



**NOACA Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes**  
September 12, 2025  
Mentor High School – Paradigm Building  
6477 Center Street, Mentor, Ohio

**Present:** Please see the attached attendance record.

President Chris Ronayne convened the NOACA Board meeting at 9:05 a.m.

Commissioner Morris Beverage III welcomed the NOACA Board to Mentor High School.

Mr. Craig Heath, Superintendent of Mentor Schools, welcomed the NOACA Board to the Paradigm building at Mentor High School. He noted the facility, built in 2014 entirely with grant funds, serves as a hub for professional development, large district events, and student activities such as AP testing and presentations. He highlighted Mentor Schools' partnership with Lakeland Community College, which enables students to take college courses on campus at no cost, often in conjunction with Career Technical Education programs. This initiative strengthens workforce development in Lake County. Mr. Heath closed by expressing pride in the resources available to Mentor students and appreciation for NOACA holding its meeting at the Paradigm building.

Rep. Dan Troy welcomed NOACA back to holding meetings across its five member counties, recalling past gatherings in Lake County. He noted his service as NOACA Board President in 2004 and 2016, emphasizing NOACA's role as a regional council of governments. He expressed concern about the weakening partnership between state and local governments and emphasized the need for cooperation, particularly in areas such as property tax reform and transportation needs. Rep. Troy highlighted his work on renewing the Ohio Public Works Commission's 10-year bond program, which benefits local communities. He closed by reaffirming his commitment to supporting NOACA and strengthening collaboration between state and local governments.

County Executive Ronayne agreed with Rep. Troy's comments, stating he is proud of the NOACA Board. He noted that, while members may have differing opinions, there is a strong unity in their overall goals.

**Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Mike Dever made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 13, 2025. Mr. Andy Conrad seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

**Committee Updates**

**Executive Committee**

President Ronayne thanked Mayor Matt Castelli and Ms. Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells for their leadership as chair and vice chair of the HR Subcommittee. He announced the hiring of NOACA's new HR Director, Ms. Lisa Durkin, and recognized her at the meeting.

### **Governance Committee**

Trustee Jeff Brandon reported that the Governance Committee will review NOACA's Code of Regulations, Board structure, and size, as requested at the June Board meeting. The Committee has scheduled special meetings September 25 and October 24 to study the matter further, including commissioner appointments to the Board.

### **Policy Committee**

Ms. Cierebiej reported that the Policy Committee reviewed the Transportation for Safer Communities Initiative (TSCI), requested additional information, and returned it for further review. Due to significant feedback, the Committee will continue to address program versus policy considerations.

All committee meeting summaries were included in the meeting packet.

### **Public Comment on Agenda Items**

Attached to the minutes are public comments from Mr. John Kalis and Ms. Kirsten Hill regarding Resolution 2025-047.

### **President's Report**

President Ronayne noted that everyone is looking forward to NOACA's Annual Meeting on Friday, October 3. The meeting will feature a water-focused agenda. The program will include local and national speakers discussing economic development opportunities related to the Great Lakes, as well as transportation and tourism. He encouraged attendance at the meeting.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Director Grace Gallucci reported on the following:

- **Communications and Outreach – In the News**
  - NOACA's Public Affairs Division has been named a finalist for the Zenith Awards, which honor excellence in communications, public relations, marketing, and external communications. They are competing in two categories: the Integrated Communications Category for their Brand Identity Campaign and the Government Award for Regional Climate Action Planning. Winners will be announced on November 12 in Austin, Texas.
- **Legislative and Funding Issues**
  - NOACA is addressing legislative and funding issues related to the USDOT Surface Transportation Reauthorization. The IIJA is set to expire in September 2026. In preparation, NOACA submitted its priorities to USDOT's Request for Information on August 19.
    - NOACA's submitted priorities focus on giving MPOs more authority, improving funding systems, and strengthening collaboration with states and local governments. They emphasize investment in multimodal transportation, including transit, rail, biking, and walking, while ensuring planning is better supported and project delivery is more efficient.
    - The submitted priorities focus on improving funding structures, strengthening coordination among agencies, empowering MPOs in decision-making, and supporting multimodal transportation options.

- **Overall Work Program (OWP)**

- Over the past few months, NOACA has actively engaged in a wide range of meetings, conferences, and collaborative workshops at both state and national levels. These engagements focused on transportation planning, infrastructure, environmental initiatives, and regional development. Leadership and staff contributed to panels, advisory groups, and partnerships to advance NOACA's priorities and strengthen collaboration with key stakeholders.
- The TLCI Park Place project in Painesville had a ribbon cutting on August 13. NOACA contributed an initial \$250K investment to the project in 2018. Over the past decade, NOACA funding programs have provided the city with nearly \$4 million.
- NOACA hosted an External Affairs Virtual Forum on Thursday, September 18, 12-1 p.m. with presenters Bishara Addison, Michelle Rose, Ben Capelle, and Molly Schnoke.
- The CCAP public comment period was open from July 17 to August 31 and a virtual public meeting was held on August 21. Director Gallucci reported that NOACA received 68 public comments on the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan, resulting in several updates and revisions to the document. She emphasized that the plan is voluntary, funded by the USEPA, and implementation decisions rest with local governments, businesses, and individuals. She also noted that references to specific counties as carbon sequestration sites were removed, leaving such choices to the communities themselves.
- Applications are open for SFY2026 TLCI planning and implementation projects, with \$2 million in funding available and a deadline of October 10. A webinar was held to guide applicants, and details are available on NOACA's website.
- Director Gallucci's Board Listening Tour included summer meetings with Board members to promote regional cohesion and emphasize their role, with over half of the sessions already completed or scheduled.
- The I-71 Corridor Study is underway, with stakeholder meetings already held, additional meetings planned, and traffic data currently being collected.
- The Aerozone TEDI is examining a 50-square-mile area in western Cuyahoga County, with key anchors like Hopkins Airport, NASA Glenn, Ford facility, and the IX Center, and includes a stakeholder meeting on September 25.
- Phase I of the EV Charging Station Program includes 40 sites, with most completed, a few in progress, and some relocated.
- An OIG investigation found inaccuracies in a 2022 roundabout funding application, prompting NOACA to review the issue, though early findings suggest the project likely would have been funded regardless.
- The NOACA Building Mural project has advanced significantly, receiving enthusiastic feedback from the community and visitors. Structural concerns were resolved through tuckpointing and painting, and the focus is now on the decorative mural, which highlights transportation and environmental themes aligned with NOACA's mission.

- **Announcements**

- The NOACA Annual Meeting will be held on Friday, October 3, 2025, from 12 to 2 p.m. at the Huntington Convention Center. This event will bring together regional leaders, partners, and community members to highlight NOACA's ongoing work and future initiatives. Attendees will have the opportunity to connect, share ideas, and celebrate the progress being made across the region.
- Ms. Jacqueline Muhammad, employee of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, passed away on June 19, 2025. She was the alternate to Board member, Ms. Kyle

Dreyfuss-Wells.

Director Gallucci recognized Ms. Lisa Durkin, NOACA's new Associate Director of Human Resources. She thanked members of the HR, Personnel and Organizational Development Subcommittee for their participation, support, and assistance with HR issues.

### **Executive Session**

Commissioner Aaron Harrison made a motion for the Board of Directors to adjourn to executive session pursuant to ORC 121.22(g)(1) to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, or compensation of a public employee or official, or the investigation of charges or complaints against a public employee. Mr. John Gall seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, and the vote was unanimous. The Board of Directors adjourned to executive session at 9:53 a.m.

Ms. Mary Cierebiej made a motion for the Board of Directors to exit the executive session at 11 a.m. Mayor Sam Alai seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

### **Resolutions/Action Items**

#### **Executive Committee**

#### **Resolution 2025-039: Executive Director and CEO Contract**

Mayor Jack Bradley made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-039 to extend the employment agreement of the Executive Director/CEO through December 31, 2026, and to authorize the President of the Board to execute an amended and restated employment agreement. Mr. Dever seconded the motion. The Board approved the motion by voice vote.

Director Gallucci thanked the Board for extending her contract.

#### **Resolution 2025-040: Compliance with Federal Executive Orders on DEI**

Director Gallucci explained that Resolution 2025-040 dissolves the Equity Subcommittee and amends NOACA policies to comply with Executive Order 14173, which eliminated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, revoked prior equal employment opportunity (EEO) and environmental justice (EJ) directives, and reaffirmed Federal Civil Rights laws. Following USDOT guidance issued on April 24, 2025, warning of funding rescission for noncompliance and subsequent letters ending DEI/EJ enforcement, NOACA, on legal counsel's advice, revised policies to remove DEI, EEO, and EJ language, substituting "areas of persistent poverty" where applicable. Since the Equity Subcommittee's charter conflicts with the executive order, it will be formally dissolved following. It was suspended while review was underway. There is no financial impact unless NOACA fails to comply, and staff will continue monitoring lawsuits that may later affect these changes.

Mr. Thomas Patrick made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-040. Commissioner Harrison seconded the motion.

President Ronayne acknowledged Mr. Gembala's research on this issue and Mayor Annette Blackwell for her work as Chair of the Equity Subcommittee.

Mr. Ryan Gembala stated that President Trump's executive order eliminates agency-level DEI

policies and requires grant recipients to comply. Following its issuance, USDOT issued guidance indicating DEI programs may violate Federal law and place funding at risk. This combination of the executive order and USDOT guidance prompted the Board's current motion.

Director Gallucci acknowledged that this is a difficult action for the Board, noting NOACA's past efforts to support environmental justice communities, including solutions like toll credits for local match. She emphasized that while such measures can no longer continue, the Board has made important contributions toward regional equity.

Mayor Blackwell thanked the Board for acknowledging the work of the Equity Subcommittee, which was created in June 2020 to advise the Policy Committee on ensuring equity, diversity, and inclusion in NOACA's policies and planning. She noted the Subcommittee's contributions to project evaluation, long-range planning, and fair distribution of transportation benefits. While acknowledging that Executive Order 14173 requires its dissolution, she expressed disappointment and the emotional impact but emphasized pride in the Subcommittee's work and NOACA's broader commitment to equity. She recalled the Board's decision to act after the murder of George Floyd in 2020 and reflected on her own lifelong experience with equity issues. Mayor Blackwell affirmed that NOACA's project evaluation remains objective, data-driven, and competitive, with strong staff support to communities. She concluded by affirming NOACA's vision and her honor in serving as chair, stating she leaves the role feeling frustrated but hopeful.

Ms. Calley Mersmann thanked NOACA staff, Mr. Gembala, Mayor Blackwell, and the Equity Subcommittee members for their service. She expressed discomfort with the motion's immediate dissolution of the Subcommittee, noting its creation involved robust Board discussion and thoughtful deliberation. She favored referring the issue back to the Equity Subcommittee and Policy Committee for further review, to consider revisions to the charter or scope that comply with executive orders. She stated that immediate dissolution feels hasty and therefore does not support the motion.

Mr. Skip Claypool raised two concerns: first, that using "areas of persistent poverty" may not align with transportation funding programs and could create liability for the Board; and second, that NOACA's Climate Action Plan still contains environmental justice and equity language, which may also pose compliance risks and should be reviewed.

Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan thanked Mayor Blackwell, staff, and legal counsel, noting NOACA's longstanding leadership in environmental justice since he joined the Board in 2018. He emphasized that the Equity Subcommittee was created in part to address past neglect of Cleveland neighborhoods and inner-ring suburbs. Mayor Brennan expressed concern that dissolving the Subcommittee replaces plain language with euphemisms and risks suppressing critical discussion. He stated that NOACA serves all communities—including Black, poor, and LGBTQIA residents—and should not preemptively comply with general federal guidance. He opposed the proposed changes, particularly the dissolution of the Subcommittee, and moved to table the motion to ensure all voices are heard.

Councilman Blaine Griffin thanked Mayor Blackwell for her leadership and the Equity Subcommittee and voiced agreement with Mayor Brennan. He stated his opposition to the resolution, expressing disagreement with the executive order and concern that it disproportionately harms communities like Cleveland. He emphasized the need to address inequities across all regions, noted the real impacts of climate change and health disparities, and urged the Board to show courage by opposing the motion.

Mayor Bobst asked what the immediate consequences would be if the resolution were not passed and what impact it would have in the near term.

Mr. Gembala said the greatest risk is losing USDOT funding.

Mayor Bobst asked if the changes had been submitted for review to confirm whether they meet the intent.

Mr. Gembala said the changes were reviewed internally by him and the administrative team, but not sent to USDOT or any outside agency.

Mayor Bobst said it makes sense to seek feedback to ensure the actions meet the criteria and asked how they can be confident the plan fulfills the requirements.

Ms. Mary Cierebiej said the Equity Subcommittee invested significant time and consultant support in strategic planning. With the Subcommittee now suspended and removed from calendars, she asked if it must be dissolved or if the charter could be revised to clarify its purpose without referencing environmental justice.

Mr. Gembala said the matter could be referred back to the Policy Committee for review, as the Equity Subcommittee operates under it, noting this aligns with comments made by Ms. Mersmann earlier in the discussion.

President Ronayne noted the Equity Subcommittee is currently suspended.

Mr. Gembala confirmed and said its status would remain pending any Policy Committee's discussion.

Mayor Bradley asked if the executive order had been challenged in court and found to be unenforceable.

Mr. Gembala said the rules have not been challenged, so they remain enforceable on USDOT, which is issuing related guidance memos.

Mayor Bradley asked if NOACA is aware of any anticipated challenges to President Trump's executive orders and suggested waiting for court guidance, noting many of his orders have been overturned as unconstitutional.

Mr. Dever said the Board may need to amend the current motion to send the Equity Subcommittee back to the Policy Committee for further discussion and clarification of its future functions, possibly including a name change.

President Ronayne asked Mr. Dever if he wanted to propose, though not formally, changing the language from "dissolves" to "refer back to the subcommittee."

Mr. Dever suggested moving the item to the Policy Committee.

Mr. Ben Capelle said he would not take a position on dissolving the Equity Subcommittee, but stressed that USDOT's letter made it clear that funding could be at risk if the Board does not comply. He urged the Board to carefully consider Director Gallucci's recommendation and legal counsel's advice.

Mr. James DeRosa asked what the practical impact would be if communities were no longer allowed to waive a match, when it would take effect, and how it would be handled.

Director Gallucci explained that policy changes would take effect immediately. Using the local match as an example, she said the Board could remove the match requirement for all communities, rather than limiting it to environmental justice communities. This approach would keep programs accessible while ensuring compliance with the executive order.

Mr. Claypool cautioned that voting against the resolution could amount to violating the executive order, which carries the force of law. He stressed that simply changing language without action could create legal problems. While he disagreed with the original environmental justice policy, he said the Board must act responsibly under the new rules. He added that the Board can still make merit-based funding decisions to assist disadvantaged communities without relying on DEI.

Mr. Picuri said the resolution was based on guidance from NOACA's counsel and USDOT, and he would be uncomfortable voting on anything other than what was presented to the Board.

Mayor Castelli said it was important for all Board members to understand the recommended language from Director Gallucci and counsel, and asked if it was what was needed for compliance.

Mr. Gembala said that was correct.

Mayor Brennan made a motion to table resolution 2025-040 and refer the item back to the Policy Committee. Ms. Teeuwen seconded the motion.

Seeking to clarify the motion, Mayor Bobst noted the item did not go to the Policy Committee, but rather to the Executive Committee. Therefore, the referral is to the Policy Committee, not back to it since the Policy Committee has never reviewed the item.

President Ronayne noted that this is an important distinction.

Mayor Brennan restated his motion to "Table Resolution 2025-040 and refer it to the Policy Committee."

Mr. Patrick asked why there could be no discussion after the motion to table.

President Ronayne noted that the matter is somewhat complicated under the rules.

Ms. Birdsong Terry asked how long it would take for the item to return to the Board after going to the Policy Committee, and whether that process would take three to four months.

Director Gallucci said the item could return to the Board in December.

Ms. Cierebiej said the Policy Committee meets in October, and she would expect the item to be on that agenda.

Director Gallucci confirmed that to be true.

A voice vote was taken, but it was not unanimous, so a roll call vote followed. The results were 20 no votes and 15 yes votes therefore the motion failed.

Ms. Cierebiej, Chair of Policy Committee, noted that the Committee had not yet reviewed the item, even though it is the body that makes policy recommendations to the Board. She said this was the basis for the motion to table, as the proper process had been skipped.

President Ronayne acknowledged Ms. Cierebiej's comment.

A voice vote was taken on the original motion to approve the Resolution, but it was not unanimous, so a roll call followed. The results were 24 yes votes and 12 no votes therefore the motion passed.

## **External Affairs Committee (No items)**

### **Governance Committee**

#### **Resolution 2025-041: Code of Regulations Revision – Economic Development Subcommittee**

Mr. Ronnie Blackshear reviewed the timeline for NOACA's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), including formation of a steering committee to develop and implement the CEDS, formation of the Economic Development Subcommittee (EDS), and applying for Economic Development District (EDD) designation. He noted that, as part of the EDD designation application process, the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) requires NOACA to amend its bylaws to codify the EDS. EDD designation will strengthen eligibility for funding opportunities and support stakeholders. Pending Board approval, the Code of Regulations will be amended to add the EDS membership and functions under Article VI, Section 6.5 of the Policy Committee.

Mr. Picuri noted that on page 59 of the meeting packet, the NOACA Equity Subcommittee is mentioned, which has just been dissolved. He asked whether this was an error or if the reference was intentional.

President Ronayne said he assumed it would be amended according to the Board's recent action. Director Gallucci added that references to environmental justice in previously adopted documents may remain, per legal counsel, but any new documents adopted by the Board must remove such references.

Mr. Picuri stated that the meeting packet language reads, "Two chairs of the NOACA Equity Subcommittee and Business Advisory Council."

Ms. Liz Barlik stated that, per the Board's resolution that passed, any instance listing the Equity Subcommittee Chair as a member—including on the Policy Committee and Equity Subcommittee—will be removed. Accordingly, the Economic Development Subcommittee membership will be adjusted.

President Ronayne asked Mr. Picuri if Ms. Barlik's explanation satisfied his concerns. Mr. Picuri said yes.

Commissioner Beverage said that regarding the creation of the Economic Development Subcommittee, he understood its purpose is to pursue additional economic development funding. He noted that when seeking transit, transportation, or infrastructure dollars, projects are scored and either recommended or not recommended through this organization, and he asked if his understanding was correct.

Director Gallucci said there is nuance to NOACA's transportation role. The organization is responsible for both planning, including preparing a long-range plan that lists projects and funding those projects, and the Board oversees both aspects.

Commissioner Beverage asked whether programs, plans, or projects related to economic development would need to go through NOACA to be scored and advocated for or against, like the process for transportation projects.

Director Gallucci clarified that the process for economic development is not like transportation. Unlike transportation dollars, which NOACA allocates, economic development funds are applied for directly by the communities. NOACA's role would be to work with communities to align priorities with the CEDS and provide a letter of support, like the IJJA discretionary grant process at USDOT.

Commissioner Beverage asked whether NOACA would provide less support for projects that do not go through the organization.

Director Gallucci explained that the Economic Development Administration, using the region's CEDS plan, is the primary evaluator of project priorities. The Economic Development Subcommittee could recommend against a project that does not align with NOACA's CEDS; however, communities could still submit such projects independently, but they would not receive NOACA's letter of support.

Commissioner Beverage stated that if a project conflicted with NOACA's CEDS, it would either receive a recommendation against it or would lack NOACA's support.

Director Gallucci stated that the Economic Development Subcommittee differs from other Board subcommittees, as many of its members helped develop the Economic Development Plan. While NOACA facilitated the process, it did not create the plan, and these members would help establish the priority plan.

President Ronayne asked where this work will be housed in relation to NOACA's committees.

Director Gallucci stated that the work is currently housed under the Policy Committee and clarified that the Subcommittee already exists, having been created by a previous Board action. This action simply documents the Subcommittee in the Code of Regulations to demonstrate to the EDA that it is included in NOACA's governing documents.

Director Gallucci asked Mr. Blackshear if that was correct.

Mr. Blackshear confirmed that one criterion for becoming an EDD is having the language codified in NOACA's Code of Regulations. When applying for EDD status in January 2024, NOACA submitted the application, but the EDA required the language to be in the regulations and letters of support from NOACA, as well as from most of the counties in the region.

President Ronayne asked if the boundaries are coterminous with all five counties.

Mr. Blackshear said that so far, NOACA has received four letters of support from the counties.

Director Gallucci stated that the EDD designation and the CEDS encompass the same area defined in NOACA's bylaws—namely, all five counties.

Mr. Claypool asked Mr. Gembala to confirm that previously approved items are codified and do not need to be revisited, while new approvals fall under the DEI requirements. He then asked Director Gallucci about the Economic Development Subcommittee, expressing concern that adding another layer could disadvantage smaller counties, like Geauga, in pursuing funding compared to Cuyahoga County, and asked for clarification.

Director Gallucci explained that the CEDS was developed by all five counties, including government and business representatives, and is already complete. The Economic Development Subcommittee also already exists. She noted that the counties previously lacked such a strategy, which prevented access to EDA funding. The purpose of the Subcommittee is to enable that funding. She added that the priorities, maintained by NOACA and updated every five years, include each county's priorities.

President Ronayne asked if NOACA has counterparts in other metro areas with EDDs.

Director Gallucci confirmed, noting that MORPC in Columbus recently became an EDD, Youngstown already has one, and Akron and Canton have organizations covering economic development. She added that NOACA's five counties previously represented a gap in northeast Ohio.

President Ronayne asked whether the EDDs in those MPOs cover multiple counties.

Director Gallucci confirmed, stating that the EDA requires multi-county plans and will not accept a plan for just one county.

President Ronayne said the designation of the EDD is a prerequisite for receiving EDA funding.

Director Gallucci clarified that it is not a prerequisite. She explained that an EDD facilitates additional funding, enables applications for certain operating funds, strengthens staffing for economic development, and enhances the competitiveness of project or program submissions from individual communities to the EDA.

Ms. Teeuwen made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-041, which was seconded by Trustee Brandon. The Board approved the motion via voice vote.

### **Finance and Audit Committee**

#### **Resolution 2025-042: SFY 2025 Overall Work Plan (OWP) Completion Report**

Director Gallucci stated that NOACA's Overall Work Program (OWP) documents all projects, programs, and tasks undertaken, and noted that there are two items on the agenda related to the OWP: the SFY25 Completion Report and the SFY26 Budget Amendment. Director Gallucci recognized the NOACA staff for their work on both items.

Mr. Blackshear stated that the OWP guides the implementation of the Long Range Plan and performance is tracked through the annual Completion Report. In SFY 2025, 29 projects were included, with a 93% task completion rate and 81% of allocated funds expended. Of these, 15 were fully completed, 5 were nearly complete, 6 were mostly complete, and 3 were less than 80% complete, averaging a 92% completion rate overall. Across 122 tasks, 102 were completed in full. Unspent funds will carry forward to SFY 2026, including encumbrances and contracts. Pending Board approval, the SFY 2025 OWP Completion Report will be submitted to ODOT and federal

agencies.

Mr. Picuri stated that he would be abstaining from the vote since the SFY 2025 OWP would be submitted to ODOT for review.

Mayor Bobst made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-042, which was seconded by Mr. Conrad. Mr. Picuri abstained from voting. The Board approved the motion by voice vote.

**Resolution 2025-043: SFY 2026 Overall Work Plan (OWP) Budget Amendment**

Ms. Deb Wordell reviewed the financial impacts of the 2026 Overall Work Plan (OWP) Budget Amendment:

- SFY 2026 Budget Amendment - Revenues
  - Total Revenue Increase: \$1,281,253
- SFY 2026 Budget Amendment - Expenditures
  - Total Expenditures: \$1,281,253
- FY26 Operating and Capital Budget
  - Original Budget: \$33,081,110
  - Adjustments: \$1,281,253
  - Amended Budget: \$34,362,363
- FY26 Federal Pass-Through Budget
  - Original Budget: \$9,243,326
  - Adjustments: \$508,525
  - Amended Budget: \$9,751,852

Ms. Wordell stated that, pending Board approval, NOACA staff will submit the revised SFY 2026 OWP and Budget to ODOT and federal agencies for review and approval.

Mr. Capelle asked who led the crowdfunding effort.

Director Gallucci explained that the crowdfunding originated from a grant application NOACA submitted to USDOT for the Irishtown Bend Project. NOACA proposed it as part of the successful grant application, and now needs to execute it, which is why it is being included in the budget.

President Ronayne asked about the recent trend in capital dollars coming to the NOACA region—whether they have increased or decreased over the past few years.

Ms. Wordell reported that capital last fiscal year increased by \$15 million as a result of the CFI Grant, which is included in the capital budget. Previously, capital mainly referred to the NOACA building.

President Ronayne suggested it would be useful, perhaps outside this discussion, to review how much capital funding flows through the MPO.

Director Gallucci clarified that the \$15 million is a grant for EV charging stations, separate from the TIP capital program. She suggested a future presentation to provide more detail on regional capital projects beyond what is included in the quarterly report.

Commissioner Harrison made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-043, which was seconded by Mr. Dever. Mr. Picuri abstained from voting. The Board approved the motion by voice vote.

## **Planning and Programming Committee**

### **Resolution 2025-044: SFY 2025 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Project Recommendations**

Ms. Sarah White presented information on the following:

- Purpose of the CMAQ program
- Program goals
- CMAQ Program Funding Cycles: NOACA Region
- Eligible Applicants
- Phases of Development Eligible for Funding
- Project Evaluation Criteria (up to 100 Points)
- Recommended Regional Priority Points
- Program Timeline
- 2025 CMAQ Project Recommendations

Ms. White stated that projects selected for the region will establish the initial CMAQ budgets for SFYs 2030-2031. NOACA expects to receive approximately \$40 million for implementing projects in these SFYs.

Mr. Dever made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-044, which was seconded by Ms. Cierebiej.

Mr. Picuri asked if potential recipients could vote on this item.

Director Gallucci explained that legal review found no issue, since all Board members are recipients of NOACA funding at some point.

The Board voted. Mr. Picuri abstained from voting. The motion passed by voice vote.

### **Resolution 2025-045: SFY 2025 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Program Recommendations**

Ms. Leah Telepak presented information on the following:

- Background on Section 5310 program
- SFY 2025 Applications
- Budget and Funding Recommendations
- Transit Agency Recommendations: \$2,314,454
- Competitive Application Recommendations: \$2,819,000

Ms. Telepak stated that \$5,256,033 in FTA funds are available to the Cleveland UZA from Federal Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 apportionments, with an additional \$150,000 available from carryover. She noted that, pending Board approval, NOACA staff will execute contracts with program awardees and monitor project implementation.

Mr. Conrad made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-045, which was seconded by Mr. Gall.

President Ronayne shared that he recently toured two NOACA-funded sites, including the SAW group and senior transportation. He highlighted the programs' impact in helping seniors reach medical appointments and groceries, and adults with disabilities get to work. He expressed pride in NOACA's role and thanked staff for their work.

Director Gallucci thanked him for the recognition, noting the program is relatively small at \$2.5–\$3 million annually (with this year doubled) but has a significant impact on communities. She thanked the Board for supporting this important program.

The Board approved the motion by voice vote.

### **Resolution 2025-046: Geauga County Five-Year Facility Planning Area (FPA) Boundary and Prescriptions Update**

Ms. Sarah Stanzi presented information on the following:

- Background on the Five-Year Countywide FPA Updates
- Geauga COUNTY FPA Update Process
- Geauga County's Seven FPAs and 21 Jurisdictions
- Geauga County FPA Maps
- Analysis
- Lessons Learned

Ms. Stanzi stated that, pending Board approval, the Geauga County Five-Year Update will be submitted to the Ohio EPA for certification by the Governor. Once approved by the Board, staff will forward copies of the resolution to the appropriate agencies.

Mr. Claypool made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-046, which was seconded by Mr. Andy Haupt. The Board approved the motion by voice vote.

### **Resolution 2025-047: Cleveland-Elyria Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)**

Director Gallucci thanked the City of Cleveland and NOACA staff for their work on the CCAP, which outlines voluntary measures for communities to meet federal environmental targets. She noted the plan enabled the region to receive \$129 million in USEPA grants, \$79 million of which is for Lake County, that would not have been possible without the Priority Climate Action Plan. At a September 8 meeting, US EPA praised the Cleveland-Elyria MSA team for its progress on subawards and overall milestones, highlighting the strong implementation of the plan.

Mr. MacDonald presented information on the following:

- Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) Program
- CPRG Program Phase I Deliverables

Ms. Sarah O'Keeffe presented information on the following:

- CCAP Development Process
- CCAP Key Messages
- CCAP – Building off the PCAP
- CCAP Required Elements
- 2022 GHG Emissions by Sector
- 2022 GHG Emissions by County
- Business as Usual Projections
- Climate Pollution Reduction Targets
- Go Big Strategies
- Emissions Reduction Measures
- Co-Benefits of CCAP Measures
- Authority to Implement Measures

- Workforce Planning Analysis
- CCAP Implementation Playbook

Mr. MacDonald reported that the public comment period ran from July 17 to August 31, during which time comments could be submitted by email, online, phone, or mail. A total of 47 comments were received. On August 21, a virtual public meeting was held with 87 attendees and 21 comments or questions submitted. Of the 47 public comments submitted outside of the event, 13 resulted in specific revisions to technical information and 34 led to general revisions. Additional stakeholder input prompted further changes, including updates to the Implementation Playbook in sections §6.2.3 (p. 32) and §6.7.3 (p. 41) related to Industrial Energy and IPPU.

Mr. MacDonald mentioned that there was no financial impact of this action item. He noted that, pending Board approval, the City of Cleveland and NOACA will collaborate with a firm to develop drafts of the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) and Implementation Playbook. The finalized CCAP will be submitted to the US EPA by December 1, 2025. Subawards totaling \$300,000, allocated based on each county's share of GHG emissions, will be provided to Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina Counties for planning and engagement projects. Counties may use funds through mid-2027, and no local match is required.

Mayor Alai made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-047, which was seconded by Ms. Cierebiej

Commissioner Beverage stated that his concerns about this item were not about questioning climate change but about how taxpayer dollars are being spent. He stressed that the \$250 million should be guided by qualified staff and science experts, not politicians, and raised concerns that elements of the plan—such as nuclear energy in Perry—go beyond recommendations and resemble an implementation playbook. He argued that expanding nuclear energy without proper support from Columbus would burden Lake County's infrastructure while providing no property tax revenue, which he opposed. He also asked whether developing and approving the plan is still required for the \$129 million grant already awarded.

Director Gallucci responded that the grant is not at risk; the plan was required to obtain it, but it is unclear if maintaining the plan is necessary to retain the funds or to qualify for future CPRG program funding.

Commissioner Beverage asked for clarification, noting that the plan the board is approving is not a requirement for the \$129 million grant.

Mr. MacDonald explained that eligibility for an implementation grant required the Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP), the first of three deliverables under the CPRG Phase One planning grant. The current plan is the second required deliverable. While the PCAP served as the precursor to the implementation grant, EPA guidance indicated this was a one-time funding opportunity, though future opportunities could change depending on the Administration.

Commissioner Beverage sought further clarification, asking if the CCAP was required for the \$129 million grant.

Director Gallucci stated that the CCAP was required to obtain the funds, but it is unclear if it is still needed to complete the program, as the current administration has not provided guidance.

Mr. MacDonald said the PCAP was required to be eligible for the implementation grant. The CCAP is also required for the CPRG program. If NOACA fails to deliver the CCAP to the EPA, it would

be in violation of its written agreement for the planning grant. He noted that the implementation and planning grants are separate programs, but the CCAP is required for the current grant.

Director Gallucci said the CCAP is required under NOACA's contract with the USEPA, which provided \$1 million to the largest 67 MSAs and \$3 million to each state for development of the plans. Failure to fulfill this requirement could result in the EPA seeking repayment. She added that it is unclear whether approval of the plan would affect funds already received.

Mr. Claypool shared his recent visit to Alaska, where he heard a presentation asserting that current climate changes are part of a 20,000-year cycle and that CO<sub>2</sub> is not detrimental to the environment. He said the plan has many flaws, including the omission of public comments from forums he attended. He criticized the plan's use of ICLEI's framework and questioned claims about health benefits. He concluded by urging the Board to delay, review further, or vote against the plan.

Mayor Alai called the question.

Before taking the vote, President Ronayne said it was positive to see Cuyahoga and Lake Counties collaborate on the CPRG grant and pursue energy sources that could lower costs for residents. He also commended NEORSD for its work on clean water and thanked local transit agencies for their contributions, noting the work all contributes to benefits for communities and counties in the region.

A voice vote was taken but it was not unanimous.

Commissioner Harrison requested a roll call vote.

A Board roll call vote was taken: 19 Yes and 13 No. The motion passed.

### **Presentation/Discussion Items**

No presentation/discussion items were presented at this meeting.

### **Reports/Updates**

No reports/updates were presented at this meeting.

### **Old Business**

No old business was discussed at this meeting.

### **New Business**

#### **Ohio House Metropolitan Planning Organizations Reform Legislation**

Director Gallucci reported that state legislation has been drafted which seeks to reform metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). Co-sponsored by Rep. Dovilla and Rep. Stewart, the bill focuses on four areas: balanced governance structure, MPO redesignation authority, legal compliance safeguards, and state executive oversight. She noted that several provisions are already addressed by federal law, which governs MPO membership, structure, and functions. For example, governors may already redesignate MPOs under federal rules, but with stricter thresholds than those in the draft legislation. Federal law also requires MPO board representation to be proportionate to population. She expressed concern that the legislation could undermine the original intent of MPOs, created in the 1960s, to ensure local control in transportation planning. Regarding the executive oversight provision, Director Gallucci clarified that it is directed at her.

She has long taught as an adjunct lecturer, currently at Northwestern University, and emphasized that this work is done on her own time, minimally compensated, and approved by the Board. If the legislation passes, she would continue teaching pro bono. She added that other MPOs, such as OKI in Cincinnati and TMACOG in Toledo, share similar concerns.

Director Gallucci announced that the legislation would be emailed to the Board following this meeting.

President Ronayne said he spoke with Rep. Dovilla recently and plans to meet with him in the next two weeks to better understand his position on the legislation. He outlined four key issues: proportionality, the Board's organizational purview, county mobility between jurisdictions, and the location of the MPO leader's work. He emphasized concern about proportionality, including how county representation is determined, and noted the need to clarify Rep. Dovilla's intentions. He has invited Rep. Dovilla to meet with the NOACA Board and will continue to reach out to understand the legislation's implications.

Mr. Claypool clarified that under 23 CFR 453.10, the federal law establishing MPOs, NOACA is not required to operate strictly by population. The law requires that units of local government together represent at least 75% of the population. He explained that NOACA's original structure complied with this requirement and that the Board has discretion in how it operates, subject to governor approval. He noted recent shifts in control have left some communities underrepresented and acknowledged the State may adjust oversight, but the federal population rule only requires 75% representation.

Commissioner Beverage expressed concerns about local control within NOACA. While he values regional collaboration on transit, economic development, and climate issues, he emphasized that counties should retain autonomy over decisions without needing approval from other entities. He cited Geauga County's inability to change bylaws independently as an example. He also stated that NOACA should remain neutral in discussions with the State House, participating only when asked, to ensure the organization can continue bringing resources to the region effectively.

President Ronayne said NOACA will continue engaging with legislative leadership on the proposed legislation. He noted there is still ambiguity in the bill and four key points to address. Board members can help clarify Rep. Dovilla's intentions, and every voice around the table is important. He also mentioned that Medina County Commissioner Steve Hambly, who helped lead the Board's composition, could be consulted for further insight.

Director Gallucci said she has invited Commissioner Hambly to speak at future meetings, and he is willing to assist.

Mayor Castelli asked if Rep. Dovilla had been invited to speak to the Board. President Ronayne said he extended a verbal invitation, but Rep. Dovilla has not yet accepted.

Director Gallucci said she takes her directives from the NOACA Board and does not offer personal opinions. She explained that a letter sent to Rep. Dovilla was drafted with the Board President and legal counsel to correct misinformation he had shared about NOACA, including false claims regarding Intel's headquarters decision. She noted that after the press release, she attempted to speak with Rep. Dovilla, but he declined and asked for objections to be submitted in writing, which were then prepared with Board and legal input.

## **Public Comment**

Additional comments from Mr. Kalas are attached to these minutes.

President Ronayne thanked the Board for a respectful and collegial exchange on complex matters and expressed appreciation to staff for their work. He gave special thanks to Commissioner Beverage for hosting at Mentor High School's Paradigm building, praised the venue, and thanked the Lake County Commissioners and representatives. He noted the value of holding meetings across the region, as recently in Lorain County, and expressed hope to continue in Geauga and Medina Counties. He also thanked the superintendent and remarked that he wore a Mentor Cardinals T-shirt throughout the meeting.

**Adjournment**

Ms. Cierebiej made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:40 p.m. Mr. Patrick seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

The next Board meeting will be Friday, December 12, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. at the NOACA Offices.

Respectfully submitted,



Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne  
NOACA Board President

*Note: Additional information on the agenda items is available on [NOACA's website](#) and [YouTube channel](#). [09.12.25 September Board Meeting](#).*



Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS ATTENDANCE**

X = Member present    A = Alternate present    \* = Ex officio, non-voting

MEETING DATES	1/24/25	3/14/25	6/13/25	9/12/25	12/12/25
<b>BOARD OFFICERS</b>					
BEVERAGE III, Morris W.	X	X	X	X	
BIBB, Justin	A	A	A	A	
BLACKWELL, Annette M.	X	X	X	X	
BRADLEY, Jack	X	X	A	X	
BRANDON, Jeff	X	X	X	X	
BRENNAN, Michael D.	X	X	X	X	
CONRAD, Andy	X	X	A	X	
CUNNINGHAM, Mark	X	X	X		
DVORAK, James W.	A	X	A	A	
GRIFFIN, Blaine A.	X	X	X	X	
HARRISON, Aaron M.	X	X	X	X	
PLECNIK, John	A	A	A	A	
RIDDELL, Jeff	A	A	X	A	
RONAYNE, Chris	X	X	X	X	
<b>CUYAHOGA COUNTY</b>					
<b>County Government</b>					
CIEREBIEJ, Mary	X/A	X	X	X	
DEVER, Michael	X	X	A	X	
HOUSER, Michael J.	A	X	A	A	
<b>Regional Authorities</b>					
DREYFUSS-WELLS, Kyle	A	A	X	X	
GUTHEIL, David		A	A	A	
KOOMAR, Paul	A	X	X	A	
<b>Suburban Regions</b>					
ALAI, Samuel	A		X	X	
ANTOSKIEWICZ, Larry	X	X	X		
BOBST, Pamela	X	X	X	X	
CASTELLI, Matthew	X	X	X	X	
DEGEETER, Timothy	A	X	X	A	
GAIL, Kirsten Holzheimer	X	X	X	X	
GEORGE, Meghan	A	X			
SEREN, Kahlil		X			
THOMAS, Kim		X	X		
<b>CITY OF CLEVELAND</b>					
DEROSA, James	A	X	A	X	
FIELDS, Marka	X				
HOWSE-JONES, Stephanie	X	X	X		
KAZY, Brian	A		X	X	
MCCORMACK, Kerry	X	X	X		
MERSMANN, Calley	A	X	X	X	
O'Keeffe, Sarah		X			
MOSS, Matt			X	A	
<b>GEAUGA COUNTY</b>					

<b>MEETING DATES</b>	<b>1/24/25</b>	<b>3/14/25</b>	<b>6/13/25</b>	<b>9/12/25</b>	<b>12/12/25</b>
BRAKEY, Carolyn	A	X	X	X	
SPIDALIERI, Ralph	A	A	A	A	
<b>LAKE COUNTY</b>					
EXLEY, Alan	X	X		X	
CAPELLE, Ben		X	X	X	
REGOVICH, Richard	X/A	X	A	X	
<b>LORAIN COUNTY</b>					
BRUBAKER, Kevin	X		X	A	
CARNEY, Ken	A	A	A	A	
CORCORAN, Kevin	X		X		
MOORE, David J.		A	A	A	
<b>MEDINA COUNTY</b>					
MAGOVAC, Paul	X	X	X	X	
<b>STATE OF OHIO</b>					
AHMED, Ferzan*		A		X	
EMERMAN, David*	X				
PICURI, John	X	X	A	X	
<b>Total Members Attend:</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>39</b>	

## Public Comments

### **Public Comment on Agenda Items**

**Speaker:** John Kalas, Medina County

**Agenda Item:** Resolution 2025-047: Cleveland-Elyria Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)

Mr. John Kalas stated that if the CCAP vote passes, it will be due to the current board structure that gives Cleveland and Cuyahoga County supermajority control. He referenced Cleveland.com articles from June, labeling Cleveland Cliffs as the region's biggest polluter, a theme reflected in NOACA's CCAP. He noted that Signal Cleveland ran ads this week blaming Cleveland Cliffs, funded in part by the Cleveland Foundation, which also supported related climate studies. Despite compliance with EPA regulations, the CCAP calls for Cleveland Cliffs to install carbon capture technology requiring pipelines through private property. He also cited an August Cleveland.com story on the Ohio Inspector General's investigation into falsified traffic data used to obtain \$2 million in CMAQ funding for a Medina County roundabout. Kalas claimed the article omitted details of NOACA's involvement, instead placing blame on ODOT and Medina County. He said Director Gallucci used this to distance NOACA from the issue in later coverage. The IG's report included a Zoom meeting where a NOACA staff member suggested altering data for a higher score, which led to the use of prohibited forecasted data. NOACA approved the application with the falsified data. Gallucci has stated the falsification did not matter because the project would have been funded regardless. Kalas concluded this shows NOACA presents data to support desired outcomes.

**Speaker:** Kirsten Hill, Lorain County

**Agenda Item:** Resolution 2025-047: Cleveland-Elyria Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)

Ms. Kirsten Hill commented on two areas of the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan. She expressed concern about replacing gas furnaces with geothermal or electric heat pumps, citing personal experience that geothermal systems did not provide adequate heating in residential use, though they worked well for cooling. She warned that if gas furnaces are eliminated and energy use must align with renewable availability, citizens may be left without sufficient heat. She also raised concerns about high costs to counties for implementing active transportation measures (e.g., shade structures, water stations, drainage improvements), noting these would be very expensive in Northeast Ohio.

### **Second Public Comment Section**

**Speaker:** Mr. John Kalas, Medina County

**Topic:** CCAP

Mr. Kalas stated that the conversation and vote on the CCAP highlight the first point of Rep. Dovilla's legislation. He noted that the vote split along Cleveland/Cuyahoga County versus the remaining four counties, demonstrating a disconnect and a supermajority for Cleveland/Cuyahoga that limits other counties' influence. He expressed concern that this forces counties to play political games rather than represent their own residents. He reviewed the CCAP draft, implementation toolbox, and playbook, noting that while presentations appeared polished, the content included measures such as reducing natural gas usage in homes and

prioritizing cyclists and pedestrians on rural roads, which he found concerning. He also highlighted climate-focused courses at Case Western Reserve University as part of planner education. Mr. Kalas emphasized that while NOACA cannot directly mandate implementation of these plans, other mechanisms—such as media and public pressure—can influence adoption. He cited examples in Pepper Pike, Solon, Edgewater, and Irishtown Bend where public shaming affected local decisions. He also warned that property tax implications could emerge from these initiatives.

**Speaker:** Joseph, Geauga County

**Topic:** Climate Action Plan

Note: Name not listed on Public Comment Sheet

Joseph stated that he opposed the Climate Action Plan. Regarding the air quality benefits of the CCAP measures, he noted that the medical issues listed are not recognized risk factors. As a CPR Instructor for 35 years, and based on recent guidance from his cardiologist, he identified hereditary factors, age, gender, and diet as primary risks, not air quality, and asked the Board to take this into account when reviewing the Plan. He also expressed concern about energy reliability in the snowbelt, citing the Texas ice storm as an example of grid failure. He cautioned that reducing reliance on natural gas could place Cleveland and Cuyahoga County's low-income households at risk during outages, as many depend on gas for heat when electricity is lost.