



NOACA External Affairs Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 11, 2025

NOACA Offices

Present: Please see the attached attendance record.

Councilwoman Stephanie Howse-Jones, Chair of the External Affairs Committee, convened the meeting at 8:31 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Ms. Debbie Berry made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 31, 2025. Mr. John Gall 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 March 2025.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

No public comments were made at this meeting.

Executive Director's Report

Director Grace Gallucci made the following announcements:

- Communications and Outreach
 - NOACA External Affairs Virtual Forum
 - 135 registrants
 - Recording is available at: vimeo.com/1068185844
 - Transportation Safety Billboards
 - Two Advertisers: Lamar and OutFront Media
 - 14 Locations; Static and Digital
 - Prior Meeting Follow-up
 - Request made by Ms. Calley Mersmann regarding advertising metrics
 - Northeast Ohio Loves Transit Challenge Campaign metrics

Action Items

No action items were presented at this meeting.

Presentation/Discussion Items

Government Affairs Report

Ms. Bev Burtzlaff presented information on the following:

- Federal Updates
 - Capitol Hill visits: March 4-5

- Rep. Shontel Brown
- Rep. Dave Joyce
- Rep. Marcy Kaptur
- Rep. Bob Latta
- Rep. Max Miller
- Great Lakes Day Congressional Breakfast: March 6
- Ohio's 222nd Birthday Celebration: March 5 at Library of Congress
- Executive Orders
- Memo on Review of Previous Grant Awards
- NOACA Board Supports NASA HQ relocation to NASA Glenn Facility
- New Issue for Consideration

Ms. Burtzlaff informed the Committee that Congress is evaluating the possibility of limiting or eliminating the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds as part of budget reconciliation efforts. This change could increase borrowing costs for state and local governments and harm infrastructure projects. National groups, including the National League of Cities and the Government Finance Officers Association, are advocating to preserve the current tax-exempt status.

Ms. Burtzlaff requested the Committee's input on whether NOACA should address the municipal bond tax-exemption issue in its Legislative Agenda and raise the matter in discussions with regional legislators.

Mayor Larry Antoskiewicz supported adding the municipal bond tax-exemption issue to NOACA's Legislative Agenda. He shared that he had already contacted Representatives and Senators about the matter, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the tax-exempt status for the region. He acknowledged other potential targets in the reconciliation package but stressed that this exemption should be preserved.

Ms. Bonnie Teeuwen made a motion to recommend to the Board to take the position of maintaining the tax exempt status of municipal bonds. Mayor Antoskiewicz seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

Ms. Teeuwen asked if NOACA staff could research the potential financial impact that could result if the municipal bond tax-exemption is changed.

Councilwoman Howse-Jones posed the question to NOACA staff, requesting that information be provided to the Committee at the next meeting on how the potential tax-exemption change could impact bonds related to NOACA's work, helping members understand the implications.

Ms. Burtzlaff stated she would examine the financial impacts of the potential tax-exemption change, considering effects on both local communities and the broader budget package.

Ms. Burtzlaff proceeded with her presentation following the discussion on the municipal bond tax-exemption issue.

- State Updates
 - Ohio's Biennial SFY 2026-27 Transportation and Operating Budgets
 - State Initiatives for Action
 - Transportation Budget Signed
 - Final Transportation Budget
 - I-71 Interchange
 - Transit Funding

- Passenger Rail
- Operating Budget: Pending – Deadline: June 30
- All Aboard Ohio Day at Statehouse – March 5
- Legislative Meet and Greet
- Speed Limit Initiative
- NOACA Board Support of Issue 2

Ms. Burtzlaff invited feedback from the Committee.

Mr. Matt Moss expressed support for the speed limit initiative, noting it aligns with Cleveland's Vision Zero Action Plan. He and Ms. Burtzlaff have attended productive Ohioans for Safe Streets meetings. He emphasized engaging local stakeholders, especially in healthcare, due to the strong link between high speeds and serious or fatal crashes.

Ms. Burtzlaff noted that Ohioans for Safe Streets has partnered with the insurance industry, highlighting the economic impact of crashes. The insurance sector supports efforts to reduce crash rates. NOACA will continue collaborating with the group and share legislative proposals with the Committee once available.

Ms. Berry inquired if data exists showing whether crashes happen more often at posted speed limits or when drivers exceed those limits.

Ms. Burtzlaff confirmed that relevant data exists and said she would provide it to the Committee. She also noted that speeding is a contributing factor in many crashes.

Ms. Berry acknowledged the rationale behind current speed limits and the data showing how even small speed increases can greatly impact crash severity. However, she emphasized the importance of enforcement, questioning whether changing speed limits without enforcement would be effective. She referenced the West Shoreway's reduced speed limit, where many drivers still exceed it, and stressed the need to consider both enforcement and realistic speed changes to avoid unintended consequences. While supportive of the initiative, she urged a thoughtful and balanced approach.

Ms. Burtzlaff stated that she would work with NOACA's engineering team to provide relevant data for the Committee. While acknowledging the importance of enforcement, she highlighted distracted driving as a major crash factor. She observed that driving habits changed during COVID and have been slow to return to baseline. Some communities are dissatisfied with the state-mandated 35 m.p.h. speed limit in residential areas near schools, parks, and bike lanes. In response, NOACA is exploring ways to allow communities greater input in setting speed limits based on local needs rather than state mandates.

Ms. Berry agreed with Ms. Burtzlaff's response and clarified that she supports evaluating the issue. She emphasized the importance of considering all potential impacts and addressing the problem from multiple angles. Her concern was to avoid creating new or bigger problems while trying to solve the current one.

Director Gallucci shared that NOACA staff will present a potential safety fund proposal at the upcoming Policy Committee meeting, which will include insights into the causes of severe crashes and fatalities. She suggested that Ms. Berry might be particularly interested in attending that meeting.

Ms. Berry mentioned that she had another commitment and would not be able to attend the meeting, but someone else would attend in her place.

Mayor Paul Koomar expressed interest in reviewing distracted driving data. He shared an example from Bay Village, where a 25-m.p.h. street that served as a cut-through to a nearby highway had significant enforcement but it was a drain city resources. The city conducted research on road striping and found that, despite having curbs and gutters, striping the road to minimum specs reduced average speeds by 6 to 7 m.p.h., which was more successful than anticipated. The approach, along with the ongoing enforcement and speed signs, proved to be a major improvement and resolved a contentious issue with residents.

Ms. Berry agreed with Mayor Koomar's point and reiterated that NOACA should consider all options holistically, not just focus on speed. She expressed her appreciation for the upcoming presentation at the Policy Committee meeting.

Director Gallucci mentioned that NOACA publishes Community Safety Reports every two years, with the last reports from 2022 available online. The new 2024 reports will soon be released and will highlight both human behavior and infrastructure issues that contribute to severe crashes and fatalities. The reports will offer insights on potential infrastructure improvements as well as considerations like speed limits to address these issues moving forward.

Mr. Moss emphasized that addressing this issue requires a comprehensive, safe systems approach, considering all factors. He shared a challenge in Cleveland with Franklin Boulevard, a mile-long street where state law mandates a 35 m.p.h. speed limit despite its residential and community-oriented use, causing tension between the city and residents who feel it should be 25 m.p.h. The city's attempt to lower the speed limit led to legal challenges over ticketing. He highlighted the complexity of the situation and the ongoing efforts to find a solution.

Mr. Gall discussed the behavioral aspect of driving, where individuals assess the risk versus reward of speeding. He questioned how effective a speed limit change would be if people don't willingly adhere to it, highlighting the challenge of changing driving behavior. He referenced Lorain County's efforts over St. Patrick's Day, where enforcement focused on distracted driving, seatbelt usage, and speeding. While it was effective during that special push, he noted that not all communities have the resources to replicate such efforts regularly, and budgets would impact how often enforcement could occur. Mr. Gall also shared an example from Elyria, where a specific ward faced significant traffic issues with speeding. Law enforcement increased their presence in the area, working until drivers became aware that they could face a stop and summons, effectively deterring speeding through consistent enforcement.

Commissioner Regovich inquired about the last time the state made changes to driver training, expressing concern that new drivers are only learning the basics. He pointed out the advanced technology in new cars, like self-parking and reverse cameras, but mentioned that he made his own kids learn to drive without relying on such features. He noted a perceived decline in the quality of driving, though he wondered if it was just his perspective.

Director Gallucci pointed out that the removal of driver's education from high schools has contributed to the issue. Governor DeWine was working to reverse that decision.

Ms. Burtzloff clarified that while Governor DeWine supported reinstating driver's education in high schools, the Legislature has not yet agreed to it.

Commissioner Regovich expressed the belief that driving should be considered a privilege, not a right, until individuals demonstrate responsible driving, prioritize safety, and consider all relevant factors. He also noted that COVID was a game changer due to the lack of enforcement during that time.

Mr. John Kalas expressed interest in the upcoming Policy Committee meeting and shared a concern stemming from the COVID period when many temporary tags were defective, leading people to drive without license plates, which he thinks contributes to reckless driving. He noted that many of the worst accidents in Cleveland recently involved stolen vehicles and linked this to the reckless behavior of car thieves, especially in police chases. He asked if there had been any discussions with law enforcement or the state about strengthening penalties for stolen vehicles and suggested the creation of a task force or other measures to address this issue at its root.

In response to Mr. Kalas' question, Director Gallucci stated that NOACA had not had any discussions on this issue, but it could be something that staff could suggest to ODOT for consideration.

Mr. Kalas expressed concern about the increasing number of bicyclists on the roads alongside drivers with less education. He suggested that staying proactive in addressing this issue was likely the best approach. He also asked if NOACA collaborates with any bicycle advocacy groups to support cyclist education while sharing the road with vehicles.

Director Gallucci confirmed that NOACA staff work closely with bicycle advocacy organizations such as Bike Cleveland and NOACA's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Council (BPAC). She mentioned that projects related to cycling are reviewed by the BPAC.

Mr. Kalas inquired whether any of the billboards used by NOACA are digital and if there is any data on the potential distractions caused by digital billboards.

Director Gallucci explained that NOACA uses both digital and static billboards. She mentioned that she wasn't aware of any data on whether digital billboards cause distractions for drivers but suggested that staff could look into it.

Mr. Kalas emphasized the importance of the issue. He mentioned that a digital billboard on the West Shoreway was particularly distracting to him. He suggested that if NOACA is using such billboards for advertising, it would make sense to investigate the potential distractions they might cause.

Ms. Burtzloff affirmed that safety is a multifaceted issue deserving continued attention from NOACA. She acknowledged the various contributing factors, appreciated the input received, and emphasized that the suggestions would be integrated into NOACA's future safety efforts.

Ms. Burtzloff reported that the Board passed a resolution on March 14 in support of Ohio's Issue 2 on the May 6 ballot. This measure would renew the State Capital Improvement Program, which funds infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, water systems, and waste facilities across all 88 counties using existing state revenues without raising taxes. Over the past 10 years, the program has funded 613 projects in the NOACA region.

Presentation / Discussion Items

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Update (eNEO 2050+)

Director Gallucci explained that the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is part of the broader *eNEO2050* Long Range Plan. NOACA updates the LRTP every four years, with a major overhaul done in 2021. The current update is minor, focusing on envisioning transportation needs and priorities for the next 25 years. Staff will continue to roll out the draft plan for public input, using the same scenarios and framework as the 2021 version. Public engagement will begin at the end of the month, with a review of the draft plan. Some public engagement was already conducted in the fall to gather input for the draft.

Ms. Danielle Render presented information on the following:

- Public Engagement
- Engagement Process
- Key Engagement and Approaches
- Upcoming Engagement
 - Public Comment Period: April 21 – June 1
 - How to Submit COmments
- Methods
- Public Awareness Campaigns – Circulation
- Community Connections – Open Houses
- Interactive Forum – Mindmixer
- Storytelling – Final Plan

Mr. Ali Makarachi presented information on the following:

- Long Range Transportation Plan
 - NOACA LRTP Update Three Planning Elements
 - Long Term Transportation Planning, Policy, and Investments
 - Short Term Transportation Improvements
 - Public Involvement: December 2024, April 2025, and May 2025
 - Timeline & Objectives
 - LRPT Process Flow Chart
- Data Update
 - 2050 Population Projection
 - Telecommuting
 - Online Shopping
 - Virtual Meetings
 - Household Travel Survey
- Scenario Planning
 - 2025-2050: Present Trend and Risk Analysis
 - Scenario 1: MAINTAIN
 - Scenario 2: Car
 - Scenario 3: Transit
 - Scenario 4: Total
 - Modeling Scenarios
- Congestion Management Plan (CMP)
 - Overview & Steps
 - Congestion Management Objectives
 - Congested Highway Corridors
 - Congested Interchanges/Intersections
- Performance Measures
 - Zero-Car Household Density 2024 and 2050
- Accessibility & Mobility
 - Access to Transit
 - Annual Transit Ridership

- Freeway & Arterial Delay
- Work Commute Time (All Households and Zero-Car Households)
- Transportation Safety
 - Safety Performance Measures
 - Safety Performance Measure Targets
- Air Quality
 - Emissions per Million Residents
 - PM_{2.5} per Million Residents
- Infrastructure
 - Pavement Maintenance Costs
 - Bridge Conditions
 - Bridge Rehabilitation & Maintenance Costs
 - Nonmotorized Infrastructure
- Freight Planning
 - Required Truck Spaces
 - Truck VMT Percent
 - Truck Routes
- Future Technology
 - EV Adoption by State in 2023
 - Estimated Number of EVs by 2050
 - Estimated Number of L2 Ports by 2050
 - Estimated Number of DCFC Ports by 2050
 - Estimated Required Budgets
 - Technology Adoption
- Scenario Costs & Revenue
 - Project Categories
 - Revenue Summary
 - Total Scenario Costs & Revenues
 - Roadway Costs & Revenue
 - Transit Costs & Revenue
 - Nonmotorized Costs & Revenue
 - Scenario Measure of Effectiveness Value
 - MOE & Cost

Mr. Makarachi stated that staff will provide updates on eNEO2050+ to the committees, the Transportation Subcommittee, councils, and the Board over the next few months.

Mr. Moss requested that staff share the details of Scenario 4 with the Committee, so members can review it.

Mr. Makarachi mentioned that the details of Scenario 4 are available on NOACA's website.

Director Gallucci stated that the draft LRTP, including the scenarios, will be prepared within the next two weeks for review by the Committee.

Reports/Updates

No reports/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

Mayor Koomar made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 a.m. Commissioner Regovich seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

The next regular External Affairs Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday, July 11, 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		
BIBB , Justin Bonnie Teeuwen, Alternate	A	A		
BRADLEY , Jack Dale Vandersommen, Alternate	X	A		
DEGEETER , Timothy J. Scott Wangler, Alternate	X	X		
DREYFUSS-WELLS , Kyle Jacqueline Muhammad, Alternate Angela Jones, Alternate on 1/31/25	X	X		
DVORAK , James W. Andy Haupt, Alternate	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		
HOWSE-JONES , Stephanie Jasmin Santana, Alternate	X	X		
KOOMAR , Paul India L. Birdsong Terry, Alternate	X	X		
MERSMANN , Calley Sarah O'Keeffe, Alternate	X			
MOSS , Matt Sarah O'Keeffe, Alternate		X		
REGOVICH , Richard Robert Fiala, Alternate	X	X		
RIDDELL , Jeff John Gall, Alternate	A	A		
RONAYNE , Chris Debbie Berry, Alternate	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			
McCALL , Valarie Kevin S. Schmotzer, Alternate				
SNYDER , Timothy Eric Hange, Alternate				
RANALDSON , Marvin Eric C. Mack, Alternate		A		

X = Member A = Alternate