



**NOACA Air Quality Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes
June 20, 2025
NOACA Offices**

Present: Please see the attached attendance record.

Ms. Maribeth Feke, Chair of Air Quality Subcommittee, convened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Mr. John Gall made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 21, 2025. Mr. Bryan Sokolowski seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

Public Comment

No public comment was made at this meeting.

Action Items

No action items were presented at this meeting.

Presentation /Discussion Items

SFY 2025 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program Applications

Ms. Sarah White stated that the purpose of the CMAQ program is to support transportation projects or programs that help achieve or maintain compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}). She noted that the program's primary goals are to improve air quality and relieve congestion.

Ms. White presented information on the following:

- CMAQ Program Funding Cycles: NOACA Region
- Eligible Applicants
- Phases of Development Eligible for Funding
- Eligible Project Types Including Project Type Score
- Project Evaluation Criteria (up to 100 Points)

Director Grace Gallucci stated that although CMAQ is a statewide program with criteria developed by the Statewide CMAQ Committee, which includes NOACA's regional priority, it is very individualized. NOACA previously used environmental justice as a criterion, but due to a federal executive order issued in January, they can no longer use it. Instead, NOACA will use areas of persistent poverty as a substitute. While not the same, it covers many of the same areas.

Ms. White also presented information on the following:

- Program Timeline
- 2025 CMAQ Project Requests

Ms. White stated that staff will complete the project evaluation and scoring process and, incorporating feedback from the Subcommittee, present the projects to the Planning and Programming Committee. The recommended projects will then be brought to the Board of Directors for approval at their September 12 meeting. Afterward, staff will submit the Board-approved applications to the Ohio Statewide Urban Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Committee (OSUCC) for comparison with other statewide projects in Autumn 2025. It is expected that the OSUCC will then forward their project recommendations to the Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) Executive Directors for final approval at their November 2025 meeting.

Director Gallucci elaborated that, as previously mentioned regarding the CMAQ program, the issue of environmental justice is impacting NOACA due to the executive order issued earlier this year. She noted that additional impacts are expected in the coming months. In response, NOACA staff are working with legal counsel to review all NOACA's policies and procedures to determine what actions are needed to remain in compliance with the directives issued by U.S. DOT Secretary Sean Duffy due to the executive order.

Air Quality Public Education and Outreach

Ms. Kate Moening presented information on the following:

- Air Quality Advisory Days
- Public Communications by Method from March 2025 through May 2025
 - 5/12/2025 Advisory Day communications
 - AQ Advisory emails sent to subscribers as needed
 - Sign up for advisories on the NOACA Air Quality Advisories webpage
 - Visit www.airnow.gov for daily air quality status
- Public Engagement and Outreach
 - Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Engagement
 - 2024 Air Quality Trends Report released April 23, 2025
 - Air Quality Awareness Week – May 5-9, 2025
 - Air Quality/Gohio Commute Media Messaging
 - May CAR(bon) Challenge – May 1-31, 2025
 - Prize Winners
 - 1st Place: Tim Kovach
 - 2nd Place: Colby Gallagher
 - 3rd Place: Henry Tafe
 - Lake County: Peter Maurath
 - Commuter Choice Awards (CCA) Program
 - Registration period July 1–31
 - Challenge runs August 1–31
 - Winners announced at the end of 2025
 - Upcoming
 - 2025 Commuter Choice Awards
 - No-Idle Resources and Campaign

Ms. Moening stated that NOACA will provide quarterly updates to the Air Quality Subcommittee.

Gohio Commute Update and Performance Measures

Ms. Ashleigh Dennis stated that Gohio Commute was launched in April 2017. She explained that staff work with businesses, universities, local governments, and other organizations to create subsites. These subsites allow organizations to offer targeted employee incentives and track employee participation.

Ms. Dennis presented information on the following:

- Four performance measure categories
 - User Metrics
 - Systemwide Performance Metrics
 - Outreach and Promotion Metrics
 - Platform Administration and Enhancement Metrics
- User and Systemwide Metrics
 - NOACA Region
 - Total Users: 8,098
 - Total Trips: 195,617
 - Total Non-SOV Trips: 173,791
 - Total VMT Avoided: 1,800,955
 - Total Calories Burned: 19,962,548
 - Statewide
 - Total Users: 22,896
 - Total Trips: 328,840
 - Total Non-SOV Trips: 296,089
 - Total VMT Avoided: 3,039,961
 - Total Calories Burned: 29,928,273
 - CO₂ Offset June 2024 - May 2025 (t)
 - Trip Logs June 2024 - May 2025
 - 2025 Vanpool Metrics per Month
 - Miles Avoided: 414 – 2,553 miles
 - CO₂ avoided: 29,996 - 801,642 grams
 - Commuter Savings: \$228 -1,404 per month
 - 2025 Vanpool Growth: 46 Total Vanpools
- Outreach and Promotion Metrics
 - 79 organizations have created subsites on Gohio Commute
 - 121 total subsites/networks on the platform
 - Some organizations created multiple subnetworks for locations, buildings, etc.
 - Gohio Commute Office Hours
 - Quarterly updates on new topics related to Gohio Commute
 - Notifications through email
 - Next topic: Gohio Commute Branded App
- Platform Administration and Enhancement Metrics
 - March 2017 – June 2025
 - 45 Total Challenges
 - 57 Employer/Organization Incentives
 - 187 Events
 - Commute Perks
 - Rideshare App Update
 - Features
 - Home Tab
 - Log Tab
 - Record Tab

- Pools Tab
- Account Tab

Ms. Dennis stated that staff will provide quarterly updates on platform performance metrics to the Subcommittee.

2024 Air Quality Trends Report

Mr. Kirk Kallenborn noted that NOACA regularly monitors and reports on Northeast Ohio's air quality through its annual Air Quality Trends Report, most recently the 2024 edition published in April 2025. He highlighted that while overall air quality in the region has continued to improve, there are yearly fluctuations in pollutant levels, and events like the 2023 Canadian wildfires significantly affected local air quality.

Mr. Kallenborn stated that the 2023 Canadian wildfire season was the worst on record - over 17 million hectares burned. The Canadian wildfires released various pollutants, which were carried by North Atlantic winds as far as western Europe. The Canadian wildfires emitted 480 megatons of carbon and over 10,700 kilotons of particulate matter—about five times their typical annual levels.

Mr. Kallenborn reported that June 28, Northeast Ohio experienced its worst air pollution in decades, with PM_{2.5} reaching 210 µg/m³ and ozone levels on June 29 exceeding standards at 90 ppb. In December 2024, the U.S. EPA reclassified the region as a “Serious” Nonattainment Area for the 2015 ozone standard, based on 2021–2023 data. As a result, State Implementation Plan (SIP) revisions are now required to achieve attainment by August 3, 2027

Mr. Kallenborn presented charts on the following:

- Three-year average of eight-hour maximum O₃ levels ((2011-2013)-(2021-2023))
- Number of Exceedance Days of the 70 ppb O₃ NAAQS (2009-2023)

Mr. Kallenborn explained that the U.S. EPA tightened the annual PM_{2.5} standard from 12 to 9 µg/m³ in 2024, leading Ohio EPA to recommend Cuyahoga County as nonattainment, with final designations expected in 2026 and a moderate attainment deadline set for 2032. Mr. Kallenborn stated that for Cuyahoga County, the annual PM_{2.5} (fine particulate matter) value for 2023 is 13.5 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³), while the three-year average PM_{2.5} value is 12.4 µg/m³.

Mr. Kallenborn presented information on the following:

- Maximum Three-Year Rolling Averages for Annual PM_{2.5} ((2011-2013)-(2021-2023)) – Cuyahoga County
- Monitor-by-Monitor Three-Year Rolling Averages for Annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS Cuyahoga, Lake, Medina and Summit Counties
- Northeast Ohio PM_{2.5} Monitor Locations
- Number of PM_{2.5} Exceedance Days (2013-2023)
- Number of PM₁₀ Exceedance Days (2013-2023)

Mr. Kallenborn stated that staff will continue monitoring ozone and PM_{2.5} levels in Northeast Ohio, collaborate with the Ohio EPA on area designations, update the Air Quality Subcommittee after final area designations are made, and publish the 2025 Air Quality Trends Report in 2026.

Mr. Gall asked Mr. Kallenborn to bring up the slide showing Monitor-by-Monitor Three-Year Rolling Averages for Annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS. He pointed out that in 2022, the values were all under 12 for the counties. He asked if the rate would have been 12.

Mr. Kallenborn said that was correct.

Mr. Gall asked if the monitors would have been blank.

Mr. Kallenborn explained that he wanted to highlight that the monitors had a history of exceeding the current standard.

Mr. Gall stated that when the EPA moves the goal post, all of the monitors would exceed the standard.

Mr. Gall stated that the EPA has since moved the goal post from 12 to 9, and four or five years earlier, the standard was 15. He asked Mr. Kallenborn if he had a forecast for when the EPA would change the standard from 9 to 6.

Mr. Kallenborn said he would be speculating at this point.

Mr. MacDonald stated that given what the current Federal Government and the administration of the EPA have put out publicly in the media, he did not expect any further strengthening of standards on the NAAQS. He stated that when there are increases in fine particulate matter due to wildfire smoke from other areas, it doesn't necessarily mean that it reflects on what people are doing in Northeast Ohio. The EPA will look at the causes behind the increase in pollution for the year 2023, and also the fact that there were environmental conditions that were beyond the control of the region.

Ms. Feke stated that the national standards went up, but for 2023, there was not anything anyone could do; Canada was on fire. She asked if the NOACA region was penalized for the wildfires, even though nothing could have been done. She asked Mr. Kallenborn if he was referring to PM_{2.5} when he was describing the particulate matter from the wildfires.

Mr. Kallenborn said yes.

Ms. Feke suggested that Mr. Kallenborn add PM_{2.5} information to the slide.

Mr. Kallenborn said the EPA considers Canadian wildfires as "exclusion events." This means if those fires are the reason an area has bad air, the EPA can leave that data out. But right now, the wildfires are not the cause of the air problems in the NOACA region, so the EPA is still counting them.

Mr. Sokolowski added that the wildfires could be the cause in the future. Mr. Sokolowski stated that regions are allowed to do an exceptional event demonstration, which means removing data based on wildfires or other exceptional events. It has to have regulatory significance, meaning it must impact the region's attainment status. The Ohio EPA analyzed the data and determined that even if the wildfire-related data from the three years were removed, the region would still be in

nonattainment. Therefore, the NOACA region was not allowed to apply exceptional events to that dataset. For example, Summit County was in nonattainment, but after flagging data, its level dropped below 8.9. Several other areas in Ohio were similarly affected. NOACA only reviews areas in Northeast Ohio. Based on his understanding, the next three-year period will use data from 2022 to 2024, not 2021 to 2023. The 2024 data has improved, more consistent with the region's normal background, since the area was not impacted by wildfire smoke like it was in 2023. However, the region still has high PM_{2.5} levels that need to be addressed locally. While NOACA didn't see the wildfire impact in 2024, Ohio EPA could still submit an exceptional event demonstration if it impacts the three-year dataset. If so, and the data is within that period, NOACA can apply the exceptional events and remove that data from the calculation.

CY2025 Air Quality Forecast Accuracy (through May 31)

Mr. MacDonald stated that NOACA forecasts daily peak eight-hour ground-level ozone concentrations and fine particulate matter concentrations. In 2025, daily forecasts for ozone began March 1 and will conclude October 31. Daily forecasts for fine particulate matter are year-round. NOACA posts daily air quality forecasts through AirNowTech, in affiliation with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA).

Mr. MacDonald stated that NOACA bases ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter forecasts on a review of various meteorological variables and model guidance, including the NOAA National Air Quality Forecast Capability (for ozone only), the Classification and Regression Tree (CART) model, Sonoma Tech Guidance (via the Columbus/Central Ohio Forecast on AirNow.gov), the BlueSky Canada Smoke Forecast, and Firework: Canada's Wildfire Smoke Prediction System.

Mr. MacDonald presented information on the following:

- NOACA Forecast Performance for 2025 (PM_{2.5})
 - PM_{2.5} Good/Moderate Threshold (12 µg/m³)
 - Correct = 80%
 - PM_{2.5} Moderate/Unhealthy Threshold (35 µg/m³)
 - Correct = 100%
- NOACA and NOAA Forecast Performance for 2025 (March 1-May 31) (PM_{2.5})

	<u>12 µg/m³</u>	<u>35 µg/m³</u>
NOACA	80%	100%
NOAA 6Z (M/B)	(74/74)%	(100/100)%
NOAA 12Z (M/B)	(74/75)%	(100/100)%

- NOACA and NOAA Forecast Performance for 2025 (March 1-May 31) (O₃)

	<u>50 ppb</u>	<u>70 ppb</u>
NOACA	89%	99%
NOAA 6Z (M/B)	(84/79)%	(99/99)%
NOAA 12Z (M/B)	(87/79)%	(99/99)%

- Exceedance Days for March-May 2025 (O₃)
 - April 24

Mr. MacDonald explained that when comparing NOACA's and NOAA's ozone forecast performance regarding exceedance days, there was one "missed opportunity" where both agencies failed to forecast a day that ultimately exceeded the 2015 eight-hour ozone standard of

70 parts per billion (ppb). However, there were zero “false alarms,” meaning neither NOACA nor NOAA incorrectly forecasted an exceedance on a day when the observed ozone levels remained below the standard.

Mr. MacDonald stated that staff will track the forecast performance of both NOACA and NOAA for ozone and fine particulate matter, update the Air Quality Subcommittee in September 2025, and collaborate with NOAA personnel to report model performance in Northeast Ohio at the National Air Quality Forecasters Conference in October 2025.

Reports/Updates

No reports or updates were provided during the meeting.

Old Business

No old business was discussed at this meeting.

New Business

Ms. Feke announced that GCRTA will work with Ms. Kate Moening on a bike event at West Park Station on Saturday, July 26, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. The goal is to promote biking alongside transit use. A recent GCRTA event had strong attendance, notably with more general public than planners and bikers. GCRTA also plans to collaborate with NOACA on a Gohio Commute Day.

Adjournment

Mr. Dave Schroedel made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:58 a.m. Mr. Gall seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

The Air Quality Subcommittee will hold its next meeting at the NOACA offices on Friday, September 21, 2025.

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



**Air Quality Subcommittee
2025 Attendance Record**

Meeting Dates	3/21/25	6/20/25	9/19/25	12/19/25
ALAI , Samuel J. (David Schroedel, Alternate)		A		
CAPELLE , Ben (Brian J. Falkowski, Alternate)	X			
FEKE , Maribeth (Samantha Metcalf, Alternate)	X	X		
FISCHER , Tim (Corey Kurjian, Alternate)	X	A		
GORRIS , Nick J. (James Dvorak, Alternate)	X			
HARRISON , Aaron M. (Stephen D. Hambley, Alternate)				
HEARNE , David G. (Christina Yoka, Alternate)	X	A		
MECHENBIER , Bert (Alternate TBD)				
RIDDELL , Jeff (John Gall, Alternate)	A	A		
RUBENS , Sam (Julie Brown, Alternate)	X			
SOKOLOWSKI , Bryan (David Salem, Alternate)	X	X		
SORGE , Thomas (Corey Czinger, Alternate) (Neil Shop, Alternate on 6/20/25)	X	A		

X = Member A = Alternate