



External Affairs Committee Meeting

January 30, 2026, 8:30 a.m.

NOACA Offices, 1299 Superior Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44114

RSVP to 216-241-2414 ext. 282
or boardliaison@mpo.noaca.org

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.



**NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY
MEMORANDUM**

TO: External Affairs Committee Members
Bishara Addison*
Ferzan M. Ahmed, P.E., Executive Director, Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission*
Larry Antoskiewicz, Mayor, City of North Royalton
Justin Bibb, Mayor, City of Cleveland
Kevin Bishop, Council Member, Ward 8, City of Cleveland
Jack Bradley, Mayor, City of Lorain
Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, CEO, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
James W. Dvorak, Commissioner, Geauga County
Eric Hange, District Manager, Medina County Soil and Water Conservation District*
Aaron M. Harrison, Commissioner, Medina County
Michael J. Houser, Council Member, District 10, Cuyahoga County
Eric C. Mack, P.E., Project Manager & Engineer, Cuyahoga County, Department of Public Works*
Valarie McCall, Founder & Chief Executive, Valarie McCall Consulting Agency*
Morgan McIntosh, Commissioner, Lake County
Matt Moss, Senior Strategist for Thriving Communities, City of Cleveland
Jim Petras, Mayor, City of Cleveland Heights
Jeff Riddell, Commissioner, Lorain County
Chris Ronayne, County Executive, Cuyahoga County
India Birdsong Terry, General Manager and CEO, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority

*Ex Officio Member

FROM: Timothy J. DeGeeter, Chair
Mayor, City of Parma

DATE: January 23, 2026

RE: External Affairs Committee

Attached please find materials for the External Affairs Committee meeting on **Friday, January 30, 2026, from 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. at NOACA's Offices, 1299 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.**

Please note that in addition to the members listed above, any interested Board members are welcome to attend. Notice of this meeting has been publicly posted, and major public media has been notified.



Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency
Friday, January 30, 2026
8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

The public can view the meeting live at: youtube.com/live/1gXAuQBjOu0?feature=share

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

	Page
1. Call to Order	
a. Pledge of Allegiance	
2. Minutes of October 10, 2025, Meeting	1
3. Advisory Council Updates	10
a. Business Advisory Council (Chair: Valarie McCall)	
b. Community Advisory Council (Chair: Bishara Addison)	
c. Rural Advisory Council (Chair: Eric Hange)	
d. Emerging Leaders Advisory Council (Chair: Eric Mack)	
4. Public Comment on Agenda Items	
5. Chair's/Executive Director's Report	
6. Action Items	
a. CY 2026 External Affairs Committee Focus Areas	11
7. Presentation/Discussion Items	
a. Public Affairs Updates	13
b. Government Affairs Updates	14
8. Reports/Updates	
9. Old Business	
10. New Business	
11. Adjourn	

Next Meeting: **Friday, April 10, 2025, at 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.**
NOACA Offices, 1299 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio



**NOACA External Affairs Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 10, 2025
NOACA Offices
1299 Superior Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio**

Present: Please see the attached attendance record.

Councilwoman Stephanie Howse-Jones, Chair of the External Affairs Committee, convened the meeting at 8:35 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Richard Regovich made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of July 11, 2025. Mr. Joseph Nanni 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 September 2025.

Ms. Valarie McCall, Chair of the Business Advisory Council (BAC), noted that she raised the issue of attendance and the need to re-engage members at the joint council meeting, as the BAC has not approved its minutes in over a year.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

No public comments were made at this meeting.

Executive Director's Report

Director Grace Gallucci had no formal report but noted that NOACA's Annual Meeting was a success.

Action Items

2026 Legislative Agenda

Director Gallucci said that each year, the External Affairs Committee provides input to the Board regarding NOACA's legislative priorities for the upcoming year. For 2026, NOACA staff are requesting input on updates to the federal priorities. The Committee's input will be incorporated into the draft provided to the Board for approval in December.

Ms. Bev Burtzlaff presented information on the following:

- State Priorities

- Improve the region’s rate of return from state allocated funds to meet regional asset management needs
- Advocate for the inclusion of multimodal transportation within state programs & funding
- Advocate for state transportation programs, policies, and funding that will improve transportation safety, air and water quality, climate pollution reduction and resilience, and economic development opportunities
- Federal Priorities
 - Strengthen the MPO’s local control of core transportation programs
 - Promote asset management as a funding priority
 - Incorporate safety, sustainability, and multimodalism in planning & funding
- Potential Edits

Ms. Burtzloff welcomed input from the Committee.

Mr. Brian Iorio explained that he works in community development and that while finalizing Cleveland Heights’ Housing Consortium’s consolidated plan, they were informed of 17 prohibited words, one being “sustainability.” He suggested that NOACA consider avoiding those terms in its Legislative Agenda, noting that similar guidance has been given to other groups.

Commissioner Regovich asked if NOACA knows what the federal government will fund next year. He noted that at the state level, officials are considering redirecting capital dollars toward a one-time tax cut instead of distributing them, which would leave no capital funding for an entire year. He emphasized that NOACA must continue planning as usual in hopes that some funding becomes available.

Director Gallucci responded that at the federal level, the outlook is uncertain. She mentioned a recent article about the current administration rescinding grants for bicycle routes and trails deemed “hostile to cars,” highlighting an unfamiliar funding landscape. She suggested that NOACA emphasize the importance of continued funding for transportation alternatives, such as bicycle, pedestrian, and public transit programs, in its reauthorization requests. Director Gallucci added that while NOACA has not had funding rescinded so far, about 80% of her peers at a recent conference have experienced rescissions.

Councilwoman Howse-Jones asked if NOACA has data on the percentage and number of people without cars, noting that some Cleveland neighborhoods have about 40% without vehicle access. She emphasized the need to support multimodal transportation options for these residents.

Director Gallucci responded that NOACA does have this data, recently updated through the Household Travel Survey. She noted that the region’s numbers are significantly higher than both the state and national averages, and expressed concern about the challenges of an auto-centric environment.

Ms. Bonnie Teeuwen asked Ms. Burtzloff to bring up the slide showing the bullet points of potential edits to present to Congress. She said the last three points—reducing local match requirements, streamlining environmental review, permitting, and stabilizing the Highway Trust Fund—are “no-brainers” that should be part of NOACA’s federal ask. She noted that local match requirements place a heavy burden on communities and that environmental reviews often take longer than project construction. She supported all the points but suggested discussion on the first two, emphasizing that, at a minimum, the last three should be included.

Ms. Annie Pease agreed with Ms. Teeuwen on the last three bullets, particularly the need to streamline environmental reviews, which add time and cost to projects. She also asked for more explanation about the Highway Trust Fund and its connection to the user-pay principle mentioned in the presentation materials.

Ms. Burtzlaff explained that the Highway Trust Fund, funded primarily through the federal gas tax, supports both highway and transit programs. However, the fund is no longer keeping pace with needs due to increased fuel efficiency, electric vehicle use, and the gas tax not being raised in 32 years. She said Congress has long discussed stabilizing the fund and that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) included pilot programs to explore new funding models, such as mileage-based fees. She emphasized that NOACA should urge Congress to take serious action to restore the Highway Trust Fund's stability while maintaining the user-pay principle.

Director Gallucci explained that until about 2010, the Highway Trust Fund fully covered national and regional transportation projects. Since then, its value has declined, and now roughly 40% of transportation funding comes from the General Fund, making it no longer fully user-fee supported. She noted this shift threatens programs like public transit, which receives only three cents of the 18.3-cent federal gas tax. Director Gallucci emphasized that in calling to stabilize the fund, NOACA must make clear it does not support removing public transit from it.

Ms. Burtzlaff agreed, adding that the Highway Trust Fund's structure helps protect transportation funding from annual congressional appropriations and potential government shutdowns. She stressed that the fund remains a reliable source of support but must be replenished to continue meeting national transportation needs.

Mr. Jose Feliciano agreed with Ms. Teeuwen's support for the last three bullet points, noting that former Secretary Buttigieg had also emphasized the need to accelerate transit projects and reduce barriers and costs. He said this aligns with current federal priorities and appears politically viable.

Councilwoman Howse-Jones revisited Mr. Iorio's earlier point and asked if Director Gallucci or Ms. Burtzlaff had heard about restrictions on certain words in upcoming applications.

Director Gallucci confirmed that NOACA has been addressing similar issues this year due to federal executive orders on equity and DEI. She said staff have already modified applications and updated policies to comply. Although NOACA has not encountered as many restricted terms as the 17 mentioned by Mr. Iorio, staff will review the list he referenced to ensure compliance.

Ms. McCall noted that new federal rules for the Unified Certification Program will require current DBEs to re-register and meet revised criteria. The interim final rule removes race- and sex-based presumptions from the definitions of "socially and economically disadvantaged." Applicants must now provide detailed personal narratives and evidence of disadvantage, including specific examples of economic hardship and current impact. She emphasized that this change could significantly affect minority-, female-, and disadvantaged-owned businesses in Cleveland and nationwide. On behalf of the Business Advisory Council, she recommended that the Committee review these changes and consider adding related points to NOACA's federal priorities before final approval.

Ms. Burtzlaff agreed and said she would address the new DBE rules in an upcoming presentation on government affairs. She noted that Ms. McCall raised an important issue and asked the Committee to consider whether it should be reflected in NOACA's Legislative Agenda.

Ms. Teeuwen asked whether there was agreement that the five bullet points shown on the slide should be included in NOACA's 2026 Legislative Agenda.

Councilwoman Howse-Jones said yes.

Ms. Teeuwen made a motion to approve the 2026 Legislative Agenda. Mayor Tim DeGeeter seconded the motion. The motion passed by voice vote.

Presentation/Discussion Items

Public Affairs Report

Ms. Danielle Render provided an overview of NOACA's Public Affairs division, which serves as the agency's communicator of information and context to both internal and external audiences. The division's mission focuses on increasing visibility, engagement, and awareness while ensuring inclusive and consistent outreach and advocacy aligned with NOACA's FY2026 strategic priorities. Key functions include preparing quarterly reports, managing public-facing communications and stakeholder engagement, and maintaining efficient internal operations to support these external outputs.

Ms. Render presented information on the following:

- External Output
- FY2026 Quarterly Action Plans
- Focus Area: Brand Management
- First Quarter Engagements
- 2025 Annual Meeting & Luncheon
- Upcoming Engagements
 - Autumn October 2025 - March 2026
- Promo Video
- Paid Advertisements
 - Paid Advertisements 2nd/3rd Quarter
 - Paid Advertisements 2nd Quarter
 - Lake Erie Go (Car)Bon Free
- Public Involvement and Outreach
 - Focus Area: Community Awareness
 - Focus Area: Public Engagement
 - Measurable Impact
 - Looking Ahead: FY26 Third and Fourth Quarters
 - Committee Discussion

Government Affairs Report

Ms. Burtzlaff presented information on the following:

- Federal Updates
 - Government Shutdown
 - USDOT Update
 - Surface Transportation Reauthorization
 - NOACA Reauthorization Priorities
 - Federal Funding Update
 - NOACA's Funding Resources Webpage
- State Update

- Speed Limit Initiative
- Passenger Rail Advocacy
- Meetings with State Legislators
- MPO Legislation

Director Gallucci stated that the Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) is preparing a response to the legislation for both ODOT and the state legislature. She noted that it would be helpful for elected officials to speak directly to legislators and encouraged the Committee to consider how it could assist or facilitate that effort. She added that they are assembling a group of elected officials representing MPOs across the state to speak on the issue, and that those with legislative experience could be especially valuable.

Ms. Burtzloff said the OARC Policy Committee discussed this issue yesterday and confirmed that MPO board members are encouraged to speak out. Once a prepared response is available, it will be shared. She emphasized the importance of helping legislators understand the role and value of MPOs in bringing funding to regions and supporting economic development. She said a document with talking points is being prepared, and welcomed the External Affairs Committee's help in amplifying the message.

Ms. Sarah O'Keeffe stated that NOACA's advocacy should highlight safety, especially given recent concerns about pedestrian and school safety. She noted that conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians remain a major issue and asked how NOACA plans to further elevate safety in its advocacy.

Director Gallucci responded that NOACA has already begun emphasizing safety in all its programs and project criteria. She said the upcoming Policy Committee meeting will include a discussion of the Transportation for Safer Communities Initiative (TSCI), which will fund projects and raise awareness of safety issues. She reiterated that safety should remain the top priority, noting NOACA's goal of zero fatalities by 2050. She added that technological advances, such as assisted driving features and potential front cameras for vehicles, will play a key role in achieving that goal.

Irishtown Bend Project Crowdfunding Campaign

Director Gallucci stated that the Irishtown Bend Slope Stabilization project had previously been presented to the Committee. NOACA received \$9 million from the USDOT INFRA Grant Program, which included a proposal for innovative financing via crowdfunding. She explained that the initial consultant was unable to advance the initiative, and a new consultant has since been hired. She then turned the discussion over to Ms. Alison Ball to outline NOACA's proposed activities.

Ms. Ball presented information on the following:

- Background on the Irishtown Bend Project
 - NOACA Funding Commitments
- Crowdfunding Method and Model
- Irishtown Bend Stabilization Crowdfunding Consultant
- Project Approach
 - Scope of Services
 - Marketing and Community Engagement

Ms. Ball reported that the InfraShares contract will not exceed \$57,000, including a \$20,000 flat fee for campaign development, marketing, and execution, plus a 5% commission on total funds raised.

Ms. Ball outlined the next steps, which include executing the contract with InfraShares and collaborating with their staff to develop a detailed work plan. This plan will outline deliverables, establish milestones and platform deployment, define target contributor profiles, and set up a project management system to track tasks, timelines, and workflows.

Mr. Tom Jordan asked whether the funds are limited to the general project or if there is additional funding planned for other aspects of the Irishtown Bend Park and its future development.

Ms. Ball confirmed that any extra funds may support work beyond the main project, but the immediate goal is to meet the hillside stabilization funding target.

Mr. Jordan clarified that the crowdfunding goal is \$726,000.

Ms. Ball noted that NOACA will make a good-faith effort toward that goal.

Mr. Jordan mentioned that other organizations are raising funds for separate initiatives (e.g., art installations and a monument).

Ms. Ball concurred, adding that staff are aware of these efforts and the project's fast timeline.

Director Gallucci emphasized that NOACA's funding commitment is limited to hillside stabilization and related trail work; all other fundraising efforts are separate and pertain to the park above the hillside.

Ms. Pease asked if there remains a fundraising gap for the park.

Director Gallucci confirmed there is a significant funding shortfall, amounting to tens of millions of dollars, for the full park project.

Ms. Pease asked whether there has been consideration of public messaging around the crowdfunding effort, suggesting coordination with broader park fundraising. She noted that the public may not distinguish between the hillside stabilization and the park project, so clear communication and coordination would be helpful.

Director Gallucci agreed, acknowledging that while some coordination has occurred, it would be beneficial to make the connection more explicit and to position the next phase of fundraising, even if it is not led by NOACA.

Reports/Updates

No reports or updates were presented at this meeting.

Old Business

No old business was discussed at this meeting.

New Business

No new business was discussed at this meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. Iorio 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 meeting of the External Affairs Committee will be scheduled for 2026.

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

DRAFT



**External Affairs Committee
Attendance Record**

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

Meeting Dates	1/31/25	4/11/25	7/11/25	10/10/25
RONAYNE, Chris (Debbie Berry, Alternate) (Annie Pease, Alt. on 7/11/25, 10/10/25)	A	A	A	A
SEREN, Kahlil (Eric Zamft, Alternate)	X			
Ex-officio Members/Council Chairs				
ADDISON, Bishara (Ryan Aroney, Alternate)		X		
AHMED, Ferzan M. (Charles Cyrill, Alternate)	X		X	
McCALL, Valarie (Kevin S. Schmotzer, Alternate)			X	X
SNYDER, Timothy (Eric Hange, Alternate)				
RANALDSON, Marvin (Eric C. Mack, Alternate)		A		

X = Member Present A = Alternate Present

DRAFT



**NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY
M E M O R A N D U M**

TO: NOACA External Affairs Committee
FROM: Grace Gallucci, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer
DATE: January 23, 2026
RE: **Advisory Council Updates**

ACTION REQUESTED

No action is requested at this time. This is an informational item.

BACKGROUND/JUSTIFICATION FOR CURRENT ACTION

The External Affairs Committee evaluates recommendations from its four Councils: Business, Community, Rural and Emerging Leaders. The Councils provide advice and policy recommendations to the External Affairs Committee. Below is a summary of the joint Council meeting on December 5, 2025.

Business, Community, Rural, and Emerging Leaders Advisory Councils

Ms. Bishara Addison chaired the joint meeting on Friday, December 5, 2025.

The Councils were provided with information on the following:

- Government Affairs Report
- Second Quarter SFY 2026 Project Planning Review (PPR)
 - Public Infrastructure Improvements in Brook Park (CUY SR 291-02.90)
- Cleveland-Elyria Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP)

The next BAC, CAC, RAC, and ELAC meeting will be held on Friday, March 27, 2026, 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact.

CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS

Updates of the joint Council meeting will continue to be provided to the External Affairs Committee.

GG:EB:bw



**BacNORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY
M E M O R A N D U M**

TO: NOACA External Affairs Committee
FROM: Grace Gallucci, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer
DATE: January 23, 2026
RE: **CY 2026 External Affairs Committee Focus Areas**

ACTION REQUESTED

The Committee is asked to adopt Focus Areas to guide what it intends to accomplish in calendar year 2026.

BACKGROUND/JUSTIFICATION FOR CURRENT ACTION

The focus areas for 2026 are the same as for 2025, as the mission of the External Affairs Committee remains focused on communication, outreach, policy education, and advocacy. NOACA remains committed to ensuring that outreach efforts best support the agency's work and effectively engage the region as we build consensus with our stakeholders and the public.

The External Affairs Committee is engaged in the following efforts, which will be part of the 2026 Focus Areas. The priorities are to elevate NOACA's brand image through increased advocacy, program-area narratives and storytelling, and marketing strategies to reach a wider audience.

2026 Potential Focus Areas	Status
Advocacy and marketing for climate and clean energy investments, including the electric vehicle charging station, idling, etc.	Ongoing
Engaging the Business, Community, Rural and Emerging Leaders Advisory Councils	Ongoing
Advocacy and outreach for federal, state, and local priorities	Ongoing
Brand Identity and Content Marketing to reach vast audiences	Ongoing
Communication Messaging (i.e. case studies, impact stories, public awareness through podcasts, social media, results from analytics/plan studies, etc.);	Ongoing
Elevating program and outreach for various NOACA projects and programs for mass media marketing efforts.	Ongoing
Develop county-specific engagement activities surrounding long-range plan projects, OWP and TIP initiatives to update the region on NOACA's significant transportation and environmental planning efforts.	Ongoing
Create a structured messaging platform to alert communities on emerging regional issues via website, social media, digital platforms, paid advertisement and in-person outreach methods.	Ongoing
Publish Annual Report and Community Impact Report	Ongoing

External Affairs virtual forums on relevant topics to build public awareness and capacity among stakeholders.	Ongoing
---	---------

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact.

CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS

NOACA staff will continue to engage Committee members to share information and elicit input and recommendations.



**NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY
M E M O R A N D U M**

TO: NOACA External Affairs Committee
FROM: Grace Gallucci, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer
DATE: January 23, 2026
RE: **Public Affairs Updates**

ACTION REQUESTED

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

BACKGROUND/JUSTIFICATION FOR CURRENT ACTION

During FY26 Quarter 3, NOACA advanced a coordinated public engagement and communications strategy to support major regional planning initiatives, elevate public awareness, and ensure meaningful opportunities for community input. These efforts align with NOACA's role and its commitment to transparency, accessibility, and inclusive participation in project decision-making.

FY26 Quarter 3 activities focused on three interconnected areas:

- Public engagement and outreach activities
- Targeted communications, social media, and campaigns to broaden awareness and participation
- High-profile public meetings to address regionally significant transportation impacts
 - TEDI Aerozone Planning and Engagement
 - I-71 Crossroads Study
 - Brook Park Transportation & Traffic Impact Meeting – Cleveland Browns Stadium

Together, these efforts ensured that stakeholders, including residents, businesses, local governments, and partner agencies, had timely information and clear pathways to engage in projects with local and regional implications.

This presentation will provide the External Affairs Committee with details on how engagement, communications, and public meetings are being strategically deployed to support NOACA's planning responsibilities and regional leadership role.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact.

CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS

NOACA will continue to engage committee members to share information and elicit input and recommendations for Public Affairs.

GG:EB:DR



**NORTHEAST OHIO AREAWIDE COORDINATING AGENCY
M E M O R A N D U M**

TO: NOACA External Affairs Committee
FROM: Grace Gallucci, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer
DATE: January 23, 2026
RE: **Government Affairs Updates**

ACTION REQUESTED

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

BACKGROUND/JUSTIFICATION FOR CURRENT ACTION

NOACA staff will provide a quarterly status report on government affairs activities aimed at fulfilling the NOACA Board-adopted [2026 Federal and State Legislative Agenda](#). In particular, staff will discuss and seek Committee input on the following items:

- Draft 2026 Federal and State Initiatives for Action document, which contains specific action items to implement the 2026 Legislative Agenda
- Status of FY 2026 federal transportation appropriations
- Status of federal grant funding opportunities
- NOACA's ongoing outreach to Congress regarding surface transportation reauthorization legislation:
 - Updated 2026 Legislative Agenda sent to Northeast Ohio's congressional delegation
 - Capitol Hill visits with our delegation in March
 - NOACA Transportation Day scheduled for March 26 to focus on reauthorization
 - Collaboration with partner organizations
- Updates to NOACA strategy for improving passenger rail service in Northeast Ohio:
 - Ongoing meetings with stakeholders, including:
 - Local stakeholders (government, business, education sectors)
 - Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) staff
 - Amtrak staff
 - ODOT/Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC)
 - Neighboring states (Pennsylvania and New York transportation agencies)
 - Passenger rail advocacy organizations
 - Plans to re-submit applications through U.S. DOT's Corridor ID program
- NOACA's 2026 Legislative Meet and Greet with our Statehouse delegation immediately preceding the March 13 Board meeting
 - Focus on HB 445 (regarding regional councils of government and metropolitan planning organizations)

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact.

CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS

NOACA will continue to provide quarterly government affairs status reports to the Committee.

GG:EB:bb

Attachment: Draft NOACA 2026 Federal and State Initiatives for Action

NOACA's 2026 Federal Initiatives For Action

Background: The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) is set to expire on September 30, 2026. NOACA will work with federal officials to shape the next surface transportation law consistent with NOACA's 2026 Legislative Agenda and Long Range Plan, and support federal initiatives and funding to improve the economy and quality of life in Northeast Ohio.

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

■ **Advocate for a reauthorized federal surface transportation law that strengthens local control of core transportation programs**

Ask Congress to consider making metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) direct recipients for core planning programs like STBG, CMAQ, TAP, and CRP. Support additional reforms to support local decision-making: shift some discretionary funding to MPO-directed formula funding to advance projects prioritized in regional Long Range Plans, increase MPO planning funds, reduce local match for federal transportation programs in low-income communities, and streamline environmental reviews without compromising environmental protection.

■ **Support efforts to stabilize and grow the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and encourage the search for new revenue sources**

Urge lawmakers to stabilize and grow the HTF to provide long-term predictable funding for the nation's transportation programs with an updated "user pays" system to replace the increasingly outdated federal gas tax. Ensure that any new funding mechanisms will continue to support public transit.

■ **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 and freight service, and create economic opportunity. Seek federal support for service and infrastructure improvements to existing Amtrak east-west long distance routes through the region, and proposals for new Ohio corridors: 3C+D and Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit. Support extension of the CVSR north to Cleveland.

■ **Support federal actions that promote economic development and environmental stewardship in the Great Lakes megaregion**

Support implementation of the Great Lakes Authority and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) to protect fresh water resources, create new education and job opportunities, and collaborate on infrastructure investments.

■ **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 reauthorized Economic Development Administration (EDA) to improve economic opportunity and jobs in the region.

■ **Urge Congress to continue support for U.S. DOT's NETT Council to advance hyperloop technology 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.

NOACA's 2026 State Initiatives for Action

Background: In early 2027, the Ohio Governor and the General Assembly will consider and enact the 2028-2029 Biennial Transportation Budget. NOACA will continue to advocate for policies and funding to enhance Northeast Ohio's multimodal transportation network, increase travel options, improve transportation safety, and support regional collaboration through metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs).

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

■ **Oppose any 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.

■ **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 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.

■ **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.

■ **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.

■ **Support the federally established role of metropolitan planning organizations to ensure regional collaboration and cooperation among local governments**

Oppose legislation to undermine metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) like NOACA. Continue to empower local elected officials -- working through their respective MPO boards -- to conduct regional transportation and environmental planning and make decisions that directly impact their communities while reaching national goals through a "continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C)" process.



TRAVEL OPTIONS FOR NOACA MEETINGS

LOCATION

NOACA is conveniently located in Cleveland's central business district at 1299 Superior Avenue, on the NW corner of Superior and E. 13th Street.

TRANSIT & BICYCLE TRAVEL TO NOACA

NOACA is accessible by transit and bike.

The NOACA office building is situated on several major and minor bus routes. You can plan your transit trip to NOACA by using trip planner tools or with information provided by the region's public transit agencies:

- [GCRTA Trip Planner](#)
- [Geauga County Transit](#)
- [Laketran Trip Planner](#)
- [Lorain County Transit service](#)
- [Medina County Transit](#)

Bikes may be stored and locked at U-racks located directly in front of the building.

PARKING (see map)

The following map shows parking facilities in the vicinity of the NOACA building. Unfortunately, we are unable to offer reimbursement for parking.

On-street, metered parking is also available for up to 2-hour periods along E. 13th Street north of Superior Avenue. Please heed parking signs and note any time restrictions. Payment can be made at these meters with credit card or by using the [ParkMobile](#) mobile device application.

Street parking is also available along Rockwell Avenue, east of E. 13th Street.

TRAVEL ASSISTANCE AND SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION

If you have further questions about parking or need assistance with travel to or special accommodation at NOACA, please contact Lindy Burt at 216-241-2414, x. 108.

