



NOACA External Affairs Committee

Meeting Minutes

July 11, 2025

NOACA Offices

Present: Please see the attached attendance record.

Mayor Jack Bradley, serving as Chair in the absence of the Committee Chair, convened the meeting at 8:37 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Ms. Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of April 11, 2025. Mr. Andy Haupt seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

Advisory Committee Updates

The External Affairs Committee received updates on the advisory council meetings that took place in June 2025.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

No public comments were made at this meeting.

Executive Director's Report

Director Grace Gallucci reported on the following:

- Boardroom Technology Update
 - Aging components that required specialized maintenance were replaced with modern, scalable systems. The upgrades ensure seamless integration with existing technology and support future expansion needs.
- Communications and Outreach
 - The 2025 Commuter Choice Awards Challenge recognizes and rewards employers who promote environmentally friendly commuting options. Participants gain recognition as champions of sustainable transportation and contribute to community impact by supporting regional efforts to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. Register by July 30. For more information, visit noaca.org.
- Announcements
 - Nominations for the 2025 Walter F. Ehrnfelt, Jr. Award for Outstanding Regional Contribution are due by August 15 for regional leaders who demonstrate outstanding leadership skills and exemplify collaborative and cooperative qualities. For more details, visit www.noaca.org/EhrnfeltAward.
 - The NOACA 2025 Annual Meeting will be held at the Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland on October 3, 2025, 12-2 p.m.
 - Ms. Jacqueline Muhammad, who served as the alternate for Ms. Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, passed away on June 19, 2025.

Action Items

No action items were presented at this meeting.

Presentation/Discussion Items

Government Affairs Report

Ms. Bev Burtzloff provided an overview of recent developments at the federal and state levels of government and summarized NOACA's advocacy efforts over the past three months since the previous meeting.

Ms. Burtzloff presented information on the following:

- Federal Updates
 - Federal Budget Reconciliation
 - Surface Transportation Reauthorization
 - NOACA Reauthorization Priorities
 - Funding advocacy / IIJA
 - NOACA's Funding Resources Webpage
 - Other Recent Advocacy
 - Other Federal Initiatives
- State Updates
 - Ohio 2026–2027 Biennial Operating Budget
 - General Assembly Adopted Budget
 - Gov. DeWine's Line-item Vetoes
 - Speed Limit Initiative
 - Draft Speed Limit Proposals

Public Affairs Report

Ms. Danielle Render stated that the public affairs report covers NOACA's fiscal year 2025 and highlights efforts related to public engagement, communication, marketing, and information dissemination. These efforts align closely with the work outlined in NOACA's vision statement. She explained that the NOACA Public Affairs Division functions as the conveyor of information, contacts, and insights to both external and internal audiences. The division continually works to enhance public understanding of the agency. All of its efforts are centered on public awareness, stakeholder engagement, and building partnerships. Ms. Render also noted that NOACA is actively working to elevate its presence and mission by connecting the agency's priorities to the region through clearly defined focus areas.

Ms. Render presented information on the following

- External Affairs Committee Priorities – 2025
- Public Affairs Strategies
- Commendations as part of the Federal Highway Administration Certification Review
- FY 2025 Result Summary
- Brand Management
 - Brand awareness/identity
 - New Logo
 - Brand promotions
 - Campaign Marketing Drivers
 - Evergreen Messaging
 - Return on Marketing Investment (ROMI)
- Paid Advertisements
 - Billboards

- Audience Conversion Increased
- TV Ads and Segment Spots
 - 2024 Paris Olympics
 - Go Carbon-Free Challenge
 - "NOACA Loves Transit" campaign
- Radio ads
- Air Quality Education, Outreach, and Planning
 - Air Quality Advisories
 - Commuter Choice Awards
 - Go Car(bon) Free Challenges
 - No Idling Campaign
- Transportation Planning
- Public Involvement and Outreach
 - Effective Tools of Engagement
 - External Affairs Forums
 - Traveling Kiosks
 - Crowd Gauging Platform
 - Upcoming Engagements

Mr. Tom Jordan asked how much money NOACA spends on the program.

Ms. Render stated that NOACA collectively spent \$108,000 on eight campaigns, achieving a 400% return on investment. She added that if NOACA had considered the funds received as transactional expenses related to the marketing investment, the return would have exceeded 29,000%.

Mr. Jordan asked about the goal of the engagement.

Ms. Render explained that the goal of the engagement for something like the challenges is participation. Staff saw an increase in the number of people taking part in the challenges. However, the broader goal, especially with ongoing efforts, is to build brand awareness for NOACA and highlight its impact on the community. Staff want people to understand and engage with the work NOACA does, which is mission-driven and focused on improving their communities. Many people are not familiar with NOACA, and the name is not widely recognized. Funding typically goes through stakeholders—those who already do business with the agency. The goal is to expand outreach and connect with a broader audience so more people can see the larger impact NOACA has on the region.

Director Gallucci stated that NOACA conducted a Household Travel Survey over the past year. The agency's consultant initially recommended that staff ask ODOT for permission to use its name and logo when distributing the survey, noting that many people are unfamiliar with NOACA and might be more likely to respond if the survey appeared to come from a more recognizable source. This highlights the challenge NOACA faces with brand recognition. As a result, staff had difficulty getting people to participate and respond—something that is critical for federally required public engagement. Director Gallucci emphasized the importance of being more inclusive and deliberate in outreach efforts, but noted that staff still face challenges.

Ms. McCall said she wanted to commend NOACA, recalling a time when meeting discussions centered around the lack of marketing and limited impressions. She noted that it was encouraging to now see strong data and the various initiatives currently underway. She expressed appreciation for the efforts of NOACA staff and acknowledged the progress made. Ms. McCall also pointed out opportunities for further expansion, particularly by increasing outreach to communities through

resources like the kiosks located throughout the city of Cleveland. She suggested these kiosks could serve as effective options for engagement. Additionally, she encouraged staff to find ways to collaborate with local transit agencies, such as RTA and Laketran, which often seek positive messaging for their advertisements. She saw this as another potential avenue for expanding NOACA's reach. Reflecting on her experience as moderator for the External Affairs Forum, Ms. McCall said the recent webinar was well attended and generated a significant number of questions. She observed that public interest in neighborhood projects is growing, a point that became clear during the webinar. She encouraged others to watch the recording if they had not yet done so. Ms. McCall reiterated her praise for NOACA's branding efforts, acknowledging how difficult this type of work can be. She likened the progress to dropping something in a bucket that continues to ripple outward. She encouraged staff to keep up the momentum, to explore opportunities within the budget, and noted that the return on investment was substantial given the relatively small cost. She advocated for considering a slight budget increase to further build on the success and visibility already achieved.

Director Gallucci referred back to the Household Travel Survey. She explained that NOACA was unable to gather the minimum number of responses needed for a representative sample based on the initial survey distribution. As a result, NOACA had to delay the project and send the survey out a second time to obtain sufficient responses, which ultimately increased costs. Director Gallucci emphasized that increasing public awareness of NOACA can lead to financial benefits in the long run, as improved engagement can help avoid such additional expenses.

Mr. Jordan stated that encouraging participation in meetings is very helpful. He noted that sometimes, even if a public meeting is held in a prominent location, only a few people may attend. He emphasized that even if the public is not always aware that NOACA helped fund a transportation improvement project, it is important that stakeholders, such as cities, counties, and other partners, are recognized as part of those efforts. He reiterated that promoting public participation remains valuable and worthwhile.

Mr. Haupt acknowledged that outreach to constituents, to both gather input and share information about the organization, is important for any organization. He posed a question regarding the nature of the feedback received through various outreach methods. While some formats, such as billboards, do not allow for direct feedback, he asked whether social media platforms used by NOACA have comments enabled and, if so, whether any data is collected on the nature of that feedback—positive, negative, or otherwise. He noted that while enabling comments can be risky, it also offers an opportunity to gauge public engagement.

Ms. Render stated that what is considered a positive outcome for NOACA is the number of clicks received. She explained that 1.7 million clicks demonstrated significant interest. Once that interest is captured, the next question becomes: will that interest lead to action? Will people share content? What level of engagement follows? She noted that staff regularly post content daily and, while some negative comments are expected, engagement still occurs. NOACA has also built strong partnerships and developed a base of organic traffic visiting the website. This is important because those visitors are often unfamiliar with the agency. She emphasized the importance of analyzing these conversions—looking at website visits and platform interactions to determine whether the messaging is cohesive and effective. Ms. Render explained that success is measured by how the audience responds and converts, and this is why she wanted to focus on it. She acknowledged the existence of negative comments but underscored the value of the work NOACA does. More individuals are participating in forums, joining challenges, and engaging with media partners. She cited examples like the Cleveland Charge and Cleveland Monsters, which have reached out to NOACA. She added that people are seeing NOACA billboards and asking, "Who is NOACA?" She frequently receives calls from individuals who say they heard about

NOACA on the radio and want to learn more. While responding to those inquiries can be time-consuming, she sees it as a meaningful first step in audience engagement. Helping people understand who NOACA is and where to find more information is a sign of progress and a form of success.

Ms. India Birdsong Terry thanked staff for the information and commented that it was nice to see the digital marketing efforts currently underway. She noted that digital outreach is always helpful. She then asked whether there have been ongoing discussions about stratifying the marketing efforts by generation. She emphasized that generational targeting is often the most effective way to reach new and untapped markets. Acknowledging that NOACA does not have thousands of staff members, she expressed curiosity about how NOACA plans to bridge that gap—especially with specific groups such as older adults, individuals with disabilities, and new professionals. Ms. Terry also asked whether NOACA has considered outreach efforts within colleges and universities. She noted that, as a planning organization, NOACA risks missing early brand recognition if it is not present in the educational sector. She requested staff's thoughts on both generational outreach and engagement with academic institutions.

Ms. Render explained that one of the key things NOACA staff focuses on is analyzing trends and demographics across all NOACA's work. Digital platforms make it easier to visualize and share this information, which supports intentional marketing strategies. While NOACA operates with limited funds, the aim is always to maximize impact. Through the Long Range Plan, TIP, and Comprehensive Climate Action Plan, NOACA staff have used demographic data to guide communication and outreach. From an educational standpoint, most public meetings have been held at educational institutions. Messaging and materials are tailored to reflect the communities being reached. In fiscal year 2026, NOACA staff will work on refining the use of existing data and identifying next steps. A major focus will be face-to-face engagement, bringing NOACA's name and work directly into communities. She stated that is NOACA's responsibility not only to build awareness through digital platforms but to show up where people are. That is the direction of NOACA's strategy moving forward.

Ms. Annie Pease expressed appreciation for the update and noted that seeing some of the digital ads was particularly interesting. She suggested that it would be helpful for future External Affairs updates to break out the different audiences NOACA serves. While she acknowledged the emphasis on public audiences, she especially appreciated the example of the Household Travel Survey. Ms. Pease added that there is a lot of valuable information in the update and emphasized that NOACA has a variety of audiences. She recommended highlighting how this strategy addresses each of those distinct groups.

Ms. Render responded that she would be happy to provide that and noted that NOACA has compiled data that reflects the demographics collected so far. She explained that this information helps NOACA staff understand which audiences are engaging with different types of content. For example, social media posts about challenges tend to draw a certain age group, while transit-related messaging may reach others. When recruiting volunteers for bike counts, NOACA staff know what those demographics typically look like. Ms. Render said NOACA would be glad to share this data and, as future marketing strategies are planned, will show how those efforts align with and serve different audiences.

Ms. Terry stated that it might be worth considering how NOACA can show not only the Board, but also the broader community, the outcomes of projects after funding has been delivered. She noted that, during meetings, there is typically discussion about what will be funded and where the money is going, but the conversation often stops there. While data related to safety, accidents, and other

secondary metrics are reviewed, she felt that this sometimes becomes a "check-the-box" exercise.

Ms. Terry emphasized that the "heart behind the data" can often be missing when the focus remains solely on numbers. That human element, she suggested, may be what creates a stronger connection with the community. She acknowledged that she is not a marketing expert but believed that this emotional connection could resonate more with the public. She compared NOACA's role to that of a bank—functional but not always engaging. However, when NOACA communicates the real-life community benefits enabled by its funding, such as infrastructure improvements or safety initiatives, it could serve as a compelling message to help people better understand NOACA's mission and view it as a community-centered agency. She suggested this approach, one that moves beyond financial figures to highlight meaningful outcomes, be considered in the future.

Ms. Render responded that she appreciated Ms. Terry's comment and agreed that the real impact lies in the community outcomes of NOACA's work.

Ms. Pease asked whether NOACA tracks participation in its public challenges. She referenced several digital ads related to the Gohio Commute Challenges and inquired about what participation looks like in those campaigns and how the numbers compare year over year.

Ms. Render replied that she did not have that data immediately available, but confirmed that NOACA does track those metrics and would be able to provide them.

Director Gallucci referenced the safety-related billboards, noting that NOACA had conducted an important safety campaign and, at the time, NOACA staff were exploring ways to reach a broader audience. The campaign had focused on the issue of speed and how increased speed contributes to crashes and fatalities. She added that NOACA would also be examining other aspects of safety in future initiatives.

Mayor Bradley expressed support for the idea of providing data on the benefits of projects to the community. He shared an example from the City of Lorain, where bike lanes had been installed on West Erie Avenue. Initially, he received numerous complaints, with residents questioning the purpose and suggesting that no one would use them. However, during budget discussions, the Clerk of Courts mentioned a noticeable drop in traffic fines issued on West Erie Avenue. According to the Clerk, the presence of the bike lanes forced drivers to slow down, as they could no longer pass other vehicles by crossing into the opposite lane. As a result, speeds decreased, and so did traffic violations. Mayor Bradley emphasized the importance of communicating these kinds of community benefits to the public. He stated that when public funds are used to encourage more biking and walking, there are real, measurable improvements, such as reduced traffic fatalities and fewer accidents. He added that this was a valuable example and suggested that NOACA staff consider incorporating similar success stories into future campaigns. Highlighting the positive outcomes of local investments, he said, could help the public better understand the impact and value of NOACA's work in their communities.

Reports/Updates

No reports or updates were presented at this meeting.

Old Business

No old business was discussed at this meeting.

New Business

No new business was discussed at this meeting.

Adjournment

Commissioner Jeff Riddell made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 a.m. Mr. Haupt seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

The next regular meeting of the External Affairs Committee will be held on Friday, October 10, 2025, from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. at the NOACA offices.

Note: Additional information on the agenda items can be found on [NOACA's website](#) and [YouTube channel](#)



External Affairs Committee Attendance Record

Meeting Dates	1/31/25	4/11/25	7/11/25	10/10/25
ANTOSKIEWICZ , Larry (Thomas Jordan, Alternate)	X	X	A	
BIBB , Justin (Bonnie Teeuwen, Alternate) (Michael Culp, Alternate on 7/11/25)	A	A	A	
BRADLEY , Jack (Dale Vandersommen, Alternate)	X	A	X	
DEGEETER , Timothy J. (Scott Wangler, Alternate)	X	X	A	
DREYFUSS-WELLS , Kyle (Alternate TBD) (Angela Jones, Alternate on 1/31/25)	X	X	X	
DVORAK , James W. (Andy Haupt, Alternate)	A	A	A	
HARRISON , Aaron M. (Stephen D. Hambley, Alternate) (John Kalas, Alternate on 4/11/25)		A		
HOUSER , Michael J. Joseph Nanni, Alternate	X	A	A	
HOWSE-JONES , Stephanie (Jasmin Santana, Alternate)	X	X		
KOOMAR , Paul (India L. Birdsong Terry, Alternate)	X	X	A	
MERSMANN , Calley (Sarah O'Keeffe, Alternate)	X			
MOSS , Matt (Sarah O'Keeffe, Alternate)		X	A	
REGOVICH , Richard (Robert Fiala, Alternate)	X	X	A	
RIDDELL , Jeff (John Gall, Alternate)	A	A	X	
RONAYNE , Chris (Debbie Berry, Alternate) (Annie Pease, Alternate on 7/11/25)	A	A	A	
SEREN , Kahlil (Eric Zamft, Alternate)	X			
Ex-officio Members/Council Chairs				

Meeting Dates	1/31/25	4/11/25	7/11/25	10/10/25
ADDISON , Bishara (Ryan Aroney, Alternate)		X		
AHMED , Ferzan M. (Charles Cyrill, Alternate)	X		X	
McCALL , Valarie (Kevin S. Schmotzer, Alternate)			X	
SNYDER , Timothy (Eric Hange, Alternate)				
RANALDSON , Marvin (Eric C. Mack, Alternate)		A		