process and introduced to the components of the Strategic Plan: the vision statement and goals. The objectives that accompanied each goal were presented to the group in an activity that followed the presentation. Displays of information on the project were provided for review before and after the presentation.

During the presentation, attendees were asked to vote via a remote control electronic voting system on their agreement with the goals of the Strategic Plan. They were polled as to whether they agreed or disagreed with NOACA’s developed goals. After the voting was revealed for each goal, the moderator asked if any of the attendees would care to explain or comment on how they voted.

After the presentation, attendees were presented with a large poster that displayed the series of objectives that accompanied each goal, and were provided with green, yellow, and red-colored dots which they could place near each objective to serve as a marker to whether they agree, are neutral, or disagree with each objective, respectively.

At any point in the presentation or during the activity, attendees were welcome to provide input and feedback on the Strategic Plan, its goals and/or objectives. Comment cards were provided to facilitate participant comment. All of the feedback collected and materials used at the public meetings are provided in Appendix B.

Civic Commons Online Forums
Civic Commons, a civic engagement consulting firm based in Cleveland, hosted a number of online forums on their website for the NOACA Strategic Plan (http://theciviccommons.com/issues/noaca-strategic-plan) to gather feedback from website followers and visitors about the NOACA Strategic Plan goals. The NOACA webpage also advertised the online forum from their website to encourage webpage visitors to participate in the Strategic Plan initiative. The first three goals were provided with their own “conversation” page. A member of NOACA’s staff served as a moderator to guide the conversation about the goal and its contribution to the overall plan and region. A number of experts in transportation, city planning, and infrastructure also joined the moderator to answer questions and provide commentary to the developing conversation and discussion. The moderator and distinguished experts were only invited to participate in the conversation for a few days after the respective goal forum was created. However, the discussions continued for many weeks beyond the official completion of the forum, with visitors to the website continuing to contribute to the
discussion. Each “conversation” created for the Strategic Plan on the Civic Commons website is also documented in Appendix B.

**Public Forum at Idea Center in Playhouse Square**

After the regional public meetings, a larger town hall type meeting/community session was held on Wednesday, June 4, 2014 from 4:00 PM and 6:30 PM at the Idea Center at Playhouse Square in Downtown Cleveland. The same presentation from the regional public meetings was used once again educating the audience on what a strategic plan is and its value, and finally introducing them to the components of the Strategic Plan: the vision statement, goals, and objectives. Voting on the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan was not on the agenda during the public forum. Instead, a panel of experts on planning, infrastructure, and transportation was gathered and asked to share some insight and knowledge on a variety of questions and topics related to the Strategic Plan.

The panel of experts that was gathered to participate in the forum included the following:

- David Beach – Director of GreenCityBlueLake Initiative
- Joe Calabrese – CEO and General Manager of Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority
- Chris Easton – Service Director of the City of Wadsworth
- Leslie Farley – Planning Engineer of ODOT District 3
- Ray Jurkowski – General Manager of Laketran
- Hunter Morrison – Director of the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium
- John Motl – Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator of ODOT District 12
- Bonnie Teeuwen – Director of Cuyahoga County Public Works
- Jacob Van Sickle – Executive Director of Bike Cleveland

Immediately following the panel discussion, the attendees were asked to form into three groups where two or three panelists would rotate among the groups to keep the discussion going among the smaller groups. This also served as the public input portion of the event as attendees were able to ask questions and comment on the various ideas and topics that were explored in the panel discussion. The discussion among the groups revolved around three different subjects: multimodal transportation, regional cohesion, and preserving infrastructure. The panel and group discussions were moderated and recorded by Civic Commons’ staff. Photographs from the public forum are shown in Figures 1 through 6. A copy of their final report that includes a summary of the discussion topics and attendee input is provided in Appendix B. Feedback provided via comment card and the NOACA website regarding the topics and discussions covered in the public forum as well as additional photos are also included in Appendix B.

**Summary of Public Input**

Input received via the three on-line forums in April and May and at the Idea Center event on June 4, 2014 was generally supportive of the plan and its proposals. Many of the participants offered ideas on how NOACA might promote the goals of the project—particularly how they might further the goals of enhancing regional cohesion, preserving existing infrastructure and building a sustainable multimodal transportation system. Some participants felt that the plan did not go far enough, and was not specific enough, in supporting positive changes in transportation and development in the region. These participants called for stronger and more specific language concerning the limiting of future investment in roadway improvements and promoting mass transit, bicycle, and pedestrian
improvements, as well as mechanisms for ensuring that future NOACA actions will enhance the sustainability and reduce the environmental impacts of the transportation system.

However, a small group of attendees at the Tuesday, May 20, 2014 meeting in Warrensville Heights expressed concerns about the plan and about NOACA and the NEOSCC process more broadly. These participants were generally opposed to the plan’s goals and objectives, particularly the greater emphasis on non-roadway transportation and the consideration of economic development and quality of life issues in the planning process. Participants expressed their view that NOACA should limit its activities to supporting development and maintenance of Federal Aid roadways. Some participants at the meeting questioned NOACA’s role in planning transportation improvements in rural areas and in Geauga County, and discussed how Geauga County, or the rural portions of it, might leave NOACA membership. As a result of some specific comments at the meeting, the discussion of how NEOSCC information was used was clarified in the plan document, and some references to “the Cleveland area” in materials were amended to read “the NOACA region” or “Northeast Ohio”.

The comments received in the public involvement process were incorporated into the initial draft of the plan and were considered by the NOACA board at the August meeting at which several of the plan’s objectives were refined to provide greater clarity. Figures 3-8, below, present the public participation process from the Idea Center in 2014.
Figure 7: Small Group Discussion with Panelists

Figure 8: Small Group Discussion with Panelists and Boards
Chapter 6: Plan Implementation & Next Steps

Strategies identify specific ways that NOACA can reach its objectives, and ultimately, its goals. They connect the vision, goals and objectives to the way NOACA does business day-to-day.

Vision leads directly to the goals, which are supported by broad strategies. These strategies lead to tools and objectives that will guide the Board’s and the leadership team’s strategic focus, decision making and actions over the next 5 years.

A series of strategies were initially developed by NOACA and consultant staff, then modified and further defined in committee workgroups of NOACA Board members between February and April 2014. The strategies that were proposed include the following:

- Develop and implement performance criteria systems to most effectively achieve NOACA’s vision.
- Further develop and leverage strong relationships with community, economic development and business partners.
- Act as a regional facilitator of knowledge sharing, integrated needs assessment, and other collaborative efforts.
- Develop fiscal policies to insure the highest and best use of available resources, focusing funding on maintaining existing regional infrastructure.
- Align NOACA’s priorities and projects to other federal, state and regional initiatives.

As Table 3 shows below, the five broad strategies overlap and support the five goals and vision statement, serving as the mechanisms by which the goals and objectives will be achieved by NOACA staff.
NOACA’s professional staff has already begun the process of implementing the core concepts of the Strategic Plan. Some of the steps that NOACA is taking to further the goals, objectives and strategies of the plan are already underway, including:

- Identifying specific strategies and programs within the organization to pursue the broad strategies and begin working towards achievements of the goals and objectives, including incorporating the goals and objectives in the process of identifying projects for inclusion in the (TIP) and Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and in the development of the agency’s 2016 Overall Work Program (OWP).

- Putting in place a Business Advisory Council and a Citizen’s Advisory Council for formalizing the gathering of regular input to NOACA’s planning process by the public and, particularly, by the business and non-profit communities in the NOACA region.

- Constructed new meeting space to host community forums and to assist governmental and non-profit entities in the region in analyzing and promoting regional cohesion.

- Developing a Capital Programs prioritization initiative that is intended to create a set of policy recommendations to improve the project selection process for greater performance and transparency; as well as a revised process for externally funded projects to meet planning requirements.

- Developing a comprehensive Transportation Asset Management Program that will be an essential management tool, which will bring together all related business processes and

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**Table 3: Connection of Strategies to Goals**

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<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Strengthen Regional Cohesion</th>
<th>Preserve Existing Infrastructure</th>
<th>Build Sustainable System</th>
<th>Support Economic Development</th>
<th>Enhance Quality of Life</th>
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<td>Leverage Strong Relationships</td>
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<td>Act as Regional Facilitator</td>
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<td>Develop Fiscal Policies</td>
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<td>Align NOACA Priorities</td>
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stakeholders, internal and external, to achieve a common understanding and commitment to improve performance. It is imperative that NOACA have business processes in place that clearly link the agency’s strategic objectives with its investment decisions. This requires NOACA to have a plan that clearly supports Transportation Asset Management principles while at the same time adhering to the Federal legislative mandates outlined in MAP-21.

Deploying a new pavement management tool for prioritizing and selecting projects is critical to this project. The system will focus on reducing the substantial backlog of deficient pavements while at the same time utilizing a multi-year prioritization approach containing a mix of fixes for pavements in various condition stages, so an acceptable balance of pavement condition for the region is maintained. The system will also permit available funds to be allocated to pavement sections based on a prioritization algorithm that considers pavement performance and traffic, estimates the resulting gain or loss in the future performance of the overall network, and estimates future budget needs according to targeted performance goals for the pavement network over a user-defined (short, medium or long) planning horizon.

- Developing expanded performance measures and metrics, that will be crucial in evaluating success in achieving the vision created by this plan. Performance measures are a tool to help organizations understand, manage, and improve their activities. Performance measures quantify outcomes of products, services, and the processes that produce them. FHWA will be releasing performance measurements for MPOs and state DOTs within the next year. NOACA is developing internal and external performance measures that will provide a basis for the agency to shape the statewide and national debate and to ensure consideration of topics that matter to local communities.

In addition to the above, additional actions will be undertaken to implement this Strategic Plan:

1: Ensure an active participatory board process to engage members in all aspects of NOACA’s planning efforts (engagement strategy for board members)

*Issues:*

NOACA’s board shapes the region’s future by making decisions affecting plans, policies, and funding. Board decisions are informed by technical analysis that NOACA staff provides to board members. Recognizing the staff’s responsibility to thoroughly prepare and analyze proposals, NOACA is also aware of the need to make some procedures and documents more transparent and accessible. Lack of transparency, discourages active participation by all board members. Thus, NOACA staff will continue its efforts to improve transparency of agency activities and to highlight implications of proposals for development of the region in order to ultimately encourage an active dialog among board members.

NOACA will also continue the implementation of it new committee structure, which has led to increased board member engagement in the organization’s activities. NOACA will monitor the success of the current structure and make updates as needed.
Proposed initiatives:

- NOACA would coordinate a speaker’s series on metropolitan planning related topics for board members. Topics of interest and an appropriate schedule will be determined in collaboration with board members.
- NOACA staff would analyze and visualize current procedures involved in planning, and decision-making across all agency levels. Staff will make suggestions for improvements and policy updates to the board. Suggestions may include streamlined procedures, use of advanced technology to save the agency and its member’s time and money, or new procedures that would make the agency more efficient.

Desired outcomes:

- NOACA would achieve an active dialog and facilitate coordination among all board members on regional issues.
- NOACA would establish a basis for joint decision making concerning the region’s future.
- NOACA would continue to evolve into a modern and transparent agency, fostering organizational learning.
- Overall, changes at NOACA would help build more regional capacity to respond to an ever-changing world and region.

2: Act as a regional facilitator of knowledge sharing, integrated needs assessment, and other collaborative efforts (expand membership services)

Issues:

Local communities and counties are NOACA’s key stakeholders. With the recession and tight local budgets, more and more communities have been approaching NOACA for technical assistance. As a regional membership organization, NOACA is in a position to expand membership services, and to save communities time and money. Thus NOACA is striving to expand membership services at a variety of levels.

Proposed initiatives:

- NOACA would launch a local capacity building initiative. It would organize workshops, national speakers, and publish toolkits concerning issues that communities in the NOACA region care about and challenges they may face.
- NOACA would continue operating and expanding its existing technical assistance programs.
- NOACA would establish a best practice network that enables communities to share their experience with others in Northeast Ohio.
- NOACA would facilitate data sharing and act as a source of information for the region: From GIS to census data, NOACA staff would be able to provide data and resources to plan for the regional vision.
- NOACA would facilitate integrated needs assessment across different modes and parts of the region.
Desired outcomes:

- By implementing the initiatives, NOACA would be able to improve membership services.
- Overall, increased knowledge sharing and capacity throughout the region would enhance regional productivity and resilience.
- In the long-term, a greater understanding of concerns unique to communities in northeast Ohio.

3: Develop fiscal policies to ensure the highest and best use of scarce resources, focusing funding on maintaining and enhancing existing regional infrastructure

Issues:

With the recession, public resources have become increasingly scarce. At the same time, regional demand for investment in infrastructure far exceeds current fiscal capacities. NOACA can provide a valuable service to the region by identifying areas and methods to better leverage existing funding sources and to ultimately expand available funding for all modes.

Proposed initiatives:

- NOACA staff would develop and implement a fiscal policy to focus spending in existing communities in order to preserve and enhance existing infrastructure.
- NOACA staff would analyze regional financial trends: a first step would be to identify the total funding available to the region and to quantify the needed expenditures to maintain and enhance the system. A second step would be to identify how the available funding can be better leveraged.
- NOACA staff would also identify and pursue additional funding sources for the NOACA region and coordinate efforts among member agencies.

Desired outcomes:

a. NOACA would be more deliberate in obtaining resources for the region and its members.
b. NOACA and its members would have a better understanding of available funding.
c. In the long-term, improved fiscal health and a lower total tax burden may be possible for the region.

4: Further develop and leverage strong relationships with economic development and business partners to advance the regional vision

Issues:

The transportation system of any region is crucial for resident’s access to jobs, access to retail, as well as for global freight movement. Knowing that NOACA’s programs and policies can indirectly or directly affect business and economic development in northeast Ohio, NOACA wants to ensure adequate involvement of the business community.

Proposed initiatives:

- NOACA would work to build a strong and robust network with the business and economic development community.
• NOACA would study the positive and negative economic impact of past public infrastructure investment from a regional perspective.
• NOACA would develop a freight strategy and freight plan in collaboration with partner institutions to better serve the basic economy in the region.

Desired outcomes:
• An expanded network would help NOACA to make better infrastructure investment decisions to serve the regional economy.
• These initiatives would help NOACA achieve the regional vision to support economic development.

5: Become a strong and reliable partner to project sponsors: assist local governments with project development and planning

Issues:
The project planning and development process is complex and projects can take years to materialize. NOACA has the expertise to aid local project sponsors in navigating state and federal requirements and delivering projects on-time and on-budget. In the past, unexpected project delays have caused a backlog in NOACA’s Transportation Improvement Program, leaving funds under utilized in any given year. The following initiatives will enable NOACA to better work with project sponsors throughout the project life-cycle.

Proposed initiatives:
• NOACA would launch a project development initiative for projects. Once projects have been included in NOACA’s plan, project sponsors would work with NOACA staff to deliver projects that ensure the safety of all users regardless of age and ability, and that are on-time, and on-budget.

Desired outcomes:
• NOACA would prevent backlog in the TIP.
• NOACA would work more closely with project sponsors.
• In the long-term, the initiative would help to enhance infrastructure conditions throughout the region.

6: Institutionalizing the strategic plan

Issues:
For a meaningful implementation of the strategic plan, the content will need to be incorporated into all aspects of the organization. That includes updating goals in all impacted NOACA documents as well as the identification of needed projects and internal initiatives.

Proposed initiatives:
• NOACA staff would identify specific projects, initiatives, departments, and programs within the agency to pursue the broad strategies
NOACA Regional Strategic Plan

- NOACA would make automatic updates to the goals and objectives in all documents that currently refer to NOACAs goals as a basis for planning, policy, or decision making.
- NOACA would periodically review the strategic plan, including goals, objectives, and strategies

**Policy**

In addition to serving as a plan and guidance document, the NOACA Strategic Plan is a call to action. It is a fundamental touchstone that acknowledges the arc of the region’s history while looking firmly forward to a hopeful future.

The NOACA strategic plan exemplifies a willingness to enter the public policy arena and address the critical questions of the day. In order to be an effective source of information and innovation to policy holders, NOACA must establish basic values. The NOACA Legislative Agenda strategically codifies this in the public policy arena. The Legislative Agenda is comprised of two pieces of work product: the Legislative Platform and the Legislative Priorities.

The Legislative Platform is intended to guide policy analysis and advocacy on infrastructure issues. The Platform creates a clear test for evaluating transportation planning and programming in northeast Ohio, based on the measure of NOACA ‘s regional vision statement, goals and objectives:

- Does the issue strengthen regional cohesion?
- Does the issue preserve existing infrastructure?
- Does the issue support a sustainable and multimodal system?
- Does the issue support economic development and enhance the quality of life in Northeast Ohio?

While NOACA’s principals endure, the national and regional transportation infrastructure conversation and agenda will continue to change as technology, economy, demography, tastes and preferences change. In this way, NOACA can be a source of information and innovation with non-partisan views regardless of the political winds.

The Legislative Agenda is also inclusive of priorities or specific requests. These priorities, as guided by the strategic plan, will fall generally into three categories.

- A renewed focus on local responsibility and local control.
- A strategic decision to focus on asset management over projects that increase capacity and
- Placing a premium on safety, sustainability, and multimodal principals within state and local planning.

**Regionalism**

An undeniable element of society in the current age is that most if not all activities of human life involve interactions that cross jurisdictional boundaries. Business and industry appreciates the largest and most diverse pool of workers that it can draw upon; retail and consumer driven interests
also look to the entire region to find local customers. And negative conditions of environmental impact such as air pollution and water contamination have no respect for municipal or any other boundaries. The question is always how can benefits be maximized and how efficiently can negative conditions be mitigated and resolved.

The premise of this plan is that a regional perspective is crucial to NOACA accomplishing its vision, now and in the future. Regionalism is not by any means a new issue for the region to grapple with, but the agency’s new leadership and revamped organizational structure afforded a prime opportunity to explore what it will mean for the agency moving forward.

The evolution of regionalism in an area is described by University of Colorado professor Allan Wallis as three distinct phases of organization resulting from the dominant form of economic activity present at the time. The three stages which are viewed as successive are described as a monocentric industrial metropolis, a polycentric metropolis and intra-regional cooperation. Early in its history, Northeast Ohio had several monocentric cores (e.g. Cleveland, Elyria, Lorain, and Painesville) which became polycentric through suburbanization. Over time, these polycentric cores have overlapped creating a region which could benefit greatly from increased intra-regional cooperation.

For intra-regional cooperation to be successful, collaborative efforts must be created voluntarily, consensus must exist that a regional approach is important, and improved economic success for the region as a whole must be a cornerstone of the efforts.

As has been clear during NOACA’s history, planning and coordination at a regional level can be a complicated and sometimes controversial subject because of the many players and competing interests involved. The political values and social dynamics of member communities must be understood and respected. Stated differently, the problem is who has the authority and who benefits given that regional issues can often run headlong into the individual efforts and authority of local communities and the right and responsibility of local communities to make beneficial decisions for themselves and their citizens. But despite these challenges, regional approaches have proven beneficial to other communities around the United States. Going the way of regional cooperation is to some degree a leap of faith – but ultimately no more a leap than a community that chooses to rely solely on itself.
Appendix A

Demographic, Land Use and Public Finance Trends in Northeast Ohio

The NEOSCC study performed an analysis of potential future demographic, land use, development and public finance trends in the region. Their analysis explored four separate possible futures for the region, and outlined the demographic, employment, development/land use and public finance consequences of each of the scenarios. The four scenarios considered were as follows:

- **Current Trend**: What will happen if Northeast Ohio population and employment continue to grow at the same (low) rates as they have in recent years, and development patterns (peripheral growth and core abandonment) in Northeast Ohio continue for the next 20 years.

- **Alternative 1 – Grow the Same**: What will happen if population and employment grows at the same (higher) rate as the rest of the country over the next 20 years, but current Northeast Ohio development patterns continue.

- **Alternative 2 – Do Things Differently**: What will happen if population and employment grows at the same rates as they have in recent years, but more development occurs in already developed areas rather than peripheral areas.

- **Alternative 3 – Grow Differently**: What will happen if population and employment grows at the same rate as the rest of the country, but more development occurs in already developed areas rather than peripheral areas.

The table below helps to illustrate the growth and development that would occur under each of the four scenarios.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recent (Low) Northeast Ohio Population/Employment Growth Trend</th>
<th>Recent Northeast Ohio Development Pattern (Sprawl)</th>
<th>Compact Development Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Trend</strong></td>
<td>Current Trend</td>
<td>Alternative 3: Do Things Differently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alternative 1: Grow the Same</strong></td>
<td>Alternative 1: Grow the Same</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alternative 2: Do Things Differently</strong></td>
<td>Alternative 2: Do Things Differently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alternative 3: Grow Differently</strong></td>
<td>Alternative 3: Grow Differently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOACA’s consultants isolated the five NOACA counties from among the larger 12-county NEOSCC region to replicate the analysis that the NEOSCC study produced for the 12-county area. The results of that analysis show that many of the issues raised by the NEOSCC study, such as the fiscal unsustainability of current trends, also apply to the NOACA portion of the NEOSCC region. The analysis confirms the emphasis identified in the scan of regional vision and mission statements on the need for a greater emphasis on economic development, regional cohesion, sustainability and preservation of our existing infrastructure.

The key issue identified in the NEOSCC analysis is that the region’s built area has continued to expand over the past 40 years, even as the region’s population has remained the same or slightly declined. This is true of the NEOSCC region and, if anything, it is truer of the five-county NOACA...
region. The reasons for this spreading out are numerous, and include but are not limited to: the availability of inexpensive farm land at the region’s urban periphery, Federal programs promoting home ownership, the increasing availability of automobiles and the relatively low and stable price of fuel, public tastes and preferences for suburban housing and lifestyles, and social tensions related to race and ethnicity, income inequality and social class.

In regions of the country where population has continued to grow, many of the negative aspects of the expansion have been avoided, because new residents have arrived to replace those who are moving outward. However, in the absence of new residents, the supply of housing inevitably exceeds the demand, and outward movement can only lead to abandonment of some properties. Over the past 20 years, the core urban areas of the NOACA region, such as Cleveland, East Cleveland, Lorain, Elyria and Painesville, have seen significant abandonment of older and more deteriorated housing stock. In more recent years, this phenomenon has extended to some suburban areas. The following map shows the current stock of vacant land in the five-county region. The map shows vacant properties in both rural and urban areas of the region and indicates that there is vacant land in virtually every community and neighborhood. The most concerning, however, is the large amount of vacant land found in formerly dense urban neighborhoods in Cleveland and its inner suburbs, Lorain, Elyria and other older communities throughout the region.

Figure A-1: Vacant Land in the NOACA Region
Addressing the reasons for abandonment and sprawl is beyond the direct control of NOACA. Indeed, most of them are beyond the control or influence of any governmental agency. However, it is undeniable that the spreading out of the population has had a significant impact on the region. These impacts include, but are not limited to:

- New retail and jobs centers have developed as population has spread, leading to abandonment of older, existing retail and job centers.
- The increased distance between where people work and live has created challenges for providing transit service and contributed to the growth in single-occupancy vehicle trips, which has increased the number of hours and miles that people drive, increasing commute times, traffic congestion and pollution.
- Abandoned residential, commercial and industrial sites, especially former industrial “brownfield” sites, pose significant redevelopment challenges to local communities throughout the region.
- These abandoned sites invite crime and instability to neighborhoods, disrupting the lives of those who continue to live near them.
- Abandoned sites also generate little or no tax revenue, placing a strain on communities to maintain basic public services and infrastructure including not only roads and bridges but water and sewer lines. This burden extends to private utilities such as natural gas and electric services.

**Current Trend Scenario**
According to the projections prepared for the NEOSCC study, if both the growth and development trends of the past twenty years continue, by 2040 the NOACA region will have:

- 38,000 more people than today
- 31,000 more jobs
- 35,000 more households
- 156,000 new building permits
- 110,000 more abandoned units

The figure below is an estimate, produced by NEOSCC, of the likely locations of land vacated between 2010 and 2040 under this “Business as Usual” scenario. As the map indicates, much of the land to be vacated will be in the City of Cleveland, Lorain and Elyria and in older suburban areas like Euclid, Garfield Heights, and Lakewood. However, vacated properties will be present in all five counties, creating significant hardships on nearby residents and on taxpayers of those communities, who must continue supporting needed services with fewer resources.
If growth and development trends of the past 20 years continue, the NOACA region will be marked by abandonment, outward migration from Cleveland (and to a lesser extent, from other older Northeast Ohio Communities like Lorain, Elyria, and eventually Medina, Painesville, Chardon and many of the older suburbs of Cleveland), with much of the “growth” in new communities generated by relocation from existing communities. Another result will be high financial costs of maintaining existing infrastructure while continuing to build new roadways and infrastructure to serve newly-developing communities on the suburban fringe.

This projection of an increase in vacant properties is supported by the analysis developed by the Center for Neighborhood Technology in their April 2011 report, *Broadening Urban Investment to Leverage Transit (BUILT) in Cleveland*. The BUILT in Cleveland report analyzed the net change in the number of families and single-family detached homes in the five county NOACA region between 2000 and 2009. The study found that over that period, Cuyahoga County lost more than 42,500 families during this period, while Lake County lost 2,151. The other counties in the region gained families, in most cases probably families relocating from Cuyahoga County. Overall, the region lost 38,179 families. However, over that same time period, the five county region gained 37,395 single family homes. Every county in the region gained new single family homes, with Cuyahoga County—having lost more than 42,500 families—gaining nearly 11,800 single family homes. Lorain County—
which gained only 1,649 families—added 10,755 single family homes to its housing stock. The graphic below provides the details of the CNT analysis.

Figure A-3: Net Change in Total Families and Total Single Family Detached Homes, 2000-2008


These statistics do not paint an entirely negative picture. The nearly 38,000 new single family homes built in the region are new homes. In most cases they are larger, more comfortable, and more efficient than the ones they replaced, and are configured to meet the needs of today's households. As Americans, we cherish the freedom we have to improve our lives, to live where we like and in the manner that we prefer. The building of a new single family home sets off a chain of moves in which families and individuals upgrade their living conditions, as the family who moves into the new home vacates an older one, with another family moving into it, usually from a home of lesser quality, and so on down the line. These moves almost always result in all involved living in a better dwelling that is more appropriate to their present needs and desires.

However, a problem comes at the end of that chain of moves, when a family or individual moves out of a home—often a rental property in a poor neighborhood—for which there are no new residents waiting, leaving a vacant property. Vandalism, crime, lowered property values, and lower tax revenues await the growing number of neighborhoods and communities where such properties are concentrated. A trend in which the number of new homes exceeds the number of households available to fill them by thousands of units each year is a trend that cannot continue without reducing overall regional property values and introducing social and economic instability to communities throughout Northeast Ohio, with a concomitant erosion of the quality of life of all Northeast Ohio residents.
A problem also comes at the beginning of the chain of moves, when new houses are constructed on what was previously farmland and open space. The household that moves into a new suburban home demands urban services—roads, water and sewer lines, energy and communication utilities, waste collection, police and fire protection, schools—similar to, or even superior to, the suburban neighborhood that it recently vacated. Extending these services into new areas, while maintaining services in the areas vacated, is expensive for the local governments, transportation agencies and public utilities of the region. It is especially difficult in an environment in which the regional population and economy is not growing. Genuine issues of justice arise in situations where the costs of new development are not being borne solely by those living in the new homes, but also by people living in previously developed areas and communities that are subsidizing such development—by, for example, paying higher water and sewer rates to extend lines and increase system capacity. Americans have the right to live where and as they wish, but they do not have the right to have others bear the cost, or consequences, of their choices.

As the NEOSCC analysis indicates, continuing this process may soon be beyond the fiscal means of many of the region’s governmental units. As the analysis below shows, continuing to support extended suburban development may be beyond the region’s means, even assuming relatively optimistic levels of future population and employment growth.

**Alternative 1: Grow the Same**

Population growth in the NOACA region lags the rate of population growth in the United States. While the US population grew by 24% from 1990 to 2010 (from 248.7 million to 308.4 million), the NOACA region has declined slightly, from 2.10 million in 1990 to 2.08 million in 2010, a growth rate of -1.2%. The NEOSCC study analyzed how a growth rate in the NEOSCC study area equal to the growth rate of the country as a whole would look in terms of population, jobs, households, and building permits, and abandoned properties—assuming that recent development trends favoring large amounts of new development at the suburban periphery were to continue. The analysis found that, assuming a growth rate equal to that of the rest of the country, in 2040 the NOACA region would have:

- 460,000 more people
- 252,000 more jobs
- 213,000 more households
- 277,000 new building permits
- 44,000 more abandoned units

As the results indicate, even a large—and, frankly, unlikely—growth in population and jobs to match the projected rate in the nation as a whole would not reduce the problem of abandonment, with 44,000 abandoned units added to the existing stock of abandoned properties. While the region would clearly be better off in many ways than under the “current trend” scenario, the region would continue to suffer serious social and economic consequences from a growing stock of abandoned properties.

**Alternative 2: Do Things Differently**

The second NEOSCC alternative scenario asks, what if the region maintained the same low growth rate over the next 20 years, but new development were to occur exclusively in areas of existing
infrastructure (instead of currently undeveloped or under-developed areas at the suburban periphery). The analysis found that by 2040, the region would have:

- 51,000 more people
- 63,000 more jobs
- 50,000 more households
- 62,000 new building permits
- 8,000 more abandoned units

These results indicate that, given the relatively low amount of growth projected for the NOACA region over the next 20 years, even an unlikely scenario in which all of the region's new development occurs in currently developed areas cannot eliminate all of the abandoned property in the region—indeed, 8,000 additional abandoned units would be added to the current stock.

**Alternative 3: Grow Differently**

Given the unsatisfactory results of the first two alternative scenarios, the NEOSCC team developed a third scenario in which both growth levels matching the national average and development patterns that situated all new development in existing developed communities were assumed. Under such a scenario, the analysis found that the NOACA region would have:

- 476,000 more people
- 290,000 more jobs
- 232,000 more households
- 242,000 new building permits
- and 6,000 fewer abandoned units

As these results show, to even achieve a modest future reduction in abandoned properties in the NOACA region, two relatively unlikely assumptions—regional growth rates matching the projected growth rate of the US as a whole, and development being located entirely within existing developed areas—would be necessary. This analysis shows the challenge facing the NOACA region, as it attempts to maintain its existing infrastructure and communities in such a way as to maintain our high quality of life over the next 20 years.

**Tax Base Impacts**

The impact of further development in undeveloped areas and abandonment in older communities will be felt not only in terms of eyesore properties and social and community disruption; it also will be felt in the tax coffers of municipalities and counties throughout the region. NEOSCC developed projections of the tax impacts of current population and development trends. Their analysis found that the further extrapolation of those trends through 2040 will be financially disastrous for many Northeast Ohio communities.

The following graph is derived from financial projections developed as part of the NEOSCC study. The columns show the net difference between each county's revenues and expenditures in 2010 (blue) and projected for 2040 (red), if present trends, including if tax rates, costs, revenue sources, population growth (or loss), and development patterns, remain unchanged. The graph indicates that while one of the counties (Lake) operates at a deficit today, by 2040, all of the counties in the NOACA region will operate at a deficit if present trends continue. As the second graph indicates,
while today the five counties operate, on average, at a slight deficit of 0.3%, by 2040, the counties would operate at an average deficit of more than 33%.

The NEOSCC study cautions against assuming this scenario could occur, since all of the counties would need to make adjustments, either in tax rates, service cuts, or changes in development patterns, long before such a scenario would play out. The projection, however, is a warning to the region that fiscal insolvency will prevent the present trends from continuing.

Figure A-4: Difference in Revenue and Expenditure by County
Figure A-5: Revenue-to-Spending Ratio for 12-County NEOSCC Region

The analysis of population and development trends prepared for NEOSCC underscores the fundamental unsustainability of recent population and development trends in Northeast Ohio. It raises a number of additional, urgent concerns that should be considered as part of NOACA’s vision—the need for greater regional cohesion, the need to preserve existing infrastructure and to prioritize its preservation over the development of new infrastructure, and the need to promote sustainable development in a fiscally constrained environment.
Why the Future Will Not Look like the Past
The NEOSCC analyses discussed above indicate that present trends in the region effectively cannot continue. However, there are a number of other reasons why the future cannot, and will not, look like the past, with the development status quo that has prevailed since the 1970s extending indefinitely into the future, and NOACA and other regional transportation agencies scrambling to extend the transportation network further and further into newly suburbanized hinterlands. Among the reasons why the future will not look like the past are:

• The shrinking and aging of the Northeast Ohio population
• The changing demands on the transportation system brought on by the retirement of the Baby Boom generation and the changing tastes, needs and interests of younger generations

The Shrinking and Aging of the Northeast Ohio Population
The population of the NOACA region has been shifting between communities and between counties since at least the 1950s. Since the 1970s, the population has been both shrinking and aging, both in real terms and, even more, as compared with the rest of the country. As the Baby Boom generation, that largest cohort of the population that was born between the late 1940s and the early 1960s, ages out of the workforce over the next 20 or so years, America will experience many social and economic changes, and the market for transportation infrastructure and services will be affected.

Shrinking
Contrary to the projections used in some of the alternatives developed for the NEOSCC study, which projected a modest increase in the population of Northeast Ohio between now and 2040, projections by the Ohio Department of Development indicate a substantial loss of population in the region. As the table below indicates, the region can anticipate a loss of more than 112,000 people, a 5.7% loss, between 2010 and 2040. The loss will be led by Cuyahoga County, which is projected to lose more than 166,000 people. Lake County is expected to also lose population marginally, while the other counties in the region will gain population—presumably, primarily at the expense of Cuyahoga County, whose residents will relocate to these surrounding counties. However, the projections indicate that more residents will leave the region entirely than will relocate within it—a prediction with terrifying implications for the region’s prospects for development and for continuing to fund the maintenance of its existing transportation network.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2010 Census</th>
<th>2040 Projection</th>
<th>Change 2010-2040</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuyahoga</td>
<td>1,280,122</td>
<td>1,113,950</td>
<td>-166,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geauga</td>
<td>93,389</td>
<td>94,710</td>
<td>1,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>230,014</td>
<td>228,060</td>
<td>-1,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorain</td>
<td>301,356</td>
<td>328,190</td>
<td>26,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medina</td>
<td>172,332</td>
<td>199,890</td>
<td>27,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,077,213</td>
<td>1,964,800</td>
<td>-112,413</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One point to be made about this data is that Cuyahoga County has long been the largest county in the region in terms of population (and as we will see below, was and is even more dominant economically). Projections indicate that even with further population decline and growth in the surrounding counties through 2040, Cuyahoga County will still house nearly 57% of the region’s population, while the next largest county, Lorain, will house less than 17%. This large and most urbanized of the region’s population will continue to require significant funding to maintain a large transportation infrastructure and a transit demand that will continue to outpace the surrounding counties.
Figure A-7: NOACA Region Population Density (1950)

Figure A-8: NOACA Region Population Density (1970)
Figure A-9: NOACA Region Population Density (1990)

Figure A-10: NOACA Region Population Density (2010)
Aging

The population of the NOACA region may not be growing, but it is growing older. As the table and chart below show, the median age of residents of the five counties in the NOACA region has increased steadily since 1990 until today all five counties have a median age over 40 years (compared to under 39 years for Ohio as a whole, and barely over 37 years for the US as a whole). Geauga and Lake Counties have the highest median ages of the five counties, and have also seen the most rapid increases in median age over the time period. The median age of Geauga County residents has increased by nearly 9 years since 1990, while the median age of Lake County residents has increased by 8 years over the same time period. If this trend in increasing median age continues, the median age in the NOACA region would be well over age 45 by 2040, with some counties exceeding a median age of 50. As we will see below, this aging population has significant ramifications for transportation services in the region.

Table A-3: 1990-2010 Median Age of Residents in Northeast Ohio Counties, Ohio and US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>1990-2010 Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuyahoga</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geauga</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorain</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medina</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census

Figure A-11: 1990-2010 Median Age of Residents in Northeast Ohio Counties, Ohio and US

The following graphic shows age cohorts for the five county NOACA region for 1990, 2000 and 2010. As the graphic shows, the largest age cohort—essentially tracking the “Baby Boom” generation (those
born between the latter 1940s and the early 1960s)—was in the age groups between 15 and 44 years of age. By 2010, these groups were in the 34-64 age group. Carrying these cohorts forward a further 30 years—and not taking into account possible factors that could change the demographic profile, like in-migration of children and younger adults, and out-migration of retirees—the largest cohorts would be over 64 years old. Obviously, a population with this age profile would have very different transportation needs—and would pay much less in taxes—than a population with the age profile of today, when most people in these age cohorts are in the workforce.

Figure A-12: Percent of Population by Age Group for 5-County NOACA Region and US 1990-2010
This pattern is confirmed by the series of age pyramids produced for the NOACA region and each of the individual counties, for 2015 and 2040 projections, which are shown in Figures A-13 through A-24, below.

**Figure A-13: NOACA Region Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)**

![2015 Age Pyramid: Region](image)

**Figure A-14: NOACA Region Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)**

![2040 Age Pyramid: Region](image)
Figure A-15: Cuyahoga County Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)

Figure A-16: Cuyahoga County Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)
Figure A-17: Geauga County Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)

Figure A-18: Geauga County Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)
Figure A-21: Lorain County Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)

Figure A-22: Lorain County Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)
Figure A-23: Medina County Age Cohort Pyramid (2015)

2015 Age Pyramid : Medina

Figure A-24: Medina County Age Cohort Pyramid (2040)

2040 Age Pyramid : Medina

Source: US Census
Retirement of the Baby Boom Generation

At every stage in their lives, the Baby Boom generation, Americans born between the late 1940s and the early 1960s, have transformed the country. The country built new schools in the 1950s and new universities and colleges in the 1960s to accommodate their educational needs. The housing construction booms and price increases of the 1980s through 2000s can be attributed to their moving into, and moving through, the housing market. The current expansion of the health care industry and construction of everything from hospitals to pharmacies can be attributed, in part, to the ongoing retirement of the Baby Boomers. The oldest Baby Boomers are in their late 60s and already retiring, while the younger Baby Boomers, in their early 50s, are in the prime of their work lives, still commuting to work every day and earning—and paying taxes—at their lifetime peak. Over the next 15 years—before 2030, when the youngest Baby Boomers will be 66 years old—virtually all of the Baby Boomers will retire.

The retirement of the Baby Boomers will change the American workplace and with it, the American transportation system, including the transportation system of the Northeast Ohio. Retirees are more flexible in terms of where they live than those in their working age. Most do not have children living at home, so do not need a large home or a high quality suburban school system. Some will leave Northeast Ohio altogether, to move to a retirement location or to reunite with family who live outside Northeast Ohio. Some will relocate within the Cleveland area, seeking smaller homes, a more walkable environment, or proximity to restaurants and activity centers. This could result in more older people relocating to the City of Cleveland and denser inner suburbs, and to dense nodes within suburbs, of which Crocker Park in Westlake is a prime example. Many will simply “age in place” in their suburban homes, continuing to drive for most of their travel needs until disability or economic pressures force them to stop doing so.

Eventually, many retirees—whether in urban, suburban, or rural area, will become disabled and require assistance—including transportation—to carry out the activities of their lives. Transit agencies in the Northeast Ohio are already under pressure to meet the demand for paratransit services, as disabled persons of all ages use these services to meet their needs for work, shopping, medical and other trip purposes. The number of paratransit trips demanded by the public has been rising steadily for more than ten years. As this graph showing Greater Cleveland RTA paratransit ridership shows, paratransit demand nearly doubled between 2002 and 2012—during a period when Cuyahoga County’s population declined.
The increasing proportion of elderly people in the population will necessarily increase demand for these expensive paratransit trips, which can cost the transit system $30 or more each to provide (offset by a cash fare from the rider of $2-$4 dollars per trip, depending on the transit system). The cost of these services, which affect urban, suburban and rural areas alike, will be an increasing portion of the cost of providing transportation in the Northeast Ohio Region.

Perhaps the most important transportation impact of the retirement of the Baby Boom generation is the impact on commuting patterns. Retirees may not work at all, eliminating their work travel completely. Others will take part time jobs that, for the most part, will not require travel during peak travel hours. Transportation systems are primarily built to meet peak demand. A region with a higher proportion of retirees will require less travel during peak demand periods, which may mean that travel congestion levels will decrease, transit systems will require less service during peak periods, and fewer roadway and transit projects will be needed to meet peak demand requirements.

Another significant impact of the large-scale retirement of Baby Boomers will be the loss of tax revenues caused by their retirements. Retirees generally earn less than working age persons, and have income that is exempt from some forms of taxation. In addition, many communities and counties offer homestead tax exemptions to older people to shield those on fixed incomes from property tax increases triggered by rising home values. As higher proportions of the community are retired, the tax revenues they generate will decline, placing pressure on counties, municipalities and school systems to provide services.

The changes wrought by the retirement of the Baby Boomers are already underway, and will be fully upon us in just a few short years. It is critical that Northeast Ohio communities and transportation agencies begin planning for these changes immediately. NOACA, as one of the region’s truly regional entities, can have a large role in preparing for these changes, helping communities, and the region as a whole, plan and begin allocating funding for the shifting transportation needs and desires of an aging region.
Generations X, Y, Millennials, and the Changing Transportation Market

Members of Generations X, Y, and the Millennial Generation (essentially, the generations born since the early 1960s) have increasingly different needs, tastes, and interests than their parents’ generations. In the area of housing, this generational change is manifesting itself in a growing preference for urban living and compact, walkable communities. It is also manifesting itself in a growing preference for alternative transportation modes, including bicycling and public transit.

The following infographic, generated by the US Public Interest Research Group (US PIRG), notes a number of changes in our society, principally caused by the generational turnover between the Baby Boom and generations X, Y and Millennials. The differences in the tastes, preferences and behaviors of these younger generations will be as significant in changing many aspects of American life, including the transportation system, as the retirement of the Baby Boom generation.

Figure A-26: Why the Driving Boom is Over

Source: US PIRG
A review of recent trends in vehicle miles traveled (a common measure of driving volume) across the US reinforces the view that the transportation tastes of the Millennial generation, in particular, are changing the transportation market significantly. The following graph shows total and per capita VMT for the US for the years 1946 to 2012. As the graph shows, since 2008 there has been an unprecedented reversal of the seemingly never ending annual increases in total and per-capita VMT. In part, this reflects the impact of recessions (slight declines have occurred during past recessions), but the decline has been deeper and longer lasting than in previous recessions, reflecting both the increasing impact of Baby Boom generation retirements, and the ambivalence many younger people have towards automobiles and driving.

Source: US DOT Highway Statistics Annual Report
Indications of Economic Decline and the Potential for Resurgence

Another issue facing the Northeast Ohio region that will impact transportation policy in the coming years is the general economic decline of the region. In addition to losing population and growing older at a faster rate than the rest of the US, Northeast Ohio has lost economic status relative to the US.. Figure A-28 below shows median housing value of owner-occupied units from 1990 to the 2007-2011 time period. As the graph shows, in 1990, median housing values in the Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor Metro Area were slightly below the national average. By 2000, values had risen and were virtually equal to the national average. However, since 2000, values of owner occupied units in the region have fallen in real terms, and are substantially below the national average, which rose significantly during the 2000s.

Figure A-28: Median Housing Value of Owner-Occupied Units, US and Northeast Ohio (2011$)

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Figure A-29 shows median household income for the Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor metro area for 1990, 2000 and 2007-2011. The graph indicates that while household income in Northeast Ohio was slightly above the national average in 1990 and 2000, that gap has reversed, with the region’s median income now substantially lower than the national average. Such data indicates both the urgency of all public agencies to focus on economic development activities, to recover some of the economic ground lost in recent years. It also underscores the difficulties that the region may have in raising tax revenues to support infrastructure projects, further supporting a focus on maintaining existing infrastructure over developing new.
An economic indicator of major significance to the development of the transportation system has been the decline of downtown Cleveland as a regional employment center. Downtown Cleveland remains an important activity center. With the development of Progressive Field and Quicken Loans Arena, First Energy Stadium, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, development along Cleveland’s Lakefront, the resurgence of Playhouse Square, and the opening of the Horseshoe Casino, and the East 4th Street and Warehouse District restaurant districts, downtown Cleveland is the region’s pre-eminent entertainment district. The residential market also is growing, making downtown Cleveland an increasingly vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood. However, the growth in entertainment and residential uses has come against the backdrop of declines in downtown employment. As the graph in Figure A-30 shows, downtown Cleveland lost nearly 25,000 jobs just between 2002 and 2011. While downtown Cleveland remains the region’s largest employment center, and is by far its most densely developed employment area, it now is the home of less than 90,000 jobs, far below 10% of the regional total.

The loss of jobs is significant to the maintenance of the existing transportation network and the future development of that network. The region’s highway network, and particularly Cuyahoga County’s transit network, is heavily oriented to bringing workers into downtown Cleveland and nearby neighborhoods. Employment centers have arisen in a number of areas in Cuyahoga County over the last 50 years, including University Circle (which now rivals downtown Cleveland in the number of employees it supports), various locations along I-271 in the eastern suburbs, at I-77 and I-480 south of downtown, at Tiedemann Road in Brooklyn, the Crocker Park area in Westlake and other locations. In addition, there has been a low-density diffusion of jobs throughout the region, if this diffusion of
jobs continues, it could change traffic demand patterns on the region’s highway network, while making the region progressively more difficult and less efficient to serve with public transit.

Figure A-30: Downtown Cleveland Unemployment Numbers (2002-2011)

Downtown Cleveland Employment (2002 - 2011)

Source: LEHD

The first point to be made about the economy of Northeast Ohio is that it is, and is projected to remain, heavily focused on Cuyahoga County. Figure A-31, below, shows non-farm employment for the NOACA region and each of the five counties in the region. As the graph shows, jobs in the region are even more concentrated in Cuyahoga, the region’s central county, than is population. Currently, employment in Cuyahoga County is more than three times the level of employment in the other four counties combined. Not only do most Cuyahoga County residents also work in Cuyahoga County, but large numbers of residents of the other four counties also work in Cuyahoga County.

As the graph in Figure A-32, below, indicates, Cuyahoga County’s wages represent an even greater proportion of the region’s total wages than the proportion that Cuyahoga County represents in jobs. As the graph shows, about four-fifths of total wages in the region are earned in Cuyahoga County. When compared to the difference in the number of jobs between Cuyahoga County and the other counties in the region underscores that jobs in Cuyahoga County, on average, pay higher wages than in the surrounding counties.
Gross domestic product—the measure of value of all economic activity in the counties—even more strongly confirms Cuyahoga County’s pre-eminence in the regional economy. As the graph in Figure A-33 below shows, Cuyahoga County has long been the region’s primary economic engine. Today, the economic activity of Cuyahoga County remains more than four times that of the other four counties combined. Projections prepared by Team NEO and Moody’s Economy.com indicate that while economic activity will grow faster in the other four counties than in Cuyahoga over the next thirty years, even in 2044, Cuyahoga County is expected to remain the location of more than 2/3rds of the region’s economic activity. The information in these graphs underscores the economic interconnectedness of the region’s communities, not only to one another, but particularly between each of the five counties and Cuyahoga County.

Figure A-33: Regional Gross Domestic Product (1978-2044)
THE NOACA STRATEGIC PLAN: GOING FORWARD, TOGETHER

WHAT IS NOACA?
The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency is a regional organization of local officials responsible for carrying out transportation and environmental planning under local direction and in accordance with federal and state mandates. The NOACA Board that governs the agency is a 45-member group of elected officials and administrators from Cuyahoga, Lorain, Medina, Geauga and Lake counties.

WHAT IS A STRATEGIC PLAN?
A strategic plan defines the direction that an agency or organization will take in the future. It defines the agency’s strategy for making decisions about allocating resources in pursuit of its goals. A strategic plan is a formal definition not of “who we are,” but “who we want to be.”

WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF A STRATEGIC PLAN?
A strategic plan typically includes the following elements:
- A vision statement
- A set of goals and corresponding, measurable objectives
- Specific strategies for achieving those goals and objectives

VISION STATEMENT

NOACA’s vision statement was developed with input from various sources, including an external scan of demographic trends within Northeast Ohio and across the nation; a review of the demographic, economic, and financial conditions in the region; and a review of vision statements from other organizations within the NOACA region and other MPOs throughout the country. Potential elements for the vision statement were compiled from the various visioning activities conducted by NOACA’s Board and staff prior to the formal start of the Strategic Plan, as well as a visioning and goals worksheet completed by NOACA Board members. The final vision statement was developed in a workshop setting with the Board.

The NOACA Board developed and adopted the following vision statement:

NOACA will **STRENGTHEN** regional cohesion, **PRESERVE** existing infrastructure, and **BUILD** a sustainable multimodal transportation system to **SUPPORT** economic development and **ENHANCE** quality of life in Northeast Ohio.
GOALS
The adopted vision statement lends itself naturally to five goals:

1. STRENGTHEN REGIONAL COHESION
The Northeast Ohio region must find practical ways to coordinate and consolidate the provision of services. NOACA is one of the few agencies in Northeast Ohio that has a specific, regional focus. As such, it is well positioned to take a leadership role in fostering cooperation and cohesion among the region’s many jurisdictions.

2. PRESERVE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE
Maintaining the public infrastructure assets of the NOACA region will cost billions of dollars over the next thirty years. In that time period, low population and employment growth will lead to a decline in tax revenues used to maintain those assets. The most prudent use of limited resources is preservation of the region’s existing infrastructure investments.

3. BUILD A SUSTAINABLE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM
Building a sustainable multimodal transportation system means supporting a system in which alternative forms of transportation, including transit, bicycles, pedestrians, and other non-motorized transport are better integrated into the existing auto-oriented road network. An integrated system gives people more choices and leverages existing assets.

4. SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Strategic investments must improve the economic viability of our region by supporting the retention of existing businesses, attracting new business to areas served by existing infrastructure, and supporting the region’s economic strengths, including manufacturing and health care services.

5. ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE IN NORTHEAST OHIO
Strategic investments must support an enhanced quality of life by providing more transportation choices, improving access to economic and educational opportunities, enhancing access to the region’s recreational assets, and improving the environmental quality of the region.

MOVING FORWARD
NOACA Board members have developed a series of objectives and strategies for how NOACA will change the way it does business in order to meet these goals and objectives. The objectives and strategies are available for your review at www.noca.org. We need your input to make this plan successful. Are these the goals NOACA should be pursuing? How do you think that NOACA should accomplish these goals? Please take a few moments to share your ideas by filling out a comment card. Comments can also be sent to NOACA at NOACA, Re: Strategic Plan, 1299 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114 or emailed to noaca@mpo.noca.org.
THE NOACA STRATEGIC PLAN: GOING FORWARD, TOGETHER

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- Specific strategies for achieving those goals and objectives
VISION STATEMENT AND GOALS

NOACA’s vision statement was developed with input from various sources, including an external scan of demographic trends within Northeast Ohio and across the nation; a review of the demographic, economic, and financial conditions in the region; and a review of vision statements from other organizations within the NOACA region and other MPOs throughout the country. Potential elements for the vision statement were compiled from the various visioning activities conducted by the NOACA Board and staff prior to the formal start of the Strategic Plan, as well as a visioning and goals worksheet completed by NOACA Board members. The final vision statement was developed in a workshop setting with the Board.

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The vision statement lends itself naturally to five goals:
GOAL 1

STRENGTHEN REGIONAL COHESION

NORTHEAST OHIO RESIDENTS UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE IS DEPENDENT ON ONE ANOTHER.

A telephone and online survey conducted for the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) project found that:

- 74% of residents indicated that their area’s economic future depends a lot on the rest of Northeast Ohio.
- 89% of residents indicated a desire for local governments to work together to grow the local economy.

THE REGIONAL COOPERATION THAT NORTHEAST OHIO RESIDENTS DESIRE WILL BE NECESSARY TO FACE THE CHALLENGES THAT THE FUTURE HOLDS.

A fiscal analysis performed by NEOSCC found that our current development trends — building new infrastructure without the growth to support it — are fiscally unsustainable, not only as a region, but on an individual county basis. The costs of abandonment in communities with declining populations, the costs of new infrastructure in communities with growing populations, and low employment growth are all factors contributing to this trend toward higher operating deficits for local governments in the region.

As a region, we can no longer afford to use taxpayer dollars so inefficiently. The Northeast Ohio region must find practical ways to coordinate and consolidate the provision of services.

NOACA is one of the few agencies in Northeast Ohio that has a specific, regional focus. As such, it is well positioned to take a leadership role in fostering cooperation and cohesion among the region’s many jurisdictions.
GOAL 2

PRESERVE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

THE NOACA REGION HAS PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS VALUED IN THE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS.

These assets include the roads, bridges, transit investments, water and sewer systems upon which our regional economy depends. Maintaining these systems in will cost billions of dollars over the next thirty years.

LOW POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH WILL CONTRIBUTE TO A DECLINE IN TAX REVENUES USED TO MAINTAIN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS.

Over the next thirty years, the population of Northeast Ohio is not projected to grow, but is projected to grow older.

Employment growth is also projected to remain low. Both of these factors will contribute to a decline in the tax revenues used to maintain our infrastructure systems.

At the same time, the cost of preserving our existing infrastructure, including the costs of maintaining, repairing, and replacing existing systems that are nearing the end of their planned life-cycles, is expected to grow.

The most prudent use of limited resources is preservation of the region’s existing assets and infrastructure investments.
GOAL 3

BUILD A SUSTAINABLE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The rise in demand for alternative forms of transportation is largely due to two trends:

- The Millennial generation (born between 1983 and 2000) drives significantly less than previous generations of young Americans.
- As Baby Boomers reach retirement age, their transportation needs change, creating an increased demand for transit, and in particular paratransit, services.

As Baby Boomers Retire, the Future of Driving Will Depend on the Millennial Generation, Which Shows Far Less Inclination to Drive.

The Millennial generation leads the recent change in transportation trends, driving significantly less than previous generations of young Americans. Retiring Baby Boomers are also contributing to the decline in vehicle miles travelled; they may no longer be commuting to work, but they are contributing to the dramatic rise in demand for paratransit services across Northeast Ohio and the nation.

In order to adapt to the changing transportation needs of our region, future investments must support a sustainable, multimodal transportation system in which alternative forms of transportation, including transit, bicycles, pedestrians, and other non-motorized forms of transit are better integrated into the existing auto-oriented road network.

An integrated transportation system gives people more choices, supports alternative forms of transportation while maintaining and improving the existing road network, and leverages existing assets.
GOAL 4
SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

With limited resources, NOACA must be strategic in its investments. These investments must improve the viability of the Northeast Ohio region by:

- Supporting the retention of existing businesses
- Attracting new businesses to areas served by existing infrastructure
- Supporting the region’s economic strengths, including manufacturing and health care services

GOAL 5
ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE IN NORTHEAST OHIO

Strategic investments must support an enhanced quality of life in Northeast Ohio by:

- Giving people more choices in transportation: auto, transit, pedestrian and bicycle options
- Improving access to economic opportunities, including education, workforce training, and jobs
- Enhancing access to recreational assets, including parks, cultural centers, and sports venues
- Improving the environmental condition of the region, including air and water quality
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The NOACA Board has developed a series of objectives for each goal:

STRENGTHEN REGIONAL COHESION

Objectives:
1. Foster collaboration on issues at all levels of government and other stakeholders to ensure the effective and efficient use of regional resources.
2. Enhance public awareness and understanding of regional issues and priorities.
3.facilitate intergovernmental cooperation and coordination to improve the delivery of services and enhance regional integration.
4. Promote the use of regional planning and development strategies to guide decision-making.

PRESERVE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Objectives:
1. Ensure the maintenance and repair of existing infrastructure to prevent deterioration and minimize costs.
2. Prioritize the preservation of critical infrastructure elements and systems.
3. Implement strategies to minimize the impact of climate change on existing infrastructure.
4. Foster partnerships with local communities to improve the management and maintenance of critical infrastructure assets.

BUILD A SUSTAINABLE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Objectives:
1. Develop and implement a multimodal transportation system that promotes efficient and sustainable travel.
2. Improve accessibility and connectivity to support economic growth and social equity.
3. Enhance the integration of public transportation with other modes of transportation.
4. Promote the use of alternative transportation options and reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles.

SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Objectives:
1. Promote the development of a diverse and sustainable economy.
2. Enhance the competitiveness of the region by fostering innovation and attracting new businesses.
3. Support the growth of small businesses and entrepreneurship.
4. Enhance the quality of life for residents by providing access to employment opportunities.

ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE IN NORTHEAST OHIO

Objectives:
1. Increase access to healthcare services and improve public health outcomes.
2. Enhance the quality of life for residents through improved recreation and open space opportunities.
3. Improve the safety and mobility of the region's transportation network.
4. Strengthen the region's cultural and artistic vibrancy.

74
THE NOACA STRATEGIC PLAN: GOING FORWARD, TOGETHER

WHAT’S NEXT?

NOACA is developing a series of strategies that will direct the agency and change the way it does business in order to meet these goals and objectives. We need your input to make this plan successful. Are these the goals NOACA should be pursuing? How do you think that NOACA should accomplish these goals?

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

NOACA has partnered with Ideastream to create a Civic Commons site to encourage conversation about the Strategic Plan. You can log on at theciviccommons.com/issues/noaca-strategic-plan to participate in ongoing conversations.

HOW CAN I SUBMIT MY COMMENTS?

You can submit your comments by:

- Handing your completed comment card to a NOACA staff member today
- Mailing your comments to NOACA, Re: Strategic Plan, 1299 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114
- Emailing your comments to noaca@mpo.noaca.org
What is NOACA?

- The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency is a regional organization of local officials responsible for carrying out transportation and environmental planning under local direction and in accordance with federal and state mandates.

What is NOACA?

- The NOACA board of directors governs the agency and is a 45-member group of elected officials and administrators from Cuyahoga, Lorain, Medina, Geauga and Lake counties.

Why a Strategic Plan?

- A strategic plan defines the direction that the agency will take in the future
- Not "who we are" but "who we want to be"
- A strategic plan defines:
  - The vision and goals of the agency
  - Specific strategies for deciding how to allocate resources in pursuit of the agency’s goals

Plan Development Process

- July 2013: Task Force identifies strategic planning as goal of NOACA
- April - December 2013: Meetings with local stakeholders
- November 2013: Draft framework
- December 2013: Board Strategic and State Workshop
Plan Development Process

Vision Statement Development

- Vision statement was developed with input from various sources:
  - External scan:
    - Demographic trends
    - NEOCC economic and financial analysis
  - Review of vision statements of NOACA-area organizations and other MPOs
  - Internal scan:
    - Vision and goal worksheets
    - Board Vision workshop

Vision Statement Development

- High degree of agreement among Board members on vision statement themes/elements:
  - Regional Cohesion
  - Preserving Infrastructure
  - Multi-Modality
  - Sustainability (environmental, economic)
  - Economic Development
  - Quality of Life

Adopted Vision Statement

NOACA will STRENGTHEN regional cohesion, PRESERVE existing infrastructure, and BUILD a sustainable multimodal transportation system to SUPPORT economic development and ENHANCE quality of life in Northeast Ohio.

Vision lends itself naturally to five goals:
Strengthen regional cohesion
- There are inefficiencies resulting from the sheer number of jurisdictions in the NOACA region.
- Declining tax base/revenue means we can no longer afford to operate so inefficiently.
- Need to find practical ways to coordinate and consolidate the provision of services.

Strengthen regional cohesion
- NOACA is among the few organizations that has a regional (multi-county) focus.
- NOACA can serve as a forum and resource for developing opportunities for regional cooperation.

Preserve existing infrastructure
- The NOACA region has public infrastructure assets (roads, bridges, transit investments, water and sewer systems) valued in the billions of dollars.
- Maintaining these systems will cost billions of dollars over the next thirty years.

Preserve existing infrastructure
- Over that time period, the population of Northeast Ohio is not projected to grow, but is projected to grow older.
- The continuation of current trends (new infrastructure without the population growth to support it) will result in the deterioration of our existing infrastructure.

Preserve existing infrastructure
- The most prudent use of limited resources is preservation of the region’s existing assets and infrastructure investments.

Build a sustainable multimodal transportation system
- Demand for transportation options other than the private automobile is on the rise, largely due to two trends:
- The Millennial generation (born between 1983 and 2000) drives significantly less than previous generations of young Americans.
Build a sustainable multimodal transportation system

- Demand for transportation options other than the private automobile is on the rise, largely due to two trends:
  - As baby boomers reach retirement age, their transportation needs change, creating an increased demand for transit, and in particular paratransit, services.

- This means supporting a transportation system in which alternative forms of transportation, including transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and other non-motorized transport are better INTEGRATED into the existing auto-oriented road network.

Support economic development

- Strategic investments must improve the economic viability of our region by:
  - Supporting the retention of existing businesses
  - Attracting new businesses to areas served by existing infrastructure
  - Supporting the region’s economic strengths, including manufacturing and health care services.

Enhance quality of life in NE Ohio

- Strategic investments must support an enhanced quality of life in Northeast Ohio by:
  - Giving people more CHOICES
  - Supporting alternative forms of transportation while maintaining and improving the existing road network
  - Leveraging existing assets
  - Strategic investments must support an enhanced quality of life in Northeast Ohio by:
    - Giving people more choices in transportation—auto, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle options
    - Enhancing opportunities for economic growth by promoting education, workforce training, and jobs.
    - Enhancing access to recreational assets, including parks, natural resources, and sports venues
    - Improving the environmental condition of the region, including air and water quality.
How will the goals of the Strategic Plan impact NOACA’s decision-making process?

Strategic plan implementation

- Objectives define measurable results for the achievement of each goal.
  - For example, “Devote at least 90% of the region’s transportation and infrastructure funding to maintain and preserve existing transportation investments.”
- Strategies identify specific ways that NOACA can reach its objectives, and ultimately, its goals.

Other opportunities for engagement

- Civic Commons site – ongoing conversations
- Civic Commons site – online forum (May 22-23)
- Public forum at Idea Center at Playhouse Square (June 4, 5-7pm)

Next Steps

- Polling on the five goals
- Break-out groups
- Develop 1-2 new/additional goals in your groups
- Use stickers to assess objectives:
  - Green for objectives that you agree with
  - Red for objectives that you disagree with
  - Yellow for objectives about which you have questions or comments
  - Please write your questions down on the index cards
- Polling on goals developed in break-out groups
- Address questions about objectives

Polling: Goals

Polling: Proposed Goals
Public Comments - Tuesday, May 20th, 5:30 – 8:30 PM – Tri-C Corporate College, Warrensville Heights, OH

Regional Cohesion

- “NOACA Board can be stacked – stacked in favor of Cuyahoga County when you add in the transportation members. I don’t think an appointed Board should be making decisions, telling them how they should get around such as riding a bike, riding the rail, etc.”
- “Most of the money goes to the Cleveland Metropolitan area. Why would the outer communities want to be part of this organization?”
- “Geauga outs in $23 million in gas tax and gets $6 million back”
- “Geauga pays $35,000 in NOAVA dues and the rest comes from other counties.”
- “Cuyahoga County gets the least amount for what they put in. Lake County is 2nd worst.”
- “How many people on the Board am I able to elect in Lake County?”
- “I am appreciative that roads extend beyond the county lines. They might not do that without regional coordination/regional cooperation.”
- “I have a problem with the “cohesion” part because the counties are too disparate. Geauga and Medina are too rural. Why not Ashtabula and Trumbull? I voted no because I don’t agree with the counties included.”
- “I live in Broadview Heights next to Summit County. In this age of fiscal conservatism we need to find ways to work together. People are riding bikes more, finds ways to carshare.”
- “We have to take care of our city, not in a welfare kind of way, but we have to let our city crumble. Our city if becoming like the hole in the donut.”

 Preserve Existing Infrastructure

- “I worked in education for 41 years and I saw a lot of buildings torn down and new buildings were built at incredible expense.”
- “I don’t totally disagree with this. I only voted no because the question is “contrite”. We do need to maintain our existing infrastructure, especially our roads. We live in a free market society. If there is demand for new infrastructure, it needs to be built. Do we preserve existing infrastructure? Yes, but not at the expense of what should be built.”
- “I am uncertain – If preserving existing infrastructure means you can’t build a road out to a housing development, then that shouldn’t be allowed.”
- “In the presentation, you said that 90% of funding would be dedicated for existing infrastructure. That only leaves 10% left for places like Geauga County. But people are leaving the city, they want to live in rural areas. Based on your argument that we aren’t getting as much as we are putting in.”
- “Cleveland needs to be taken care of, but that is Cleveland’s problem. But the question is being steered. NOACA’s only responsibility is to distribute federal money for roads. The majority of roads in Geauga County are taken care of by the Geauga County Engineer.”
- “What does Colombia County do? They don’t have an MPO to go to. (Response: “That’s because they are a rural county.”) And so are we. (Response: “No, you’re not. Part of the county is urbanized – Chardon is urbanized.”)”
- “When we say “existing infrastructure” do we just only mean the “federal aid roads?” (Response: “Yes. Would it help if this said “federal aid infrastructure”? We are only responsible for federal
Sustainable Multimodal Transportation System

- “How do federal aid roads include transit and bikes?”
- “Yes – it’s less polluting if we use other forms of transportation besides all driving in our private automobiles.”
- “If you are going to use trains and buses, don’t you have to subsidize them? Those buses and trains can’t fund themselves. I don’t want my tax dollars spent on that at the expense of roads.”
- “I don’t want to expand transit. I think it should be there for people who don’t have a car.”
- “I don’t know how the Euclid Corridor got built, but it killed Euclid Road.”
- “No – I just find it interesting that when we were on the first question the focus was on there aren’t enough dollars to build new infrastructure, but suddenly we have money to spend on trains and bike paths. Getting back to the free market, decisions need to be made based on demand. If the total funding is limited, and we can’t even maintain the roads that we have and build new roads, should we be looking at all these transit and bike things. (Response: Grace mentions mass transit part of federal gas tax put in place by Ronald Reagan.)”
- “We have a legislative lobbyist (liaison) and we can go to the NOACA Board and ask them to ask for the mass transit part of the gas tax to be taken out.”
- “Ronald Reagan never pushed the future on anyone. It’s messy to govern ourselves. Each Congress and each of us need to govern ourselves. How do we know what anyone will be doing in 2040?”

Support Economic Development

- “How can we vote no on this? There isn’t enough information. Of course we support economic development, but I have a feeling that this is something we won’t like.”
- Grace: “Should we consider economic development in the investment in our transportation system?”
- “Common sense should dictate that the roads that are being used the most need the most maintenance.”
- “Grace: “The reason the plan has taken so long is because it has been an honest, open process.”
- “You were just waiting around for NEOSCC to develop their recommendations. Why not just look at the other reports that Sasaki has done around the country; the recommendations are the same. NEOSCC is mentioned on all of your Boards. It is part of your plan.”
- “There was no reference to it (NEOSCC). There was no opportunity for the opposition to present their view. It did not affect the plan.”
- “No – it’s a silly question. I took it from the federal aid point of view. I don’t want the federal government coming in and picking a road that is going to be funded because it supports economic development. That’s for the local governments to decide.”
- “It says “support and retain the expansion of Cleveland business.” That needs to change. We are not Cleveland.”
• “How did NOACA get started? I don’t ever remember voting on it. (Response: It’s a federal requirement. The way that it is defined is something we decide. We decided to define it as the five county region of the metropolitan region.”)

• “I have a problem with support economic development. Of course we do. But in my little town we had a new mayor come in and his big thing is getting new business into the town. Somebody next to the town was a big landowner and wanted to develop it and needed to be annexed to get sewer and water. They worked together to get it done. Why would NOACA need to be part of that?”

• “A suggestion is made that we should deny all federal money. We need to live within our means. There is no such thing as “federal money.” It’s our money.”

• “But our county doesn’t have to go to NOACA to get our money. (Response: “Yes, the urbanized areas have to.”)

• “We have asked for the charter statement. (Response: Grace says she will provide the initial document, but that does not define what NOACA is today. “You have to consider all of the amendments and changes that have been made along the way.”)

• Grace: “If you have a better way for transportation funding decisions to be made, tell me. Give me a plan.”

• “I taught school for 41 years. I saw a lot of changes and most of them were not for the better. Ever since the Department of Education was funded under Jimmy Carter things started to go downhill. Everything that the government gets involved with was done better at the local government.”

Enhance Quality of Life

• “I thought NOACA’s role was in distributing transportation funds? But everything I see there is about housing, recreation, etc. (Grace: “We don’t have money to distribute for environmental planning, so maybe that’s why it’s less objectionable, but it is part of our responsibility.”)

• “We all have our own lives. I don’t want anyone messing with my quality of life except me and my family. The federal government has no place here.”

• “If you focus on where the roads are bad and where there are potholes, everything else will take care of itself. Let the bikers take care of the bike paths themselves.”

• “I question the innocence of the goal. (Mentions objectives about providing funding priority for abandoned and declining areas and protecting agricultural lands.) These are things that would prevent development from happening where the demand is. This is not innocent.”

• “MAP-21: Social justice must be considered. Environmental justice must be considered.”

• “We are not opposed to everything the Federal government does, because it does some things really well. 1. The military. 2. The federal highway system. Eisenhower went to Germany and saw the benefit of a national highway and came back and built it and it was great. We just don’t need them in our backyard.”

• “Is this whole exercise constitutional? Is regional anything within our constitution? (Response: “Our legislators seem to think so because they have mandated that we do this.”)

• “We’ve seen our government use latitude with how laws our applied. Example: Obama with how the border is patrolled, Colorado with not enforcing marijuana laws.”

• “When did Summit County drop out of NOACA? When MPOs were formed, there was already an organization in place called AMATS. None of us is in a position to know exactly what
happened when it was decided that they would form their own MPO. It was 1974 when Summit County left the seven-county organization.”

- Question about who is a Board member? Grace clarifies about what a public forum is (intended to present comments about the Strategic Plan to NOACA staff) and that NOACA Board meetings are not open to the public.

**Comment Card Responses**

- “I feel that transportation dollars should be spent on expanding the use of natural gas for buses, city and state vehicles (police cars, ambulances, etc.). Please do not spend any federal dollars on bike paths.”
- “When thinking of public transportation, people without cars in the inner city need a way to get to where there are jobs. Public transportation out of the city should include destinations where factory/manufacturing jobs are located. Factory jobs are going begging.”
- “The citizens of these counties should be voting on these proposals.”
- “Do not take federal money with all the ‘strings’ that come with it. Cuyahoga County needs to solve its own problems.”
- “I think individual communities are responsible to their own citizens and we don’t need ‘regional planning’ to direct development, needs, and solutions.”
- “Why are we including NEOSCC when the findings haven’t been approved or voted on?”
- “Objective 5.1.2. - If Goal 3.4 considers strategic development, should same consideration be given to primary and secondary schools as the regional population ages?”
- Objective 2.2 – 90% may be too much.”
### NOACA Regional Strategic Plan

**Tri-C Corporate Campus – May 21, 2014**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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Saturday, May 17, 2014
Public Comments - Wednesday, May 22nd, 6:15-7:45 PM – Elyria Public Library, Elyria, Ohio

No Comments
### NOACA Regional Strategic Plan

**Elyria Public Library – May 22, 2014**

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*Saturday, May 17, 2014*
Public Comments - Thursday, May 22nd, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM – Brunswick Public Library, Brunswick, OH

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Saturday, May 17, 2014
Civic Commons Site Online Forum and Continuing Conversations

Goal 1: Strengthening Regional Cohesion

There are many good examples of community cohesion at the neighborhood, city and metropolitan scale, but fewer examples at the regional level. One exception is the Cuyahoga Towpath Trail which connects communities from Zoar to Cleveland. To become a region, we need to act as a region. Through action and experience, we will learn to trust and collaborate with each other as a region. We need to learn from the Towpath Trail and work together on projects that connect our communities across Northeast Ohio.

For Northeast Ohio to become a cohesive region we need to collectively become more competitive. To be more competitive we need to change the mindset in our region from the "us" -vs- "them" to the "we." The idea that as a team our region as a whole is stronger than the individual players alone. From my perspective, as an advocate for improved multi-modal transportation, I often see cities vying for limited dollars for an un-prioritized set of transportation projects. Many of the projects cost millions and do very little to boost our regions competitiveness (by drawing people to our region, serving the transportation needs of people where they live, or building on connections).

Vibrant NEO 2040 does a great job laying out the framework for building a more cohesive region, but how do we as a region buy-in to the vision so that our limited dollars are prioritized better to ensure we are competitive?
• “In every major historical era from the 'discovery' of the Ohio Valley to the present day, we have leveraged our geography and infrastructure. The Vibrant NEO 2040 survey outlines many exciting and aspirational outcomes that represent a mosaic and even the makings of a shared vision. Missing from that survey and much of the regional conversation is what infrastructure choices do we need to leverage as we move into the 21st century.

OneCommunity is a national model for regional engagement in the development of 21st century digital infrastructure. With more than 2500 route miles of next generation fiber optic infrastructure, our digital 'platform' is the digital, 21st century analog to the 'river', the 'lake', the 'canal', the 'airport', and the 'inter-state highway'. How we leverage that infrastructure to catalyze economic growth, 21st century education, health, wellness, and neighborhood and public safety is worthy of the planning insights and convening capacity of NOACA.

Whatever our region's future, it is hard to imagine a coherent set of insights without conversation and debate about the underlying infrastructure that connects and enables our collective hopes and aspirations. OneCommunity welcomes the opportunity to be part of the effort to power connections that will inspire the region to go big with a bold and ambitious ambition for 2040.”

• “Vibrant NEO has found that building further and further out will lead to increasingly unaffordable infrastructure costs for both capital and operation and maintenance. Furthermore, with the pressing issues of climate change impacting us now- and making life more costly for those who can least afford additional stress- the impetus to form a regional approach to development is stronger than ever. We need to work on building connections between regional hubs in a sustainable and inclusive fashion. This means focusing on core communities with spines that can support population growth without breaking the bank. It also means maintaining the infrastructure we have, and letting go of 'dream projects' for development, rather than keying into long-term maintenance-based solutions like 'Complete Streets' policies.”

• “The work has been done for you, follow what has been a proven model. http://www.briem.com/files/LucchinoDisincorporate1.pdf

You just saved $50 million dollars, spend the money leveraging the urban core. Regionalism is the very idea that a "rising tide lifts all boats", and that starts at the heart of it. Even tertiary cities (those other than CLE/AK) in the framework of regionalism should have the urban centers as first in the list of civic priorities.”
Goal 2: Preserve Existing Infrastructure

Preserving Existing Infrastructure

The NOACA region has public infrastructure assets (e.g. roads, bridges, transit investments, water and sewer system) valued in the billions of dollars. The cost of running this infrastructure system will cost billions of dollars over the next thirty years and could easily become cost prohibitive for the future residents in the region. At the same time, new infrastructure is being built without a growth in the overall population to support it.

How, then, can we support the existing infrastructure to make sure that future residents will be able to use it? What are the options that both the public and politicians might support?

Joining us for this online forum are:

- **Leslie Farley**, ODOT District Planning Engineer
- **Bonnie Teeuwlin**, Cuyahoga County Public Works Director
- **Maribeth Feke**, Greater Cleveland RTA
- **Chase Ritenauer**, Mayor of Lorain

- “Great question. My answer would be, for the love of God fix the streets, especially in poorer urban areas. We waste too much money widening roads in sprawling areas that provides relatively little economic return. That worsens inequality in our region.”
- “The Ohio Department of Transportation already has a ‘fix-it first’ policy as requirement to conduct system preservation prior to green-lighting new capital projects. There is no evidence that they follow this policy, and it is costing Northeast Ohio big time. There is plenty of funding available but it is all reserved for new, unnecessary, and highly expensive road capacity. For example, the Opportunity Corridor comes in at $331m or $100m/mile. Mayor Jackson and the City have consistently remarked that ODOT does not pay for local road maintenance, and everybody seems to recognize that ‘fix-it first’ is just words, not actual policy. Again, ODOT’s budget is PLENTY big enough to maintain a good state of repair, but the policy currently favors roadbuilders over residents.”
- “Maintaining our current infrastructure is very challenging. Local communities are finding it more and more challenging to find the money and resources to maintain infrastructure that should be replaced because they have far exceeded its usable life. Local revenues are down and cuts are being made to city personnel who usually maintain these systems. In addition, Capital Improvements are cut when city budgets are limited. That is why the County created a road resurfacing program that did not require a local financial obligation. The county selected roadways with the worse PCRs in the county and worked with the communities to utilize the
county’s license plate fee revenue on these projects. We aggressively worked to reduce our internal operating cost to make more money available for Capital Projects. But there still is not enough money to fix our existing system. While the cost of construction has gone up, the revenues we use to maintain this infrastructure have lessened.”

• “No matter what projects NOACA decides to pursue, please explore all options in the best interest of the environment. We all know climate change is incredibly pressing. NOACA is in a powerful position - with the potential to reduce our impact and create a world that better and inhabitable in the future. As we make these significant decisions we must make sure our path is as sustainable and eco-friendly as possible. Even if that means choosing an option more expensive in the short-term. The long-term benefits are so significant they far surpass any short-term burdens.”

• “Projects like the Opportunity Corridor are openly flouting the fix-it-first policy. The area through which this road would be constructed is littered with transportation maintenance needs for cars, pedestrians, and users of transit already. A single dollar spent on the Opportunity Corridor before these other needs are addressed is a violation of the fix-it-first policy. Citizens should call on their state and local leaders to adhere to this common-sense policy.”

• “It is all about prioritization. We need to rank the infrastructure improvements by condition and by how many people use or potentially use it. It needs to be on a regional basis like NOACA does on its projects.”

• “Condition is probably more important that age. Some infrastructure lasts longer than others. Age should be one factor in the matrix or ranking done to prioritize larger infrastructure investments for the region.”
Goal 3: Build a Sustainable Multimodal Transportation System

“Ai would also add that a city with widely disparate income levels and a rich diversity of ethnicities needs greater access to public transportation as well as multimodal transportation options as a matter of justice. I have frequently supported the extension of the Towpath Trail to downtown in part because it will give to residents at both Lakeview Tower and Estates and Riverview Tower access to healthy alternatives for recreation. I am also keenly aware that a larger number of folks going to and from the West Side Market either on foot of via RTA are low-income and ethnically diverse families. So one could argue for both the health and economic vitality of our city we need a plan to invest in these transportation options.”

“Providing more transportation choices — including transit, biking, and walking — is one of the most important things we can do to make our communities more livable and sustainable. So I’m glad that NOACA is promoting this discussion about multimodal transportation. Our current transportation system is unsustainable in multiple ways. It forces us to spend more and more time moving around instead of providing convenient access to what we need. It is increasingly unaffordable, as the high cost of cars and fuel consumes a larger proportion of household budgets. It is not maintainable, as hard-pressed governments can’t afford to maintain the far-flung transportation infrastructure built in the past 50 years. It is damaging the natural systems that support life. And it often degrades the public realms of cities and towns where most people live.”

“We need to let leaders at NOACA and at the state, where the funds flow for transportation, know that Ohio's metro areas have great multi-modal plans, like Cleveland's newly
announced 280 mile Bikeway Plan, but still lack the funding to build out the transportation network that will provide Complete Streets. Our goal of a 6% mode shift is realistic if we build infrastructure with the least experienced as our design group, so protected options for biking in the same space as cars is the ideal. We have a generational opportunity to reshape roads that are overbuilt, in many cases, for traffic volumes that no longer exists in our urban areas. Many four lane roads can be made safer for cars, pedestrians and cyclists by applying tried and true "road diets". Second, we need to show our metropolitan planning organizations that we strongly support them developing a transit master plan that links the historic jobs centers and the emergent edge cities with clean, fast public transit. Cleveland’s HealthLine is a great success, and should be the model for building out a Bus-Rapid Transit system along major "arterial" roads. Thanks for hosting this conversation!

- “It would be nice if Stark, Summit, and Cuyahoga Counties had some sort of regional public transit system, such as BART in San Francisco, METRO in DC, or SEPTA in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the balkanized model of government in Ohio seems to reign supreme. I drive almost daily on I-77, on which has been spent a small fortune the last few years. I've often wondered if this money might have been better spent on some sort of rail network, dedicated bus lanes, etc. It would also be nice if elected officials would be on board with this, rather than cheerleading for taxes to help the 1% (the professional athletes and owners who will benefit from Cuyahoga County's recently renewed tobacco / alcohol tax).”

- “All of the transit agencies in Cuyahoga, Lake, Lorain, Summit, Portage, Erie, Stark, Medina should be accessible with a single fare structure. Further, bus service should be in both directions. For example, there should be Akron Metro service out of Cleveland to Akron during rush hour, so that people can live in Cleveland yet go to jobs in Akron. Same for Lake, Portage, Lorain, etc. I see that Cleveland downtown and Wade Park is served by busses from Akron, Kent State, Lorain, Lake, but the reverse should be true.”
Public Forum Meeting Material and Comments

Materials for public forum were identical to public meeting materials.

Public Comments - Wednesday, June 4th, 4:30 – 6:30 PM – Public Forum at Idea Center at Playhouse Square, Cleveland, OH

Comment Card Responses

- “Fix it first! More transit! Stop sprawl! Complete streets!”
- “It is very encouraging that this type of planning is not only being done at a regional level, but public process and collaboration are being stressed in the process. I think the biggest takeaway that should come out of this is emphasizing the holistic and systems approach to future planning initiatives and how each system (transportation, economy, infrastructure, environmental, etc.) affects the other.”
- “Some words I’d have like to see in these slides: resiliency, ecosystem services, stewardship, public health impacts of planning choices, adopt and foster best practices for efficient mobility, equitable access to opportunities and amenities, public involvement and education, resourcefulness.”
- “I wish this were coordinated/synchronized with the Akron area counties. NE Ohio is not only Greater Cleveland. The first part of this meeting was too general and took too long getting started. The speakers were good but the exciting part was the discussion groups! So many ideas. Good luck putting it together.”
- “With regards to transportation, don’t forget about the issues of rural areas and accessibility to transportation. Also focus on infrastructure that is not transportation.”
- “Air pollution from fossil fuel power generation plans in OH is a major threat to our quality of life in northeast Ohio. Recent EPA CO2 regulations leave it to the states to determine how to comply. Ohio is facing lawsuits from easterly states over cross-border air pollution. We can’t depend on the State House to do what’s best for OH and NEO. The recent passage of SB 310 demonstrates that the legislature and Governor Kasich are driving Ohio in the wrong direction. We should not depend on First Energy to do the right thing for our region’s energy infrastructure. They are the ones who championed the repeal of energy efficiency and renewable energy standards funded by our electricity bills. NOACA is charged with carrying out environmental planning under local direction and our energy infrastructure urgently needs your attention. NOACA should assume a leadership role in planning our region’s energy infrastructure, just as your do for the region’s transportation system, and not cede our region’s air quality to Columbus and First Energy.”
- “More money for transit. More coordination. Better representation of low income users (majority of transit users) ex. Ohio City Transportation Plan does not mention buses at all but they are packed sometimes people can’t even get on. Low income people need to get to Metro Health. Coordinate with Metro for better transit as they redesign their campus. Why are we building Opportunity Corridor?”
- “Walkable urbanism is key to attracting young educated to urban area. Focus on rebuilding city neighborhoods to attract middle back. They will return if they have safe, attractive neighborhoods to return to.”

Email/Website Responses

• “I was in the regionalism group last night and I found people were interested in talking about real projects that the regional could work on together – projects that can only be done at the regional scale and that the act of doing will build regional pride, identity, and the habits or working across city and county lines. The idea came up most often was a regional trail and greenway network building on the success of the Towpath Trail. Why can’t we have the best regional trail network in the country?”

• “Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the NOACA strategic plan. I congratulate NOACA for doing this plan and for thinking broadly about the future of transportation in Northeast Ohio. The big-picture idea for this strategic plan should be the massive transformation now beginning in American society. The automobile-centric transportation policies of post-war America are now bankrupt and unsustainable. We have hit the wall. We can’t afford to maintain our far-flung infrastructure nor buy all the cars we’re forced to buy because we have no other transportation choices. We can’t afford to keep abandoning our cities in favor of low-density suburbs. And we can’t keep burning all the fossil fuels that are destabilizing the climate. Therefore, we need a fundamental change of direction. What will this be like? It’s already becoming apparent in shifting consumer preferences in favor of walkable urbanism. More people are choosing convenient, healthy lifestyles in places that offer vibrant density and transportation choices. So the policy question for NOACA is this: How can NOACA help to support and accelerate the new trends that are making the region more livable and sustainable? How can it help to build the future instead of the past?

The five goals already proposed in the NOACA strategy provide a good start. But I would focus most on the third goal related to building a multimodal transportation system. Mode split is a key indicator for the sustainability of the region. If the mode split becomes more balanced, many other good things will also happen. Compact patterns of land use will be promoted because alternate modes of transportation are not practical in low-density areas. VMT, air pollution, and carbon emissions will be reduced. Personal transportation costs will be reduced. Health will be improved. Urban vitality will be increased. More places for knowledge-economy workers will be created.

Here are the steps NOACA should take to shift the mode split and create more transportation choices:

• Set a target: Set a measurable target for a future mode split. This target should be bold and transformational. Bike commuting, for example, should be at a level that puts Northeast Ohio at the top of best-practice regions, such as a 6% share.

• Figure out what it will take: Do the rigorous planning needed to figure out what it will actually take to meet the target. What projects and programs? How will it happen? Who is responsible? What is the timeline? (The NEOSCC framework provides a lot of good ideas.)

• Cultivate a different set of projects: Since NOACA doesn’t propose projects, it will need to create a process to help project sponsors (cities, counties, ODOT) envision and design projects that will build a more multimodal transportation system.

• Program the projects: Change funding allocations to fund the right projects that will change the mode split.
• **Track progress:** Success should be measured by change on the ground – how much the region’s mode split has changed. NOACA should have a laser focus on this. There should be a report at every meeting about the progress. If NOACA does these things, it will have a real goal and strategy for transforming Northeast Ohio. It will help create the multimodal transportation system that more and more people are seeking. And it will make our region more resilient and sustainable.”

• “I can’t attend today’s forum but I would like you to provide the following information to NOACA regarding the opportunity to add significant green space in Cleveland. I spoke at the City Club May 21 and presented a five-step plan based on discussions with over 20 elected officials and environmental representatives. Columbus seized a similar opportunity March 9 and plans to add 600 acres of green infrastructure. The Columbus Dispatch says “Ten years into a plan to stop raw sewage from flowing into rivers and streams, Columbus officials want to cease digging tunnels and start planting gardens." The Dispatch’s March 19 editorial said: "If the city of Columbus has to spend $2.5 billion to stop storm water from overwhelming sanitary-sewer lines during big rainstorms, getting the job done by turning roadside strips, vacant lots and patches of park into grassy rain gardens is far more appealing than building miles of underground tunnels that would sit empty all but a few days per year." See [http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2014/03/10/ideas-grow-to-reduce-city-sewer-overflows.html](http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2014/03/10/ideas-grow-to-reduce-city-sewer-overflows.html) and the March 19 editorial at [http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/editorials/2014/03/19/planning-for-rainy-days.html](http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/editorials/2014/03/19/planning-for-rainy-days.html)

Similarly, St. Louis will save $1 billion versus the previous underground tunnel approach by going green, while converting a blighted neighborhood into a highly green space. See [http://www.cleveland.com/drain/index.ssf/2014/03/regional_sewer_district_plans.html](http://www.cleveland.com/drain/index.ssf/2014/03/regional_sewer_district_plans.html) Other cities (Cincinnati, New York, etc.) have gone greener and cheaper as well. But Cleveland has not. The Plain Dealer has run a dozen articles this year questioning the sewer district (NEORSD) $3 billion underground tunnel plan, which now appears to be the grayest plan in the nation. The EPA now encourages green modifications to consent decrees but the NEORSD refuses to even study a green-first approach. Amazingly, the NEORSD told the PD that if it studied a green-first approach then it might need to change its "98% gray" plan, and it doesn't want to change its plan.

I have saved over 1200 manufacturing jobs in Ohio to date and I believe that taking $3 billion from residents for underground tunnels is a terrible decision given that cheaper and greener alternatives are being implemented across the country.”
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Civic Commons Public Forum Report

A Report to NOACA following the June 4, 2014 Engagement Event
As a culmination of our work with NOACA, Civic Commons ideastream held a series of salons at the Idea Center at Playhouse Square to discuss multimodal transportation, regional cohesion and preserving existing infrastructure in Northeast Ohio. Over 100 people attended the event to participate in these discussions. This report provides a synthesis of those discussions and the sentiments expressed by the participants.

Subject One: Multimodal Transportation

The discussion groups started with the assumption that multimodal transportation is good for Northeast Ohio. Each discussion group addressed questions, such as: as a regional community, what are the priorities in developing a multimodal transportation system in Northeast Ohio that will serve our communities for the future? What is getting in our way? And understanding these, what can NOACA do to help?

Priorities

Based on comments from each group, it was clear that increasing public transportation options and availability was the major priority. Participants noted that an increase in public transportation would: 1) allow communities to serve the rapidly aging population by giving older citizens the opportunity to move around in different ways; and 2) create greater density in the urban core without an increase in vehicle infrastructure. It was also noted that public transportation could change people’s lifestyles by encouraging walking (rather than door-to-door driving) and get people in the streets more.

Bicyclists were a vocal minority in the three groups, and they called for designated bike lanes to protect bikers and greater accommodations for bicycles on public transportation.

Challenges

The groups brought up several problems that get in the way of implementing a multimodal transportation system. Because the focus for the groups was on public transportation, this was also the focus of the discussion on barriers to implementation.

The first, and by far the most important, challenge was funding. Participants noted that cities, counties, and the state are squeezing what they can out of every budget dollar. Several people pointed out that it is difficult - at least in some parts of Northeast Ohio - to pave potholes, much less envision setting up transportation systems that handle different modes of travel for broad swaths of the community.
Second, participants expressed that public transportation has a serious, multifaceted perception problem. The perception in the broader community, as expressed by the discussion participants, is that public transportation is unsafe because of the further perception that it is predominantly used by poor people who are inclined towards criminal activities. These perceptions prevent more people from using public transportation which then depresses ridership and revenue, further exacerbating the funding issue mentioned above.

Third, some people said that they thought that public transportation was less safe than vehicles, despite the fact that they knew of plenty of car accidents but very few major bus or train accidents in Northeast Ohio.

At least one person mentioned that public transit “benefits someone else” - i.e., while he might support it in theory, he and his friends wouldn’t use it and thus would not directly benefit from it. Similarly, participants mentioned that there is a perception that current public transportation does not well serve actual market needs. One speaker noted that there were many full buses on some routes and, on others, plenty of empty buses that could easily be used to ease the burden on more travelled routes.

With the belief that the public transportation system does not serve its customers well, driving is also seen as too convenient for people to choose alternative options, and parking is too cheap for driving to be an “unenviable option.” Thus, many do not see cars being displaced anytime in the near future.

Finally, participants felt that there is generally little political will to invest in a multimodal infrastructure. Politicians often have to serve constituents and “fight fires” - i.e., they focus on immediate problems without putting a lot of thought into long-term solutions. In addition, if the “squeaky wheels get the grease”, there are far squeakier wheels to service than people calling for multimodal transportation. Because of this political reality, politicians are often not interested in multimodal transportation as a political issue, and politicians do not see it as a priority for their constituents. Instead, politicians move on to other, “sexier” projects from which they can garner more political capital.

The lack of political will might be a factor in the perception expressed that Cleveland and Cuyahoga County governments don’t set goals and work to achieve them; instead, the governments start projects without thinking about the broader consequences. There was a consistent theme throughout the discussion groups that the entities in Northeast Ohio generally don’t coordinate their efforts.

Finally, the history of sprawl in Northeast Ohio, as well as the scattered urban centers, were identified as major challenges that make multimodal transportation difficult. Many felt that the
lack of regional transit operators only compounded the challenges with sprawl and dispersed urban centers. Further, a lack of density and strong urban identity in those centers would not justify more investment in alternative forms of transportation in the eyes of the broader population.

Suggestions for NOACA

Based on the synthesis of the comments generated during the discussion groups, participants noted the following ways NOACA could play a role in advancing multimodal transportation:

- NOACA can facilitate communication or coordination between relevant, regional entities that could, and should, work together;
- NOACA is in the position to serve as a regional coordinating entity that can ensure that different entities and organizations know what is happening that might affect them;
- NOACA can track what cities and counties are doing, alert other relevant cities and counties, and put in place a structure that will facilitate better communication between people in those municipalities;
- NOACA can facilitate an examination of the entire transportation system and determine what is needed and what needs to be fixed;
- NOACA can create a single, comprehensive, regional vision for how multimodal and public transportation can develop throughout northeast Ohio, and then present that vision to the various entities that can implement it;
- Related to the point above, NOACA can offer recommendations and prioritize projects, as well as advise entities on the best ways to roll out projects;
- NOACA can work on getting a wider variety of people involved in the planning process.

Subject Two: Regional Cohesion

In this section, participants discussed how they would strengthen regional cohesion, with attention paid to current barriers to regional cohesion and opportunities for greater connection and unity in Northeast Ohio for people living across geographic and political boundaries.
Barriers

Many participants felt that political and regional groups (i.e., city governments or Community Development Corporations) do not want to give up power or influence, and want to promote and advance their own communities. While these entities recognize the advantages of regional cohesion and identification, they believe that participating in regional activities or initiatives will result in a loss of power or influence. This perceived loss of power and influence leads to political leaders not wanting to sacrifice their political capital for a greater good.

Participants also expressed the opinion that suburban residents do not participate in the activities of the urban core. Because places like Cleveland, Akron and Youngstown are perceived as unsafe, or dirty, suburbanites do not travel to these cores, and so do not have experiences outside of their comfort zones. Participants suggested that the urban cores are focal points that can unite people, but many are still reluctant to go to urban areas. Someone proposed that if we are able to overcome this reluctance to engage in these cores, we can move forward in uniting people regionally.

Connected to this is the idea that urban nodes might be connected to each other with regional transportation (see above). For example, Cleveland, Akron and Youngstown might create a bus or rail line that moves just between these entities; then, Cleveland might be connected to Pittsburgh, Columbus and Chicago with a similar regional line that emphasizes its central role in Northeast Ohio.

One participant brought up an interesting, recent impediment to regionalism: the idea of “hyper-localism.” Rather than engaging and identifying with cities or regions, people want to feel like they are part of a micro-community based around particular neighborhoods or interests; Ohio City, or biking, or West 45th and Lorain, for example, as opposed to Cleveland or Cuyahoga County. This might be a fad, and there was no suggestion given as to how it might be combatted.

Suggestions for NOACA

Based on the synthesis of the comments generated during the discussion groups, participants noted the following ways NOACA could play a role in advancing regional cohesion:

- Identify regional goals that entities and individuals around the region could work toward, giving them the sense that they were doing something together;
Communicate with people about projects going on between communities, both to help coordinate regional efforts but also to let citizens know what interesting things are being done in neighboring communities;

Work with entities to improve regional efficiencies by identifying entities that could benefit from regional efficiencies and coordinating efforts between these entities.

**Subject Three: Preserving Infrastructure**

During the discussions, we asked participants to identify infrastructure in Northeast Ohio that is worth maintaining, and prioritize infrastructure projects in the region.

The first question we asked: what is the infrastructure that needs to be prioritized? In no particular order, these were the things that participants felt should be preserved:

- Highways
- Bridges
- Roads
- Bike lanes
- Opportunity corridor
- Water
- Bike lanes
- Distribution channels
- Public transportation
- Buildings
- Parking
- Walking paths
- Train tracks
- Train
- Port
- The infrastructure where people are living
- Bridges
- Rail
- RTA lines
- Buggy roads (it was not clear how these are different than regular roads)

We then asked participants how we, as a community, might preserve our existing infrastructure, what we should prioritize, and where NOACA could make progress, from the community perspective. This was among the most vibrant discussions, rife with possibilities for NOACA’s involvement.
Participants felt that the list above of infrastructure repairs all needed to be addressed and preserved, but it didn’t seem that any participants knew enough about Northeast Ohio’s infrastructure as a whole to prioritize them in order of importance. In addition, while some people felt that certain projects would benefit sectors of the community - bike lanes for bicyclists, for example - participants also felt that there was a need for experts to address upcoming infrastructure needs and to plan for them accordingly.

Based on responses during the discussions, NOACA’s first opportunity would be to collect information on the current state of our region’s infrastructure, identify the critical issues that need to be fixed, and then create a broad vision of the infrastructure needs of the region moving forward. This vision could then be presented to the community to receive feedback, and also be presented to local governments in an effort to address problems that arise or will arise in the future. As one participant noted, “NOACA does a great job of prioritizing, processing and evaluating.”

Second, NOACA can identify and describe acceptable levels of service to communities, then measure how well agencies do. For example, a “pothole index” could be created to identify which are the best and worst communities for potholes, and rate the responses provided for each local government. Creating this measurement system would help put infrastructure projects in context and help residents understand the priority of some projects over others.

Third, NOACA can work on how infrastructure projects are funded. Throughout the sessions, money was mentioned as a constant impediment to progress. Because infrastructure is so important to the region, and because governments often know they will have to spend money on it, NOACA can help coordinate infrastructure spending between entities.

**Conclusion**

Above all the individual comments and recommendations, participants felt particularly strong about NOACA increasing facilitation among different groups and entities in Northeast Ohio. Many felt that doing so would help residents feel more connected as a region as it would require coordination among various entities that affect each other; the changes to how the region works and operates would increase the sense of regional cohesion. Further, this type of coordination would help residents understand various infrastructure priorities and funding allocations to them. Finally, the coordination could build support for projects that can support the growth of the region rather than any one individual community.
Comments on NOACA strategic plan
David Beach, Director, GreenCityBlueLake Institute (dbeach@cmmh.org)
May 28, 2014

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the NOACA strategic plan. I congratulate NOACA for doing this plan and for thinking broadly about the future of transportation in Northeast Ohio.

The big-picture idea for this strategic plan should be the massive transformation now beginning in American society. The automobile-centric transportation policies of post-war America are now bankrupt and unsustainable. We have hit the wall. We can’t afford to maintain our fur-flung infrastructure nor buy all the cars we’re forced to buy because we have no other transportation choices. We can’t afford to keep abandoning our cities in favor of low-density suburbs. And we can’t keep burning all the fossil fuels that are destabilizing the climate.

Therefore, we need a fundamental change of direction. What will this be like? It’s already becoming apparent in shifting consumer preferences in favor of walkable urbanism. More people are choosing convenient, healthy lifestyles in places that offer vibrant density and transportation choices.

So the policy question for NOACA is this: How can NOACA help to support and accelerate the new trends that are making the region more livable and sustainable? How can it help to build the future instead of the past?

Mode split as a key indicator

The five goals already proposed in the NOACA strategy provide a good start. But I would focus most on the third goal related to building a multimodal transportation system. Mode split is a key indicator for the sustainability of the region. If the mode split becomes more balanced, many other good things will also happen. Compact patterns of land use will be promoted because alternate modes of transportation are not practical in low-density areas. VMT, air pollution, and carbon emissions will be reduced. Personal transportation costs will be reduced. Health will be improved. Urban vitality will be increased. More places for knowledge-economy workers will be created.

Here are the steps NOACA should take to shift the mode split and create more transportation choices:

- **Set a target**: Set a measurable target for a future mode split. This target should be bold and transformational. Bike commuting, for example, should be at a level that puts Northeast Ohio at the top of best-practice regions, such as a 6% share.
• Figure out what it will take: Do the rigorous planning needed to figure out what it will actually take to meet the target. What projects and programs? How will it happen? Who is responsible? What is the timeline? (The NEOSCC framework provides a lot of good ideas.)

• Cultivate a different set of projects: Since NOACA doesn’t propose projects, it will need to create a process to help project sponsors (cities, counties, ODOT) envision and design projects that will build a more multimodal transportation system.

• Program the projects: Change funding allocations to fund the right projects that will change the mode split.

• Track progress: Success should be measured by change on the ground – how much the region’s mode split has changed. NOACA should have a laser focus on this. There should be a report at every meeting about the progress.

If NOACA does these things, it will have a real goal and strategy for transforming Northeast Ohio. It will help create the multimodal transportation system that more and more people are seeking. And it will make our region more resilient and sustainable.