

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

External Affairs Committee

January 30, 2026

ACTION REQUESTED

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

PREVIOUS ACTION

No previous action.

DRAFT 2026 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funding for the nation's transportation programs with an updated "user pays" system to replace the increasingly outdated federal gas tax.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.

DRAFT 2026 INITIATIVES FOR ACTION

- Federal & State Initiatives for Action document puts our Legislative Agenda into action items
- More flexible/responsive to what's happening in D.C. or Columbus – doesn't require Board approval
- Updates are reviewed by External Affairs Committee with input from BAC/CAC/RAC/ELAC

UPDATES: FEDERAL INITIATIVES

First two items updated to reference reauthorization priorities from the updated 2026 Legislative Agenda

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

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

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.

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.

UPDATES: FEDERAL INITIATIVES

Other federal initiatives carried over from 2025:

- Encourage federal support for making Greater Cleveland a significant hub on the national passenger rail network
- Support federal actions that promote economic development and environmental stewardship in the Great Lakes megaregion
- Pursue initiatives & funding to implement NOACA's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Urge continued support for U.S. DOT's NETT Council

DISCUSSION ITEM: ADD TOD?

- Seeking Committee input: add a new federal initiative to support TOD?
- Bills recently introduced in Congress to promote TOD using existing federal credit tools like TIFIA and RRIF
- Would make it easier for communities to access these financing programs to develop housing & mixed-use projects near transit, in alignment with MPO transportation planning
- Aligns with NOACA priorities re: transit & economic development; endorsed by NARC, NLC, APA, & AMPO

UPDATES: STATE INITIATIVES

Two recommended changes:

- Remove action item re: interstate interchanges
- Add action item re: supporting the role of MPOs

UPDATES: STATE INITIATIVES

 **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.

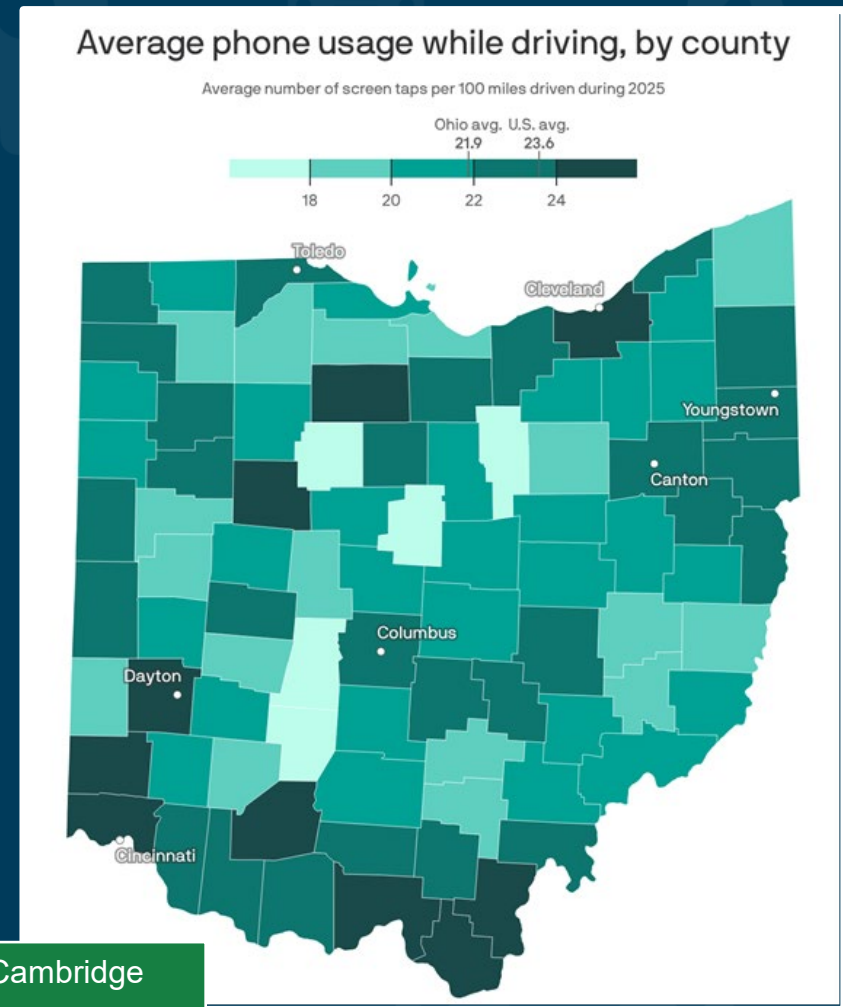
UPDATES: STATE INITIATIVES

Carried over from 2025:

- Oppose suspension of 2019 gas tax increase
- Advocate for increased/predictable transit funding
- Encourage state support for passenger rail improvements
- Support efforts to improve air, water & soil quality
- Support proposals to increase transportation safety
- Advocate for equitable return of state transportation dollars & encourage comprehensive maintenance of NHS routes

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- Transportation safety is a longstanding “Initiative”
- NOACA supported Gov. DeWine’s legislation (enacted 2023) to reduce distracted driving
- Primary offense to drive holding a mobile device
- State Highway Patrol reports 10% year-over-year decline in fatal and serious crashes from distracted driving; overall traffic deaths fell 3%
- More progress needed, but we know legislation (backed by sound priorities) can make a difference



Map credit: Axios, from Cambridge Mobile Telematics data

FEDERAL UPDATES



US DOT APPROPRIATIONS

- Federal government has been operating on a Continuing Resolution (CR) that was due to expire tonight due to lack of agreement on funding bills by last September's deadline
- Congress is nearing a deal to pass the 2026 THUD (Transportation/HUD) bill as part of "minibus" package of funding bills, after removing the DHS funding portion
- THUD bill largely protects core highway & transit formula pgrms but cuts some unobligated IIJA discretionary funding – redirecting balances toward safety, freight, bridge, & capital delivery projects

THUD BILL: HIGHLIGHTS

Highways

- \$63B from HTF for highways; \$927M from general fund for FHWA
- Preserves current formulas & funding for programs like PL, STBG, CMAQ, CRP, etc.

Transit

- Provides \$21.1B for public transit (when combined with IIJA advance funding) – increase of \$168M from '25, but less than IIJA authorized amount
- APTA supports

THUD BILL: HIGHLIGHTS

Amtrak/Rail

- Rail Passengers Association: “Some wins and some losses”
- Amtrak funding slightly reduced from '25: 1.6B for National Network; \$850M for NE Corridor
- Fed-State Partnership grant program reduced: \$1.5B to \$65M
- Prohibits suspending/reducing service on long-distance routes
- Cuts \$928M in high-speed rail grants
- \$137M for CRISI (increase over previous year)

THUD BILL: HIGHLIGHTS

Discretionary Grant highlights

- Rescinds unobligated balances of several IIJA programs on 9/30/26; redirects funding to obligated projects instead of new funding rounds: RAISE/BUILD, INFRA, PROTECT, Bridge Investment Program
- Reduces set-aside for planning projects in SS4A from 40% to 30% -- more funds for implementation
- Rescinds funds for NEVI formula/discretionary & SMART grant funds (existing CFI grant dollars not impacted)

FY 2026 THUD EARMARKS INCLUDED

THUD 2026 CPF/CDS APPROPRIATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

PROJECT	FUNDING AWARD	PROJECT SPONSOR	MEMBER OF CONGRESS	NOACA SUPPORT
Royalton Road Reconstruction Phase II	\$4,000,000	City of North Royalton	Rep. Miller	✓
Diverging Diamond Project	\$2,000,000	City of Solon	Rep. Miller	✓
DREAM 66/E. 66th Street Complete Street	\$1,850,000	City of Cleveland	Rep. Brown	✓
Irishtown Bend Stabilization Project	\$1,200,000	Port of Cleveland	Rep. Brown, Sen. Moreno	✓
Beulah Park-Euclid Beach Lakefront Connector Trail	\$850,000	Cuyahoga County	Rep. Brown	✓
Light Rail Track Reconstruction Project	\$250,000	GCRTA	Rep. Brown	✓

FY 2026 THUD “EARMARKS”: HUD

THUD 2026 CPF/CDS APPROPRIATIONS FOR HUD COMMUNITY PROJECTS

PROJECT	FUNDING AWARD	PROJECT SPONSOR	MEMBER OF CONGRESS
Building & Infrastructure Improvements	\$3,938,000	Chester Township	Rep. Joyce
Field House Construction	\$500,000	City of Sheffield Lake	Rep. Latta
Parma Heights Rehabilitation Project	\$1,000,000	City of Parma Heights	Rep. Miller
Shore Cultural Center Historic Preservation Project	\$850,000	City of Euclid	Rep. Brown
Ward 10 Economic Revitalization Recovery Develop	\$1,000,000	Cleveland City Council Ward 10	Rep. Brown
Center for Entrepreneurs Equipment & Retrofitting	\$500,000	Cuyahoga Comm. College District	Rep. Brown

OTHER FY 2026 EARMARK REQUESTS

PROJECTS NOT FUNDED BY CONGRESS

PROJECT SPONSOR

NOACA LOS

FUNDED BY CONGRESS?

State Road Reconstruction Phase 2

City of Medina



Sanitary Sewer Extention Project

City of Kirtland



Rockside Road Rehabilitation Project

City of Independence



Sewer Extension Project

Lorain County



Storm Drainage Project

City of Brunswick



Lorain & Columbia Realignment Project

City of North Olmsted



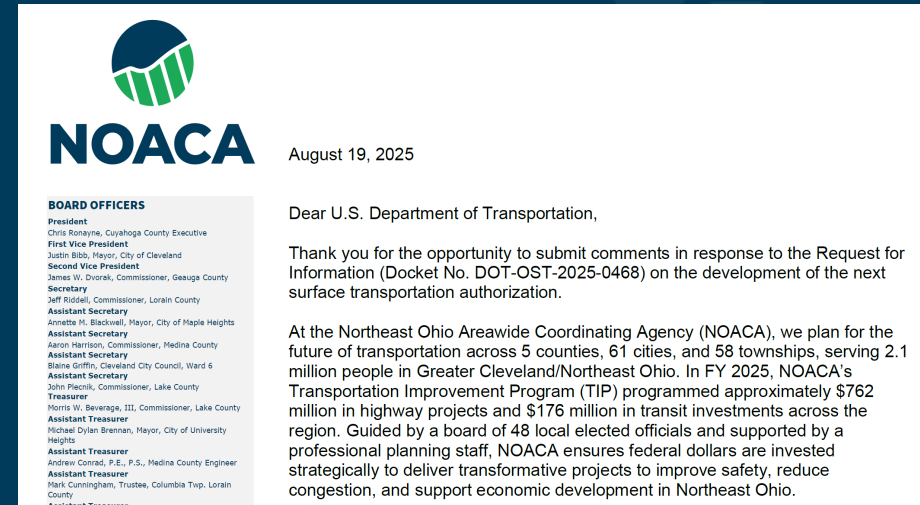
Lost Nation Road Corridor Improvement Project

City of Willoughby



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

- IIJA/BIL expires September 2026
- Congressional hearings ongoing on reauthorizing the nation's surface transportation law for five years
- NOACA outlined priorities to NE Ohio delegation, committees, and US DOT
- Planning Capitol Hill visits this Spring



NOACA TRANSPORTATION DAY 2026

YOU'RE INVITED!

2026 NOACA Transportation Day

March 26, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Tri-C's Jerry Sue Thornton Center

Board Members and Local Elected Officials invited

Theme: Reauthorization of Federal Surface Transportation Law

GRANT FUNDING UPDATE

Currently available grant opportunities:

- U.S. DOT's BUILD grant program – due 2/24/26 (NOACA will support planning & implementation projects per the Regional Strategy to Coordinate Funding Opportunities)
- FRA's Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program, due 2/6/26
- U.S. Maritime Administration's Port Infrastructure Development Program, due 2/28/26
- Ohio EPA's H2Ohio Rivers Initiative Chloride Reduction Program, due 2/6/26

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 & Resources' (highlighted), 'Community Assistance Center', and 'Board & Committees'. The main content area is titled 'Funding Resources' and includes a list of links: 'Getting Around the Region', 'Street Design Flexibility Guidelines', 'Trail Crossing Typology', 'Traffic Counts', 'Facts & Data on Northeast Ohio', 'Major Employment Hubs in the Cleveland Region', and 'Vibrant NEO 2040 County Reports'. The 'Funding Resources' link is highlighted. Below this is a sidebar with '+ Maps' and '+ Recent Studies'. The main text area contains a paragraph about funding programs and a list of 'Funding Sources' with expandable sections: 'NOACA programs for Northeast Ohio Communities', 'Federal Economic Development Assistance - continuously available', 'State Funding Programs', and 'Currently Available Funding Opportunities'. At the bottom, there is a section titled 'NOACA Regional Strategy to Coordinate Funding Opportunities: Bringing IJA Transportation Grant Dollars to Northeast Ohio' and a note about the reauthorization of the Investment and Jobs Act (IJA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

STATE UPDATES



SPEED LIMIT INITIATIVE

- Ohioans for Safe Streets continues to seek reforms to provide greater local control and context-based flexibility for speed limits in local communities
- Held meeting with ODOT on Tuesday
- Discussions continue among Ohio Legislature, ODOT, local elected officials, and interested parties

PASSENGER RAIL ADVOCACY

- Corridor ID
- Ongoing coalition building:
 - Local government
 - Business groups
 - FRA
 - Amtrak
 - ODOT/ORDC
 - Neighboring states
 - Advocacy groups
 - Other interested stakeholders – seeking partners/networks

2026 LEGISLATIVE MEET & GREET

WHEN: March 13, 8-9 a.m. prior to Board Meeting

WHERE: NOACA offices

WHAT: NOACA Board members/alternates enjoy coffee and bagels with NE Ohio Statehouse delegation

THEME: Discuss next year's biennial transportation budget and other transportation/environmental issues

MPO LEGISLATION

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

- Prevent any single county from holding a voting majority on an MPO board
- Allow 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

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next External Affairs Committee Meeting

April 10, 2026





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