

September 11, 2015

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

Environmental justice is a framework to ensure that the benefits and burdens of regional transportation investments are shared by all socioeconomic groups. The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency's (NOACA's) Environmental Justice Communities Policy designates Environmental Justice Communities based on the socio-economic composition of a community, and develops specific programs for these communities, in order to align with the principles and policies of the US Department of Transportation, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and Presidential Executive Order 12898,.

AUTHORITY

14th Amendment to the US Constitution
United States Code, Title 23, Section §134
United States Code, 49 CFR Part 21

PURPOSE

This policy originates from the Urban Core Communities Policy adopted by the Board of Directors in 1999 as contained in NOACA's *Framework for Action 2025* long range transportation plan. The initial policy, developed in part to support environmental justice concepts, was created to foster reinvestment in defined urban core areas in the region, with the intention that these communities would receive special consideration for federal assistance through NOACA attributable funding programs. This new policy was developed as a separate policy from the Urban Core Communities Policy to develop a subset of communities with urban qualities that additionally face financial hardship due to its population composition. This new policy reflects the current fiscal environment, updated Agency goals and priorities, recent data including the 2010 Census, and updated USDOT policies on environmental justice, and to focus specifically, when needed, on Environmental Justice Communities beyond the context of only Urban Core Communities.

The Policy allows for NOACA to support reinvestment in Environmental Justice Communities and to ensure such communities are not disproportionately impacted by transportation projects. Through the designation of specific communities as Environmental Justice Communities," specific programs may be developed targeted to these communities.

CRITERIA

A designated Environmental Justice Community designation must:

1. Be a designated Urban Core Community as defined by the NOACA Urban Core Communities Policy; and,
2. Obtain any 3 of 6 points from the following table below. To determine if a community meets a particular environmental justice element, each environmental justice element within each community is to be assessed against regional averages for the five-county region. Upon analyzing each community against the established criteria, a list of designated Environmental Justice Communities shall be established. The criteria and current thresholds applied are below.

Category	Criteria	Current Threshold (Rate)	Weight
Urban Core Community	Must be an Urban Core Community as defined previously in this policy.		Must meet
Minority*	Minimum minority population percentage at or above the regional average.	25.4%	1 point
Low Income*	Minimum poverty level percentage at or above the lesser of the regional average or Federal average.	15.4%	2 points
Elderly*	Minimum elderly percentage at or above the regional average.	15.5%	1 point
People with Disabilities*	Minimum disability rate at or above the regional average.	13.3%	1 point
Low English Proficiency*	Minimum "Low English Proficiency" rate at or above the regional average.	3.5%	1 point

*as defined by federal regulations.

USES OF THE DESIGNATION

Designated Environmental Justice Communities are eligible for:

1. Use of toll credits to reduce local match requirements (pending the adoption of NOACA's toll credits policy). Projects sponsored by, and located within, designated communities are eligible for 100% NOACA funding participation, utilizing 20% funding from Toll Credits.
2. Additional special programs that may be conceived of in the future

FUTURE UPDATES OF DESIGNATED COMMUNITIES

The list of designated Environmental Justice Communities shall be updated, as necessary, following each decennial census.