

# **GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE**

**Business, Community, Rural, and Emerging Leaders  
Advisory Councils**

**December 5, 2025**

# **ACTION REQUESTED**

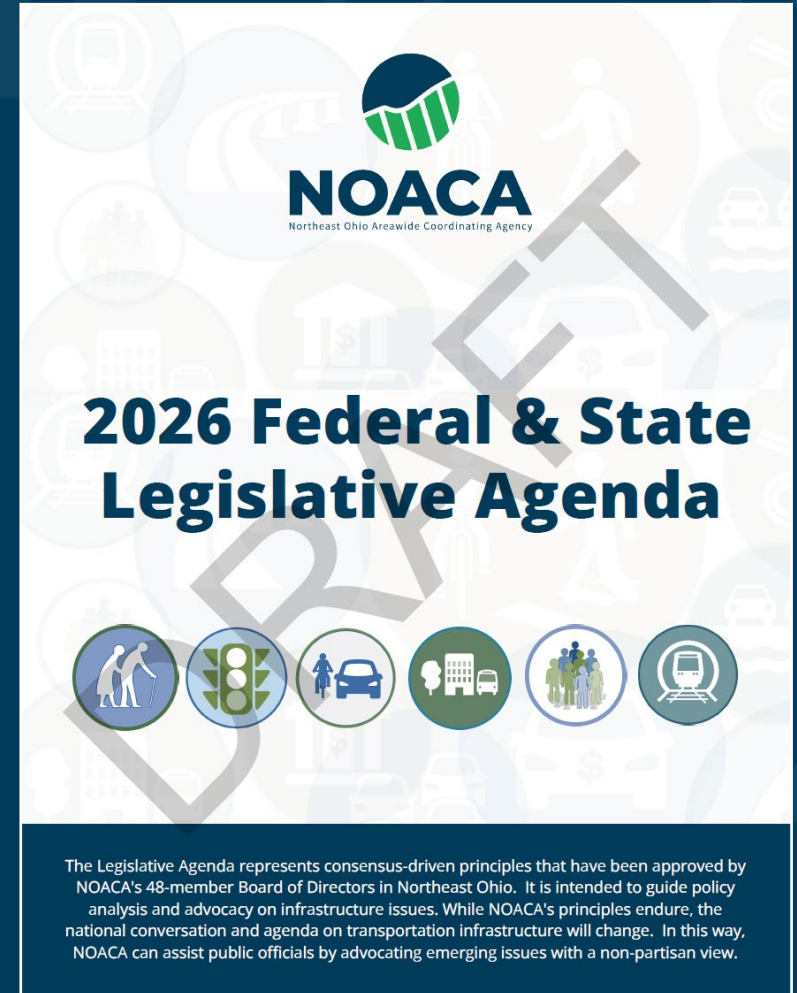
**No action is requested. This item is for presentation and discussion.**

# **PREVIOUS ACTION**

**No previous action.**

# 2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

- Per discussion at September meeting, with concurrence from External Affairs Committee, the 2026 Legislative Agenda was updated to reflect current policy priorities for reauthorization
- Copy of draft agenda in packet
- BOD will be asked to adopt the draft at Dec. 12 meeting



# INITIATIVES FOR ACTION

Companion doc to the Legislative Agenda – translates high-level policy priorities into near-term actions aligned with what’s happening in Congress and the Statehouse – our “to do” list

## NOACA'S 2025 FEDERAL INITIATIVES FOR ACTION

**Background:** In November 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was enacted, reauthorizing the nation's federal transportation programs for fiscal years 2022 - 2026. NOACA will continue to work with federal officials to maximize IIJA opportunities, shape the next surface transportation reauthorization, and develop proposals and initiatives consistent with the NOACA's 2025 Legislative Agenda and Long Range Plan.

**Recommendations for Advocacy:** Northeast Ohio's Congressional Delegation and the Administration

- Continue to coordinate a regional approach to maximize the impact of IIJA federal transportation funding on Northeast Ohio**  
Continue to implement NOACA's IIJA Strategy to pair projects with funding opportunities in the NOACA's Long Range Plan with funding opportunities in the work with federal agencies and NOACA's congressional delegation to advance regional priorities. Coordinate with local community stakeholders to increase discretionary funding, reduce duplication of effort, and maximize the impact of IIJA dollars on the NOACA region.
- Ask Congress to stabilize and grow the Highway Trust Fund and encourage the search for new revenue sources**  
Advocate that Congress should continue to explore ways to stabilize and grow the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) to provide long-term predictable funding for the nation's transportation program. Advocate for the traditional "user pays" system using existing and new programs to replace the increasingly outdated federal gas tax programs that any new funding mechanisms will support public transportation.
- Encourage federal support for making Greater Cleveland a significant hub on the national passenger rail network**  
Collaborate with the FRA, Amtrak, and others to elevate Greater Cleveland on the national passenger rail system, improve passenger freight service, and create economic opportunity. Seek federal support for existing Amtrak long distance routes through the region, and proposals for new Ohio corridors: 3C+D and Cleveland-Toledo. Support extension of the CVSR north to Cleveland.
- Building on IIJA authority, urge U.S. DOT to adequately fund the NETT Council to support Hyperloop and projects like Great Lakes Hyperloop**  
Ask Congress to fund the U.S. DOT Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology (NETT) Council, to provide a regulatory framework and funding to advance emerging technologies, like hyperloop, which have potential to transform and decarbonize the nation's transportation network.
- Support federal actions that support economic development and environmental stewardship in the Great Lakes megaregion**  
Support implementation of the Great Lakes Authority and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to protect fresh water resources, create new education and job opportunities, and collaborate on infrastructure investments.
- Maximize funding opportunities through the Inflation Reduction Act to pursue regional climate pollution reduction goals**  
Secure Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding to implement the regional climate action planning initiatives to reduce climate impacts, mitigate climate impacts, protect coastline and freshwater resources, improve economic opportunity, bolster grid resilience, and create jobs.
- Pursue initiatives and funding to implement NOACA's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**  
Support policies and funding that align with NOACA's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the recently released Economic Development Administration (EDA) to improve economic opportunity and jobs in the region.

## NOACA'S 2025 STATE INITIATIVES FOR ACTION

**Background:** In early 2025, the Ohio Governor and the General Assembly will consider and enact the 2026-2027 Biennial Transportation Budget. NOACA will continue to advocate for policies and funding to enhance Northeast Ohio's multimodal transportation network, increase travel options, and improve transportation safety.

**Recommendations for Advocacy:** Northeast Ohio's Statehouse Delegation and Governor

- Oppose the suspension of Ohio's 2019 gas tax increase**  
NOACA supported Ohio's 2019 user fee increase on gasoline and diesel fuel, and will continue to oppose efforts to reduce these fees, which are vitally important to ODOT and local governments for roadway maintenance. NOACA will support efforts to improve the state's ability to adequately fund Ohio's transportation system.
- Advocate for increased and predictable funding for transit in Ohio**  
Ohio continues to lag behind most states in per capita transit dollars, and historical disinvestment has left GCRTA and other Ohio transit systems in financial straits. NOACA supports a dedicated, long-term source of transit funding to improve local economies, attract new employers, connect workers to jobs, and improve air quality.
- Advocate for an equitable return of state transportation dollars to Northeast Ohio**  
Advocate for transportation funding formulas that send user fee dollars back to the regions and communities where they were collected, in the true spirit of a "user fee," to correct inequities that shortchange the NOACA region. As Ohio analyzes new revenue models to collect transportation user fees, we should also consider formulas to equitably return these dollars to the places where they were collected.
- Support efforts to remediate contamination and protect air and water quality**  
Support policies to remediate and repurpose brownfields and seek funding for the NOACA/Vibrant NEO Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund to spur new economic investment. Support legislation to revitalize the Clean Ohio Fund. Protect air and water quality to improve public health, economic vitality, and quality of life in the region.
- Support proposals to increase transportation safety and reduce distracted driving**  
Work with state and local partners to increase transportation safety -- focusing on programs and legislation to reduce distracted driving, establish safe speed limits, and improve network design to protect drivers and passengers, roadway workers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and all users of the region's transportation system.
- Encourage comprehensive and equitable maintenance of National Highway System (NHS) routes in Ohio**  
Raise awareness of the need for comprehensive and equitable maintenance of National Highway System (NHS) routes -- including those outside the interstate system, for which the state receives federal funds. This will reduce the maintenance burden on local communities.
- Encourage state support for passenger rail improvement and expansion in Ohio**  
Advocate for improved and expanded passenger rail service in the region, including Amtrak's existing east-west long distance routes across Northeast Ohio, and proposals for new service: 3C+D, and Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit. Encourage state funding to advance these routes. Support extension of the CVSR north to Cleveland.
- Support established processes and NOACA policy for Interstate Highway System interchanges**  
Support repeal of state law mandating new interstate interchanges determined by formula, circumventing established federal and state processes, and reaffirm NOACA's role regarding major transportation investments in the region.

# PROPOSED UPDATES - FEDERAL

Continue **federal-level** advocacy for:

- Passenger rail funding
- CEDS/economic development funding & assistance
- Environmental protection/Great Lakes initiatives
- Grant funding opportunities for NE Ohio

Create updated initiative re: advocacy for NOACA priorities in reauthorization bill

# PROPOSED UPDATES - STATE

Continue **state-level** advocacy for:

- Adequate transportation revenue for Ohio & equitable return for region
- Transit funding
- Clean air & water; brownfield funding
- Transportation safety
- Comprehensive maintenance of NHS routes in Ohio
- Passenger rail improvement & expansion


Delete initiative to protect established processes for interstate highway interchanges

# FEDERAL UPDATES



# SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

- IIJA/BIL expires September 2026
- Congressional hearings held to discuss reauthorization
- NOACA submitted priorities to U.S. DOT, congressional committee leaders, and NE Ohio delegation



**NOACA** August 19, 2025

**BOARD OFFICERS**

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Andrew Conrad, P.E., P.S., Medina County Engineer

**Assistant Treasurer**  
Mark Cunningham, Trustee, Columbia Twp. Lorain County

**Assistant Treasurer**

Dear U.S. Department of Transportation,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in response to the Request for Information (Docket No. DOT-OST-2025-0468) on the development of the next surface transportation authorization.

At the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), we plan for the future of transportation across 5 counties, 61 cities, and 58 townships, serving 2.1 million people in Greater Cleveland/Northeast Ohio. In FY 2025, NOACA's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) programmed approximately \$762 million in highway projects and \$176 million in transit investments across the region. Guided by a board of 48 local elected officials and supported by a professional planning staff, NOACA ensures federal dollars are invested strategically to deliver transformative projects to improve safety, reduce congestion, and support economic development in Northeast Ohio.

# NOACA REAUTHORIZATION PRIORITIES

- Increased direct funding to MPOs – empower local officials
- Shift some discretionary funding to formula – allow MPOs to fund projects in Long Range Plan
- Stabilize Highway Trust Fund, inclusive of transit funding
- Prioritize asset management over expansion

# NOACA REAUTHORIZATION PRIORITIES

- Safety, sustainability, and multimodalism
- Passenger rail
- Increase planning funds to meet federal requirements
- Reduce local match

# LOT COALITION PRIORITIES

NOACA's priorities align with LOT Coalition (Local Officials for Transportation) priorities:

“Congress created Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations to ensure regional coordination and accountability in federal investment. The next reauthorization should reaffirm that purpose by giving local and regional governments greater authority over the federal funds that support their responsibilities and the assets they manage” – 11/4/25



# REAUTHORIZATION ISSUES

- “Traditional” roads & bridges bill (per House T&I Chairman Graves) or continue multimodal access to funding?
- Formula vs. discretionary funding
- Direct/Suballocated \$ to regions vs. more discretion to DOTs
- Continue support for EV infrastructure? EV fees?
- Safety policies/regulations/funding
- HTF solvency/mass transit account & flex funding for transit
- Permitting reform and faster project delivery

# REAUTHORIZATION TIMELINE

- **NOW:** staff-to-staff exchanges of base text underway among committees
- **WINTER 2026:** Bills released and markups expected
- **EARLY SPRING 2026:** Potential Floor time (T&I Chair Graves hopes for passage in the spring)
- **9/30/26:** IIJA expires

# NOACA NEXT STEPS -- REAUTHORIZATION

- Continued discussions with congressional staff – sharing NOACA priorities & LOT Coalition letter
- Capitol Hill meetings in 2026
- Sharing priorities with NOACA Board and stakeholders, seeking to amplify our message to Congress

# RECENT ADMINISTRATION REGULATORY PROPOSALS

- Weaken CAFE (vehicle fuel economy) standards
- Withdraw prior proposals requiring “Safe System Approach” to road safety through design features
- Narrow/delay automatic emergency braking requirements for cars and trucks
- Redefine “Waters of the United States” (WOTUS) rules to reduce CWA jurisdiction

# APPROPRIATION STATUS

- Federal government re-opened on Nov. 12 when Congress and the Administration agreed on a continuing resolution (CR) to fund government until Jan. 30
- Meanwhile, US DOT appropriations (THUD) may advance ahead of that deadline -- five-bill “mini-bus”

# PASSENGER RAIL ADVOCACY

- **NOACA considering new Corridor ID application when the NOFO opens next year – to improve east-west service through NE Ohio**
- **Meetings ongoing with FRA, Amtrak, local business community, advocacy groups, & neighboring states**
- **NOACA continues to track and support ORDC's next steps regarding two corridors being studied by Ohio:**
  - **Cleveland-Columbus-Dayton-Cincinnati**
  - **Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit**

# OPEN FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative's 2026 Lake Erie Community Large Grants, due 12/19/25
- FRA's Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grants, due 1/7/26
- Cleveland Foundation's 2026 Digital Excellence Grants, due 1/16/26
- National Safety Council's Road to Zero Community Traffic Safety Grants, due 1/16/26
- League of American Bicyclists' Community Spark Grants, due 1/27/26
- US DOT's BUILD program (formerly RAISE), due 2/24/26 (\$1.5B)
- Ohio Safe Routes to School grants, due 3/6/26

# NOACA'S FUNDING RESOURCES WEBPAGE



- Check regularly for updates
- Link for LOS requests
- Link to IJA Strategy

A screenshot of the NOACA website's 'Funding Resources' page. The page has a blue header with the NOACA logo and navigation links: Calendar, Jobs, Contact Us, Nondiscrimination, Translate, and social media icons. A search bar is on the right. Below the header is a navigation menu with 'About', 'Regional Planning', 'Tools &amp; Resources' (highlighted), 'Community Assistance Center', and 'Board &amp; Committees'. The main content area is titled 'Funding Resources' and includes a list of resources such as 'Getting Around the Region', 'Street Design Flexibility Guidelines', 'Trail Crossing Typology', 'Traffic Counts', 'Facts &amp; Data on Northeast Ohio', 'Major Employment Hubs in the Cleveland Region', and 'Vibrant NEO 2040 County Reports'. The 'Funding Resources' link is highlighted in blue. Below the list, there are sections for 'Funding Sources' and 'NOACA programs for Northeast Ohio Communities', 'Federal Economic Development Assistance - continuously available', 'State Funding Programs', and 'Currently Available Funding Opportunities'. A paragraph at the bottom discusses the 'NOACA Regional Strategy to Coordinate Funding Opportunities: Bringing IJA Transportation Grant Dollars to Northeast Ohio' and mentions the reauthorization of the Investment and Jobs Act (IJA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

# STATE UPDATES



# MPO LEGISLATION

HB 455 introduced in Ohio Legislature by Rep. Mike Dovilla (Berea) and Rep. Brian Stewart (Ashville)

- Prevents any single county from holding a voting majority on an MPO board
- Allows Governor to redesignate a county's MPO affiliation if 25% of workforce commutes to a contiguous MPO
- Clarifies that MPOs may not issue policies that conflict with state or federal law
- Prohibits a chief executive of an MPO from being simultaneously employed outside Ohio

# OARC/NOACA RESPONSE

- Continuing to educate our Statehouse delegations on the roles and responsibilities of MPOs
- Examining interaction between federal and state laws governing MPOs
- Offering to meet with bill sponsors
- Preparing to testify at upcoming hearings

# OTHER STATEHOUSE BILLS

- HB 574 – to create the Political Subdivision Consolidation Incentive Grant Pilot Program (Reps. Daniels & Dovilla)
- HB 609 – to require a public body to allow for public comment/testimony before taking formal action on an item
- HB 399 – bans fracking in public lands, including oil & gas extraction from under Lake Erie
- HB 430 – prohibits application of brine from oil & gas wells on Ohio's roadways
- SB 219 – to modernize oil & gas laws, with provisions related to roadway maintenance agreements with local communities

# DISCUSSION





# NOACA

Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency

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.