

Chapter 6: Public Involvement

Introduction

Federal policy requires public engagement as an essential element in the development of a metropolitan planning organization's long-range transportation plan (LRTP). The FHWA guiding principle of Continuous, Comprehensive and Coordinated planning informs the approach to NOACA's planning responsibilities, including the agency's approach to public engagement.

NOACA leadership designed activities that would take place before the transportation plan was written to allow public and stakeholder input to be considered and to influence the technical considerations and final draft LRTP document.

NOACA staff decided to engage the general public and transportation stakeholders in advance of the development of a plan draft to provide several venues to hear reactions from the public on issues and challenges related to transportation planning. Engaging the public before drafting the LRTP document would allow NOACA staff to consider the comments received and potentially incorporate answers and responses in the technical sections of the Plan.

NOACA's outreach process depended on direct solicitation of the general public as well as to agencies that represent public concerns. In addition, general solicitation was made through the NOACA website, social media platforms, print media platforms, and radio ads. Ultimately NOACA received responses from more than 1,600 individuals through a variety of communication channels as a result of engagement activities to inform the general public and stakeholders about the conditions, challenges, priorities and vision of the NOACA region's transportation system with an eye toward the year 2040.

Purpose of Public Engagement Activities

NOACA is committed to transparency and public access to decisions, services, and information for everyone in the region. Through the active participation of the community, the quality of the resulting regional transportation plans and policies puts them in a better position to meet the region's needs today and into the future. NOACA strives to be responsive to the people of the region, provide clear and concise information and materials, and address the ideas and concerns raised by those who use the transportation system as well as those affected by transportation planning decisions.

In accordance with the Federal Highway Administration's regulation 23 CFR 450.316(a), NOACA's public engagement efforts document its "process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process."

Plan of Public Engagement for NOACA's LRTP: Summary

NOACA conducted a formal public engagement process for the 2040 long-range transportation plan over a period of five months from June through October 2016. The process was designed such that the general public and stakeholders would be engaged in the process up front, prior to drafting the technical sections of the LRTP. In doing so, NOACA technical staff could draw upon the comments received in the early public engagement in a way that could further inform the final document.

NOACA solicited/gathered stakeholder and members of the general public to give input through five primary forums created by NOACA staff in coordination with regional partners and selected consultants. In summary, the public engagement forums included:

- **Public and Stakeholder Meetings**

- Five meetings were held during the five-month period. Two were informational meetings for the public, which included presentations about the history and background of NOACA's long-range transportation plan, plan funding sources and funding forecast, and NOACA's Transportation Asset Management Program. Attendees at these meetings also participated in an opinion poll exercise regarding transportation in Northeast Ohio by using **Turning Point** polling software and clickable devices. Two other public meetings, although open to the general public, were geared toward specific stakeholder groups. One of these meetings focused on business and economic impacts of the LRTP, and the other on community and social impacts of the plan. Finally, NOACA held a visioning session for the public at the Idea Center at Playhouse Square in Cleveland that encouraged public out-of-the-box thinking on the future of transportation.
- Links to the public meeting summaries and presentations for the four meetings held at NOACA can be found on our website at <http://www.noaca.org/index.aspx?page=6497>
- Attendance at each public meeting
 - Long-Range Transportation Plan informational meeting, June 1, 2016: 27 attendees
 - A Framework for Action informational meeting, July 13, 2016: 44 attendees
 - Community and Social Impacts stakeholder engagement meeting, July 27, 2016: 27 attendees
 - Business and Economic Impacts stakeholder engagement meeting, August 31, 2016: 37 attendees
 - Public Visioning/Scenario session, September 20, 2016: 70 attendees

- **Public Opinion Survey**

- NOACA conducted a statistically significant survey in its five counties through a public opinion research firm Triad and Associates Research. The surveys were conducted by telephone (401 persons) and online (407 persons). The consulting firm subsequently released a report that summarized input from the public surveys.

- **Online Transportation Planning Decision Game**

- NOACA also posted an online tool to gauge public thought on transportation priorities and related projects/policies. Through consultants Sasaki Associates, the **CrowdGauge** tool was used to ask the public to prioritize transportation modes and projects by assigning coins from a "wallet" to various transportation improvements. Players also could choose policies to support these

improvements, but these choices were “free.” During the two months that the CrowdGauge tool was online, 600 people participated. A report was released summarizing the results of the CrowdGauge exercise and the roughly 600 people who participated in the survey.

- **Social Media**

- NOACA conducted engagement campaigns through social media outlets Facebook and Twitter by posing specific questions to the general public about their individual experience of transportation in the NOACA region. Their responses were posted so that a dialogue could develop and encourage more engagement with responses that could also be shared by others.

- **News Articles with Responses from the Public**

- News articles have the power to reach many people in the region. NOACA used comments posted online in response to online news articles as a source of public input for the LRTP.

Through these five outlets for participation, NOACA engaged approximately 1,600 people. Throughout the LRTP public engagement process, NOACA’s website served as a home base for information as well as a venue for collecting response and comment. NOACA also elevated a Web page dedicated to information about the developing 2040 long-range transportation plan.

Monitoring Public Outreach through Social Media: Analytics Report

NOACA staff has been steadily working to integrate social media outlets into the Agency’s communications and public outreach work in addition to, and in coordination with, traditional forms of media communication—as recommended by federal policy. Social media has several attributes that can be of benefit when trying to communicate with large audiences, such as the ability to promote engagement in events as they are happening and the opportunity to collect data on how many times a publication was viewed, how many times a public meeting was referenced, and comments made about the subject matter.

The data collected from analyzing social media activity has value in illustrating what topics are of interest to the public. A summary of activity on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn shows that through the five months of public engagement activity related to the NOACA LRTP, information was viewed on the social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn more than 6,000 times with more than 700 engagements in the form of likes, shares, or comments. Of particular note are the occasions where a so-called boost was used to promote an item more heavily; boosts typically expand the amount of attention that an item receives by highlighting that information more prominently. Overall, these analytics clearly suggest that social media platforms are a formidable media through which to perform public engagement and assess the results of outreach and engagement of the general public.

The information in Figures 6-1 through 6-3 was gleaned from Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Figure 6-1: Facebook Engagements

Date	Topic	Reach	Likes	Shares	Comments
5/18/2016	June 1 Stakeholders Meeting	455	13	6	16
5/24/2016	June 1 Stakeholders Meeting	321	6	3	0
6/1/2016	June 1 Stakeholders Meeting	284	3	1	0
6/3/2016	PD article re: LRTP	543	5	1	0
6/13/2016	NOACA press release re: public meetings	429	6	3	1
7/22/2016	Community Impacts meeting	407	1	1	0
8/15/2016	Business Impacts meeting	100	3		0
9/12/2016	Visioning Session at Ideastream (boosted)	4,946	58	14	2
9/13/2016	LRTP online survey	1,353	4	2	0
9/26/2016	LRTP online survey (boosted)	7,939	50	38	17
10/3/2016	LRTP online survey	110	4	1	0
10/14/2016	LRTP online survey	259	3	0	0
10/15/2016	LRTP online survey	270	2	0	0
10/16/2016	LRTP online survey	298	2	0	0
10/18/2016	LRTP online survey	599	4	0	0
10/19/2016	LRTP online survey	465	0	0	0
10/21/2016	LRTP online survey	313	2	0	0
10/22/2016	LRTP online survey	292	0	0	1
10/23/2016	LRTP online survey	267	1	0	0
10/26/2016	LRTP online survey	393	0	0	0
10/27/2016	LRTP online survey	384	1	0	0
10/28/2016	LRTP online survey	428	0	0	0
Total		20,855	168	70	37
Average		948	8	3	2

Figure 6.2: Twitter Engagements

Date	Topic	Impressions	Engagements	Engagement Rate
5/18/2016	June 1 Stakeholders Meeting	1,215	11	0.9%
5/26/2016	June 1 Stakeholders Meeting	968	13	1.3%
6/1/2016	June 1 Stakeholders Meeting	714	18	2.5%
6/3/2016	PD article re: LRTP	793	18	2.3%
6/13/2016	NOACA press release re: public meetings	810	22	2.7%
6/23/2016	NOACA press release re: public meetings	406	5	1.2%
7/11/2016	June 13 Stakeholders Meeting	1,301	19	1.5%
7/11/2016	June 13 Stakeholders Meeting	1,009	30	3.0%
7/19/2016	Community Impacts Meeting	1,189	14	1.2%
8/15/2016	Business Impacts meeting	829	12	1.4%
9/12/2016	LRTP online survey	3,333	36	1.1%
9/12/2016	Visioning Session at Ideastream	1,201	20	1.7%
9/14/2016	LRTP online survey	359	5	1.4%
9/15/2016	Visioning Session at Ideastream	1,212	16	1.3%
9/20/2016	Visioning Session at Ideastream	380	4	1.1%
9/21/2016	Visioning Session at Ideastream	994	21	2.1%
9/26/2016	LRTP online survey	1,556	31	2.0%
9/28/2016	LRTP online survey	609	8	1.3%
10/3/2016	LRTP online survey	2,119	22	1.0%
10/12/2016	LRTP online survey	1,491	20	1.3%
10/14/2016	LRTP online survey	345	3	0.9%
10/15/2016	LRTP online survey	329	5	1.5%

Date	Topic	Impressions	Engagements	Engagement Rate
10/16/2016	LRTP online survey	2,958	38	1.3%
10/18/2016	LRTP online survey	2,679	5	1.3%
10/19/2016	LRTP online survey	531	11	2.1%
10/21/2016	LRTP online survey	537	6	1.1%
10/22/2016	LRTP online survey	394	0	0.0%
10/23/2016	LRTP online survey	1,687	14	0.8%
10/26/2016	LRTP online survey	365	4	1.1%
10/27/2016	LRTP online survey	649	10	1.5%
10/28/2016	LRTP online survey	338	1	0.3%
Total		33,300	442	
Average		1,074	14	1.4%

Figure 6-3: LinkedIn Engagements

Date	Topic	Impressions	Clicks	Interaction	Engagement
10/9/2016	LRTP online survey	245	2	3	2.04%
10/19/2016	LRTP online survey	317	2	3	1.58%
Total		562	4	6	
Average		281	2	3	1.81%

Public Engagement Activities

Public Opinion Survey

Geographic and demographic diversity are hallmarks of the NOACA region. The region is also characterized by a large population with diverse opinions. In consideration of these facts, NOACA staff prioritized the need to capture a baseline of opinions around fundamental transportation issues, with the caveat that the results be statistically accurate and representative of the NOACA regional population. To address this priority, a public opinion survey was planned through collaboration with a communication consultant and local polling firm. The methodology used to develop the survey is described below.

Scope of Work

A public opinion survey with 808 adult residents in a five-county area in Northeast Ohio was conducted for the NOACA Long-Range Transportation Plan, public engagement. The survey was conducted by TRIAD Research Group on behalf of NOACA.

Of the 808 interviews completed for the survey, 407 were completed by telephone, using both landline and cell phone numbers, and 401 were completed using an online written survey. The results from the two survey modes were merged and weighted slightly on age and race to reflect residents in the five-county area more accurately.

The telephone interviewing was conducted from October 5 to 13, 2016, while the online interviewing was completed between October 5 and 17, 2016. With 808 interviews, the survey has a margin of error no more than $\pm 3.5\%$.

The main purpose of the survey was to explore the opinions of residents in Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina counties regarding various transportation issues to aid NOACA in developing its long-range transportation plan for the area. Some of the topics the survey examined were:

- Satisfaction with the network and condition of roads in Northeast Ohio.
- The type of transportation respondents rely on most, how often they use public transportation or walk or bike to typical destinations and their satisfaction with these modes of transportation
- Opinion of the most helpful transportation improvements in Northeast Ohio as well as suggestions for improvements to public transportation and bike lanes or sidewalks
- Frequency of experiencing traffic congestion, if it is a significant problem, and how they would suggest fixing it

For geographical analysis, the results from Lake and Geauga counties were combined because the number of respondents from Geauga County is small. Cuyahoga County was further divided into five regions to allow NOACA to look at the results for the City of Cleveland versus the suburbs because Cleveland makes up a large portion of NOACA's service area.

A written survey of 24 questions was presented in each survey (both for telephone and online surveys). The results were reported only if the survey was completed in its entirety. Survey participants were selected such that the aggregate of respondents reflected the demographic characteristics of the NOACA five-county region as a whole—for gender, age, race and region of residence.

The survey results were reported in several ways: as a narrative summary of the most significant and clear results broken into categorical statement, and as raw data segregated by results from each county and further broken into subregions for Cuyahoga County.

Online Transportation Planning Decision Game Summary

NOACA also deployed an online transportation planning decision game called CrowdGauge as an additional tool to survey the opinions of Northeast Ohio residents. The tool was previously employed by the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium (NEOSCC) in a regional planning exercise. The CrowdGauge tool is a proprietary tool that was recognized as a best practice utility by FHWA in its original use. It was adapted specifically to the information in the NOACA Long-Range Transportation Plan.

CrowdGauge is structured as a decision tool that challenges users to choose policy and program preferences with finite resources. Coins are allocated to each user to simulate the real-world limitations that transportation planning decision makers face, and that causes the user to have to identify and judge between priorities and preferences. In this way CrowdGauge creates a simulation of transportation-planning decisions in which members of the general public can participate, and that becomes in essence an interesting method to survey the priorities and preferences of the general public.

CrowdGauge was made available online and publicized through the NOACA website, at NOACA public meetings, directly solicited to NOACA email lists, and on social media through Facebook and Twitter. The tool was live beginning in mid-September 2016 and was available through the end of October. In the roughly 45 days of availability, 656 separate users completed the CrowdGauge survey.

A report that summarized results of the survey responses was presented to NOACA. The results summarize the priorities that were rated highest by aggregating the responses of all surveys. The amount of coins allocated to specific priorities is the method used to rank them. Results were further broken down by ranking the priorities of respondents based on the NOACA county in which they reside.

Similar to priority rankings, the types of projects and policies users preferred were also recorded, again based on the aggregated number of coins allocated by all users. The number of times a specific project type was selected was also reported.

Public Meeting Summaries

Five public meetings were held to gather input that could be used in the Long-Range Transportation Plan. The first two meetings were developed as public education sessions. The presentation and format of each meeting were meant to give a historical background on transportation planning in the NOACA region, from the time of the first transportation plan entitled *A Framework for Action*, 1969. The same presentation was given at each meeting, and it included an outline of the financial plan and assumptions that would be used to develop the NOACA LRTP through the year 2040. It also detailed the key transportation planning issues that will need to be addressed through 2040. These issues include an emerging asset management plan to address the region's primary challenge of asset preservation.

The five public meetings were titled consistent with their primary topic theme of discussion:

- Long-Range Transportation Planning Development
- NOACA History: A Framework for Action
- Community and Social Impacts of Transportation
- Social and Economic Impacts of Transportation
- Creating a Vision for Transportation in the NOACA Region

These meetings were designed to provide interaction with the public and stakeholders before the draft LRTP was written so that information and input received during the meetings could be considered during the writing process. As the first two meetings were primarily informational, presentations were given to the audience; however, meeting attendees were asked to respond to some survey questions using a polling/survey tool called Turning Point. The following section summarizes the information presented in each of the public meetings.

Meeting One: Long-Range Transportation Plan Development

This first meeting was a kickoff of the five planned public engagement meetings. Presentations were designed to give basic information about the LRTP development process. Outreach to develop the audience for this meeting was through direct email focused on NOACA stakeholder communities, and the audience was primarily elected and appointed officials who are direct stakeholder partners with NOACA in transportation planning. This meeting and each of the public meetings, however, was attended by transportation advocates who represented a wide variety of concerns and opinions.

Meeting Two: NOACA History—A Framework for Action

The second public meeting focused on the first Long-Range Transportation Plan developed for the NOACA region in 1969. The plan “A Framework for Action” has arguably had an outsized influence on the development of the NOACA region and transportation planning today, in part because it guided planning activities from its inception in 1969 through the early 1990s.

The period in which the first plan was developed is historically significant because the current conditions of the region’s economy and development started at the time of the first plan: population stagnation across the region, shifting of the economy from primarily industrial to a mix of service and manufacturing, and the trend of land-use development farther from the core supported by the expansion of transportation facilities. These trends have been continuous and ongoing since 1969.

As the region has developed since the first plan, phases of activity, both social and economic, have influenced the development of the region. For example, the postwar period saw the continued rise of an industrial manufacturing economy that affected business in the region and a trend and desire for suburban living that affected choices of households. These megatrends created needs and demands on the public infrastructure and investment choices made in the region. The Framework for Action information meeting was a way to begin a regional conversation (one that the media and others will continue to explore) about conditions and how the evolution of conditions has and will continue to change transportation planning and priorities.

Meeting Three: Community and Social Impact Meeting

The Community and Social Impacts meeting was planned in recognition that the operation of the transportation system can affect not only the experience of travelers but also other aspects of the lives of constituents in the region. While there have been a few recent reports that explore the relationship between transportation planning and social outcomes/societal affects, there is not a great deal of information that specifically addresses social impacts. Furthermore, those who have experience addressing social challenges are not always connected in conversations with transportation planners to explore the relationship between social outcomes and transportation mobility and access. The meeting on social outcomes was intended to facilitate better dialogue on the direct and indirect outcomes related to transportation planning..

Outreach for the Community and Social Impacts meeting was focused on groups and advocates that represented social conditions that could be affected by transportation planning outcomes. A specific goal of the meeting was to establish a dialogue with a broad range of stakeholders

and then continue that dialogue after the publication of the NOACA Long-Range Transportation Plan. NOACA staff worked closely with the NOACA Board and Advisory Councils to plan the content of the meeting and also to develop a list of people to invite.

Meeting Four: Business and Economic Impact Meeting

The Business and Economic Impacts meeting was an effort to align transportation infrastructure planning with regional economic growth and development planning as there are industries and economic activities that are directly and indirectly affected by transportation planning. Examples include business retention and expansion. NOACA is often involved in local activities when there is a relationship between infrastructure capacity and business activity; however, NOACA is less involved in the planning of economic growth strategies, which are more focused on business and industry attraction. This meeting was also an opportunity to try to gain an understanding of issues related to economic agglomeration, such as quality of life and place based economic growth strategies.

NOACA has been intentionally working to strengthen its connections to the regional business community because economic outcomes are some of the most important results that transportation planning can affect. In fact, regardless of whether NOACA pursues intentional strategies, economic outcomes such as productivity, economic growth, and agglomerative economies will be affected by transportation planning.

Outreach for the Business and Economic Impacts meeting was specifically targeted to area chambers of commerce, business intermediary groups, and business leaders. NOACA sought the advice of The Fund for Our Economic Future and the NOACA Business Advisory Council to develop the content of the meeting and conduct it.

Meeting Five: Creating a Vision for Transportation in the NOACA Region

NOACA planned a culminating meeting to cap the discussions of the previous meetings, using attendees' comments to establish a foundation for a publicly developed vision of the region's transportation needs for the next 20 years. A panel of engaged leaders representing different perspectives was convened, and NOACA worked with the public radio station WCPN, FM 90.3, and its affiliate Ideastream to host this meeting.

Outreach for the vision meeting was accomplished by promoting the meeting with advertisements on public radio (WCPN) and through direct email solicitation to all invited parties of the previous four meetings, and through online and social media venues.

Public Meeting Comments

The following is a summary of all public comments received during the five public engagement meetings. The summary was created first by recording all comments received in all of the meetings, then aggregating the comments received by subject, and finally combining all similar comments into a summarized statement. The comments are broken down into five topic areas: Transportation Mode, Transportation Qualities, Impact, Governance, and Funding. These comments are, in most cases, the aggregate of several comments that reflect the same idea. These statements were made as reflections of meeting participants both in reaction to information presented to them and opinions expressed during the meetings.

TRANSPORTATION MODES

General

- Transportation and transit policies should be built around people and their preferences and choices, not transportation modes.
- The quality of a mode of transportation use affects people's willingness to use them. At the same time, quality can depend on usage. There must be sufficient demand to justify routes and usage can drive, and can help fund, their continued existence and maintenance.
- Consumer experiences shape people's choices among different transportation modalities and transportation choices are driven, in large part, by convenience. Multiple transportation modalities may increase convenience. Making a modality more convenient is both a matter of designing the physical system to be easy to use and educating consumers about how to use it, through things like consistent signage. People need to be able to easily switch transportation modes. Barriers to switching modes need to be removed.
- Consumers need a better, regional transit fare system to make transit more convenient and open up more of the region to transit-dependent portions of the population. Transit is often too slow to be a convenient transportation option.
- Northeast Ohio should work to improve convenience by prioritizing efficient, accessible mobility.
- Different parts of the region have different abilities to support different transportation modalities. Walking, for example, is not a practical transportation mode in Northeast Ohio's rural areas. And road conditions depend on the decisions of local communities. Interest in multiple modes is growing in rural areas. This interest, however, may not extend to buses. Counties are offering different, limited supplementary ride services. Some businesses are supplementing the system by providing rides; Northeast Ohio should further engage companies and ask them to underwrite the cost of transit/transportation for their employees.
- Alternatives to automobile transportation, including transit, walking and biking, all have lesser effects on the environment and have positive health effects.
- A multimodal transportation system must include the transportation of things, not just people.

Cars

- Northeast Ohio's transportation system prioritizes the use of cars, and for many Northeast Ohioans, driving in Northeast Ohio is too easy - it discourages uses of other modalities.
- Accessing our car-based transportation system, however, requires a certain amount of wealth. Those who face income restraints find their access to the transportation system greatly impeded. Northeast Ohio is difficult to traverse without a car. If you can't afford or are unable to use a car, dependence on transit and nonmotorized travel leaves portions of the region effectively inaccessible; it constrains your mobility, undermines your quality of life and helps trap you in poor economic circumstances. In Northeast Ohio, only people with cars are truly connected.
- People who can't afford car travel or are unable to use it often find themselves cut off from other people and parts of Northeast Ohio, leading to a sense of isolation and new problems, like food deserts [defined by the USDA as "parts of the country vapid of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas. This is largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets, and healthy food providers."].
- The car isn't just a means of transportation; it's part of our culture. Cultural considerations affect other transportation modes: bicycle use has its own subculture, and living in a community that favors or is built around walking requires making a cultural choice. In communities where transit use is heavy, transit has positive cultural connotations that don't exist in Northeast Ohio.
- Those who can afford a car may still find it impractical if parking is unavailable or too expensive.
- The availability of parking at consumers' destinations can limit the quality and breadth of our automobile transportation system. Denser locations that don't have space for inexpensive and readily available parking can be inconvenient, which can place them at a disadvantage in attracting consumers.
- A transportation system that is dominated by automobiles passes a massive, uncalculated cost onto consumers. These costs are even greater in Northeast Ohio where under-maintained roads pass additional costs on to consumers by damaging their vehicles. These costs are not well quantified and they are not easy to fully calculate. These costs are, for the most part, dispersed among multiple vendors and spread out over time; they require work and attention to aggregate. Even when these costs are aggregated, they fail to capture opportunity costs paid by consumers and business from the loss of productive time while driving.

Transit

- Transit connectivity in Northeast Ohio is incomplete, which limits the people who rely on it from fully participating in the region and its economy. Northeast Ohio must make it a priority to meet the transportation needs of low-income residents without making it seem like transit is only for low-income residents. Northeast Ohio should identify and close service gaps for low-income residents and develop plans to better meet their needs. Transit needs to be expanded in both the number and frequency of routes.
- Transit development depends, and in Northeast Ohio is impeded by, density. There are limited funds available to pay for rides in areas with insufficient density to support transit.

There is debate about whether transit should be adapted to serve job density or whether job density should be developed around/near the transportation/transit system.

- Northeast Ohioans share many misperceptions about public transit that need to be corrected—for example that it's only for the poor and that the development of mass transit means adding expensive rail lines.
- Transit isn't robust enough in Northeast Ohio. Commuting into and out of urban areas is relatively easy, but moving from suburb to suburb is more difficult.
- Transit must better connect to jobs, vital services, facilities, assets, and critical movements, like to school and medical facilities.
- Transit within communities is pretty good; transit among communities is less so. Transit systems in Northeast Ohio are segmented by county and need to be connected. The region can expand access to more places and allow greater freedom of mobility through interagency transit coordination.

Biking

- There is widespread general support for biking as a healthy, inexpensive transportation mode. It is, however, inadequately interconnected throughout the region.

Walking

- Consumers need better pedestrian experiences.

TRANSPORTATION QUALITIES

Access

- Issues of access are about who has access to the transportation system, what mode of transportation they have access to, and what places the system will take them.
- Access is also a concern for the disabled and a growing concern for Northeast Ohioans as they age.

Congestion

- People may misperceive congestion in Northeast Ohio; compared to many other regions, Northeast Ohio does not have a congestion problem. The fact congestion is misperceived, however, doesn't really matter. If people perceive a congestion problem, then there is a congestion problem.

Connections

- The quality of internal transportation connections varies by community. Connections must become more systemic.

Management

- Northeast Ohio's transportation system needs to be better managed, and Northeast Ohio should use existing technological controls to improve both safety and capacity.

Safety

- Safety is a major concern for non-powered transportation modalities.
- Northeast Ohio needs greater transportation safety in its rural areas.
- Northeast Ohio also should promote transit as a safer transportation option.

Technology

- Northeast Ohio needs to keep up with technology innovations that can have an impact on economic development, and NOACA must stay open and flexible about new technologies and their uses.

IMPACT

Development

- Northeast Ohio's limited transportation funding cannot keep up with the region's sprawl. Incentives that continue to encourage the migration of residents and businesses into undeveloped and/or less dense areas encumbers Northeast Ohio with the additional cost of expanding and maintaining new infrastructure. These incentives should be reversed, and the money that would have been used for infrastructure expansion should be redirected toward other costs.
- Northeast Ohio must encourage infill in ways that place people closer to jobs. Affordable housing should be distributed more broadly to create greater density in outer areas and support a broader transit network.
- Millennials, at the moment, seem to be expressing preferences that differ from those of older generations, such as an interest in denser communities and urban environments, a diminished interest in driving, and a willingness to relocate for lifestyle reasons. Their preferences may become more traditional, however, as they and their responsibilities begin to change.
- Technology continues to transform the economy in ways that require less density; for example, manufacturing jobs are becoming more automated and 3-D printing will further revolutionize manufacturing. These changes may affect transportation needs, by reducing congestion and also reducing points of population density. They may also attract Millennials who don't want to drive.
- Northeast Ohio needs to fix the disconnection between transit and development, and needs more Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), which includes developing residential space near bus routes and rapid lines. The types of jobs that are located near transit lines matter; to attract a diverse population of transit consumers, the jobs located near transit routes need to be comparably diverse.
- Poor/incomplete information may be driving outward job movement. Lower cost of land in the short-term attracts business and development, but higher long-term costs created by outward movement is, at best, poorly calculated and is not integrated into relocation decisions.

Jobs

- NOACA should prioritize projects that increase access to jobs.
- Dependency on transit, particularly bus transit, can be risky. Bus lines tend to change, and that impermanence poses a problem for users, businesses, and developers. Changing transit routes can cut people off from essential services, cut retail businesses off from their markets, and leave customers and employees without easy transportation choices.

- Rail lines are more stable than bus routes; once rail lines are installed, they can't readily change and, assuming there is ridership, their stability makes rail more effective in supporting development and in drawing the region together.

Freight

- Northeast Ohio must anticipate and accommodate the increasing demand for freight delivery of consumer goods in residential areas.

Places

- People want to live in vibrant, exciting places.
- Communities and individuals have relationships with places. These relationships are crucial to attracting residents, businesses, and visitors to discrete locations and are shaped by how people experience each place. How people move to and around a place are integral parts of how people experience it, as are the place's physical characteristics, which are bounded by streets. Decisions to change transportation or transit should be made in the context of how they contribute to or detract from a sense of place.
- Multiple transportation modalities in a particular place help make it more vital. Riding a bike or walking makes people feel more connected to the community. If you are riding a bike or walking, you're more likely to stop at a local [establishment].
- Old intersections need to be more aesthetically pleasing and safe. Suburban land-use patterns often undermine a sense of place by placing parking between the building and the street, by not having sufficient lighting, and by not including sidewalks for pedestrian traffic.

Quality of Life

- Northeast Ohio's automobile-centric transportation system creates a public health crisis, and the lack of transportation and transit options has a negative impact on quality of life. The maintenance and enhancement of quality of life should be considered a high priority when making transportation and transit decisions.
- Maintaining Northeast Ohio's green spaces and natural assets must be a priority to ensure and enhance the quality of life of residents, help attract new residents and businesses, and make the region more sustainable and resilient.
- Changes to Northeast Ohio's transportation and transit systems should be designed to minimize their impact on green space, natural assets, and climate change. Parking is rarely the highest and best use of land and can eat up good green space. Northeast Ohio's tree canopy is insufficient; efforts toward its remediation/restoration should be integrated into changes to the transportation and transit systems.

Talent

- Corporate growth in Northeast Ohio depends on a quality of life that talented employees will find attractive. Transportation modalities are a part of providing that quality of life.
- Increasing access to talent makes a location more attractive to businesses. Businesses may follow transit routes and the access to customers and employees that they can help provide. The ability of transit routes to attract businesses depends, in part, on their stability. Businesses may be reluctant to invest if there is concern that their access to important populations may be subject to change by government fiat.

GOVERNANCE

Vision

- NOACA must create a vision for Northeast Ohio's future that clearly defines the important role of transportation and transit and can be used to better align government transportation, transit, and land-use decisions throughout the region.
- NOACA and its partners should encourage Northeast Ohioans to see and act on transportation infrastructure as a regional priority.

Decision Making

- To make regional decisions, NOACA needs to overcome lingering skepticism about all of us being in this together and build the political will to act to meet its transportation challenges. It must help Northeast Ohio address challenges created by uncoordinated local land-use planning that impede the development of a regional transportation system. NOACA must also find methods for making self-determined, sensible investment decisions about regional transportation without undermining the self-determination of local communities.
- Northeast Ohio needs to balance regional needs and personal preferences. People are reluctant to have their personal choices overridden, particularly if they believe it is simply to serve the personal choices of others. Northeast Ohio's challenge will be finding ways to leverage consumer interests to serve regional needs and to persuade residents that choices are being made in service of broader community needs, not the special interests of particular groups.

Actions

- NOACA should engage young people, elected officials, and its other constituents.
- The importance of smart communication technology continues to grow, and NOACA will need to use it as a crucial communication channel to inform the public about transportation issues and help people better access the transportation system.

Information

- NOACA needs additional engagement and public input to inform its decisions about projects. Governments throughout Northeast Ohio need better long-term ROI calculations before they make development, land-use, transportation, and transit decisions.

FUNDING

Need for Maintenance

- Transportation and transit infrastructure throughout Northeast Ohio are in need of maintenance. Infrastructure maintenance should be a regional priority and investment should be reordered accordingly.
- While there is an interest in making sure that Northeast Ohio can take advantage of new technologies like driverless cars, it is balanced by the recognition that Northeast Ohio cannot afford to fund the maintenance of its current system and simultaneously invest in new technology.

Efficiency

- Northeast Ohio should promote efficiency within its transportation and transit systems by streamlining its operations, trimming fat, and improving supervision. It also needs to use best practices to extend the life of the region's infrastructure and save money. NOACA should use the savings to find additional ways to conserve and build on what we have, not add to it.
- Greater efficiency in the regional transportation system can also put more money in consumers' pockets.

Funding Sources

- There are a variety of transportation and transit funding mechanisms that Northeast Ohio might use to secure additional transportation funding. These include user fees, sin taxes, a beef tax, a carbon tax, a tire tax, other excise taxes, a property tax, a parking tax, a gasoline tax, a tax on the electricity used by hybrid/electric cars, increased tolls, and a wider use of a system like EZ-Pass.
- Consumer behavior, however, can be affected by altering their transportation costs. These alterations can have unintended consequences. People near the edges of a district that enacts an excise tax, for example, may go outside that district for their purchases.

Perceptions

- The levels of local assessment to fund transportation vary across the region, and Northeast Ohioans are not accustomed to paying for roads; we only have one toll road in all of Ohio. Perceptions of the level of taxation for transportation are relative; expectations are anchored to previous experiences. In Pittsburgh, for example, the parking tax is three times what it is in Cleveland. These impediments will need to be overcome if Northeast Ohio intends to ask residents to fund additional investment.

Public Opinion Survey Summary

Survey Key Findings

The results of the public opinion survey were developed into a report reviewed by the polling agency and further refined and analyzed by a consulting communication firm and NOACA staff. Survey responses were presented in two ways, as raw data responses aggregated by county in NOACA's region and as a narrative analysis of the responses to each question in the survey. A table of contents outlines the narrative analysis by the subject matter of the survey questions.

General Attitudes

- Satisfaction with Northeast Ohio & Most Important Issues
- Opinion of Area Roads
- Main Mode of Transportation

Public Transportation

- Satisfaction with Public Transportation
- Frequency of Use
- Condition of Buses, Trains & Stations
- Suggested Improvements & Reasons for Not Using

Bike Lanes, Bike Paths & Sidewalks

- Satisfaction with Bike Lanes, Bike Paths & Sidewalks
- Frequency of Walking or Riding a Bike
- Most Helpful Improvements

Traffic Congestion

- Frequency of Experiencing Congestion
- Acceptable Time Spent in Congestion & More Inconvenient Type
- Significant Problem & Best Way to Fix It

Transportation Issues

- Helpful Transportation Improvements & Road Safety Issues
- Support for a Tax Increase
- Agree/Disagree Statements About Transportation

Many respondents indicated a strong preference for repairing and maintaining the existing roads in the area as well as the need for road repairs.

- 64% chose the condition of roads and bridges as one of the transportation issues they are most concerned about, and this was the leading response.
- Later, 71% indicated that repairing and maintaining the existing roads would be one of the most helpful transportation improvements in Northeast Ohio, also the top response. Just a fourth (26%) chose building more roads or adding lanes.
- Additionally, when asked about the road safety issues they are most concerned about, 65% chose potholes or the physical condition of the roads. This was second to distracted driving, which was mentioned by 71% of respondents.
- With regard to road conditions, less than half (42%) said their area roads are in excellent (7%) or good (35%) condition, while more than half (57%) said they are in fair (36%), poor (14%), or very poor (7%) condition.
- Just 22% are very satisfied with the network of roads in Northeast Ohio, while a majority are somewhat satisfied (58%) and 19% are not very or not satisfied at all with the network of roads.

Perhaps these results should not be surprising as 88% of Northeast Ohioans depend on their own car or vehicle to get around the area. Another 6% rely on family or friends to drive them around. Just 4% rely most on public transportation to get around, and 1% primarily walk or bike.

Four-fifths of residents (80%) experience traffic congestion when traveling around in Northeast Ohio, and 41% of them think it is a significant problem. This is one-third of all respondents (33%). Consistent with this, 29% of all respondents named traffic congestion as one of the transportation issues they are most concerned about.

Those who think traffic congestion is a significant problem were somewhat divided on the best way to fix it. A third (34%) think it would be best to widen the current roads, while about a fourth each said traffic lights should be timed better (24%) or a system to alert drivers in advance of congestion should be developed (21%).

It doesn't seem that many residents are ready to give up their car. Just a third (34%) agreed that they spend too much time in their car getting to places, while 62% disagreed with this. Similarly, while a third (33%) agreed that they would like to save the expense of owning a car and get around using other types of transportation, 62% disagreed. Consistent with this, a third (35%) cited transportation costs, including gas, insurance, or public transit as one of the transportation issues they are most concerned about.

Safety on the roads was also mentioned by about a third of residents as a top transportation issue (30%). Distracted driving such as texting is the top road safety concern, mentioned by 71%. Second to this was potholes and the physical condition of the roads (65%).

The use of public transportation is low, but some residents seem interested in using it or using it more.

- Just 15% indicated that they use public transportation daily, weekly, or monthly. 71% said they almost never use it.
- More than half of all respondents (55%) are satisfied with the public transportation options in their area. More people are somewhat satisfied (36%) than very satisfied (19%) with public transportation options, while a fourth (25%) are not very or not at all satisfied.
- 40% chose expanding public transportation to more areas as one of the most helpful transportation improvements in Northeast Ohio, while 20% chose increasing the frequency of public transportation.
- 58% agreed that they would use public transportation more often if it was faster and more convenient.
- Many users would like to see more public transit services, and a sizable percentage of nonusers indicated a lack of service in their area or it takes too long/it's inconvenient as a reason for not using public transportation.
- At the same time, 63% of nonusers said they have or need their car.

Two-fifths regularly walk or ride a bike to get places, and they suggested some improvements.

- A majority of all respondents (62%) are satisfied with bike lanes, bike paths, and sidewalks available in their area, but just 20% are very satisfied and 42% are somewhat satisfied. A fourth (26%) are not very or not at all satisfied. And overall, 25% chose adding more bike lanes or sidewalks as one of the most helpful transportation improvements.
- Many of those who regularly walk or bike think it would be helpful to have more or better sidewalks (36%) or more bike lanes or bike paths (28%).
- But several safety improvements were also mentioned, such as better signage, markings, or wider or separate lanes (9%), more visible crosswalks (7%), and drivers who are more respectful of cyclists and pedestrians (5%).
- There was also a high level of agreement among respondents that they would prefer to live in a community where most of their needs are within walking distance (63%).

Online Decision Game Analysis

Transportation Issues of Highest Priority to Respondents

Two major themes emerged from the priorities rankings: 1) reinvesting in existing infrastructure before building new, and 2) the desire for non-automobile forms of transportation (i.e., transit, walking, bicycling, etc.). Mitigating traffic congestion and improving access to the highway system had relatively low scores.

Priorities by county were varied. Cuyahoga County placed a high emphasis on transit accessibility, whereas none of the other counties put this in their top three priorities. Maintaining infrastructure in good condition was not only the highest-ranking priority across the region, but it also scored highly in each of the counties. County priorities generally matched overall regional priorities, with the exception of highway access: as mentioned, this was a low priority for the region overall, but it was a high priority for respondents in Lake and Medina counties.

Types of Transportation Investments Prioritized by Respondents

The most popular project category, by a significant margin, was adding new transit service. The top five were heavily focused on adding new transit service or reinvesting in existing transportation infrastructure. Building new roads and highways ranked as a relatively low priority.

One issue to note is the difference between cost-based rankings versus frequency-based rankings. Here we have provided both: the project categories are ranked by the overall number of coins they received, which is meant to simulate regional sentiment about budget allocation toward different project types, whereas the specific projects are ranked by their frequency of selection, indicating popularity of a specific initiative independent of cost. Each paints a partial picture, and it is important to look at both. For example, sidewalks received a relatively low portion of users' coin allocations, despite the fact that having pedestrian options scored high among the priorities. This is, however, offset by the fact that the specific project of "adding 60 miles of sidewalk" was one of the most commonly selected. The most reliable interpretation of this data is to look at projects that rank similarly across both dimensions: projects types that ranked high on both can be deemed popular regardless of cost, and vice versa.

Transportation Policies Most Favored by Respondents

Most of the policies received positive reactions. The only policy that had a strongly negative reaction was "prioritize investment in building new roadways before maintaining existing ones." As with the projects, reinvesting in existing transportation infrastructure proved to be very popular. Even some of the lower-ranked policies still had strongly favorable reactions, with nearly all policies receiving as many as five times as many thumbs up versus thumbs down votes.

As mentioned previously, users also had the option of adjusting their budget by using a tax slider. Most users (73%) chose not to change their starting budget. Among those that did, the majority indicated a willingness to raise taxes to fund additional projects.

Business Community Engagement

Business Engagement Plan

The NOACA LRTP Public Engagement Plan also included a significant and integrated effort to engage the business community in the NOACA region. Transportation planning has a significant impact on business activity of all kinds, and to date there had not been a serious effort to align transportation planning directly with economic growth strategy. In an attempt to

align transportation planning with a regional economic growth strategy, NOACA commissioned The Fund for Our Economic Future to conduct research on the most recent regional scale economic growth planning studies and surveyed the opinions of significant business leaders in the region.

NOACA worked with former Fund for the Future staff person, Chris Thompson, to conduct interviews of business leaders and to review previous research of various regional economic growth planning efforts. The work of this report and its recommendations and findings are based on the following:

- Past and updated economic research conducted by Team NEO in support of the region's economic competitiveness strategy.
- *Vibrant NEO 2040*, a report issued by the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium with the support of the Fund in February 2014.
- Interviews with more than 20 economic development and business leaders in Northeast Ohio conducted in summer and fall 2016.
- *What Matters to Metros*, an analysis of the foundational indicators for economic competitiveness issued in October 2013 by the Fund.
- *Growth and Opportunity*, an analysis completed by the Fund in May 2014 that examined how to support stronger, more equitable local and regional economies.
- *The Geography of Jobs*, a Fund analysis of the increasing distance between jobs and workers in Northeast Ohio and why it matters for future growth, published in 2015 and updated in June 2016.
- *Road Less Traveled*, a community engagement and opinion research report issued by Policy Bridge in March 2016.

Business Engagement: Report Recommendations

The work performed by the Fund was synthesized into a report presented to NOACA for the LRTP. To be clear, the report from the Fund is a commissioned work that represents the viewpoint of the Fund in response to the assignment from NOACA to produce recommendations on how and where transportation planning and policy could be aligned with regional economic growth strategy, so that transportation planning and investments would more efficiently support the region's goals of economic growth.

Context of Recommendations

If Northeast Ohio is to outperform the national economy, it will require a resilient, robust transportation system that can evolve over the next 20 years to meet shifting market demands and expectations. Our region's ability to enhance and sustain such a system are constrained by limited resources. Indeed, the \$13 billion anticipated to be available through state and federal resources over the next 20 years are insufficient to maintain the system "as is," let alone to invest in new transportation infrastructure necessary to catalyze economic growth and increase access to opportunity.

Federal guidelines require the LRTP developed by NOACA to reflect existing financial conditions. NOACA cannot plan for projects beyond the region's financial resources. The following recommendations are made with that understanding; however, research for this report makes it clear that our region will need additional financial resources to build and sustain a transportation system that advances economic growth and opportunity into the future.

Therefore, we urge NOACA and our economic development partners to view this report as not only a set of recommendations for a 20-year plan, but also a call for changes in public policy that result in increased local, regional, state, and federal resources for transportation-related investments. Achieving such policy changes will require a separate effort by public, private, and philanthropic leadership. The Fund is eager to engage with the elected officials on NOACA’s board, NOACA’s staff, and our economic development partners to explore those policy changes in greater detail.

Summary of Report Recommendations

To improve our region’s ability to plan for a future that fulfills our shared vision:

- NOACA should meld the visions of *Vibrant NEO 2040* and the region’s economic competitiveness strategy to guide the LRTP.
- NOACA should engage with its peers across the broader Northeast Ohio region to align their respective transportation plans to better meet the needs of the regional economy.
- NOACA’s board leadership should engage with the Fund, Team NEO, Greater Cleveland Partnership, and others to explore ways to better coordinate land use, transportation, and economic planning.

Maintenance and enhancements of existing transportation assets should be prioritized to:

- strengthen the competitiveness of key industries
- strengthen “strategic investment areas” identified in *Vibrant NEO 2040*, including investments that make them more connected and walkable
- strengthen multimodal transportation hubs and key freight corridors, including the Port of Cleveland, Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, and rail hubs
- make Hopkins more accessible to the region’s residents
- make existing job hubs (locations with a relatively large concentration of jobs within a contiguous area) across NOACA’s footprint more accessible, especially to residents of distressed neighborhoods to increase connectivity to and within downtown Cleveland

Investments in new transportation assets to catalyze economic growth and increased access to opportunity should:

- strengthen key freight corridors, especially near the Port of Cleveland and rail-accessible development sites
- expand job access by increasing availability of public transit as described in *Vibrant NEO 2040*, and by encouraging a more regional transit system
- Increase multimodal access to existing and potential new job hubs proximate to more densely populated areas

County Planners’ Meeting

Meeting Summary

NOACA convened a meeting of county planning officials in an effort to coordinate the concerns of transportation planning with the concerns of land-use development professionals.

Professional staff from each of NOACA’s counties were invited; representatives from Medina

County, however, was unable to attend. Also in attendance were representatives of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Agency (GCRTA) and the City of Cleveland.

The meeting agenda consisted of a review of planning requirements and priorities, NOACA's history of transportation planning, a discussion of current planning efforts and financial resources available, a summary of public involvement efforts to date, and finally, the invitation to participants to view county-level maps that displayed known major transportation projects and existing and planned transit and bicycle projects.

Current and historic regional growth practices were discussed as well as the potential negatives associated with them. The largest concerns were related to the senior population. Many core communities have rapidly aging populations but have not proven to be attractive to younger, new owners. Additionally, seniors in more rural areas may find themselves increasingly isolated as they age beyond the independence that auto ownership and the ability to drive give them.

Some queried the impacts of electric vehicles, drones, and self-driving vehicles. A dramatic expansion in electric vehicles would further necessitate a new paradigm for financing transportation projects and improvements, as fewer funds would be raised through a gasoline tax. Although drones could reduce the number of delivery trucks, they would originate from transportation warehouses that would be supplied, in all likelihood, by trucks. If the technology for self-driving vehicles becomes safe and reliable, it could assist substantially in maintaining the independence of seniors.

The potential for repurposing and/or even deconstructing roads and highways was suggested. The Midway Project, which seeks to repurpose the midways of some Cleveland streets with a two-way bike path running down the center, separated from traffic, was cited as an example of repurposing that could promote bicycle transportation.

A few questioned the benefit of spending scarce transportation dollars on transit, noting that the vehicles are frequently seen operating empty. It was noted that roads are also empty the majority of the time. Funding is generally prioritized based on service, whether transit or roadway, at peak travel periods. Elimination of transit during those periods would significantly increase congestion near employment hubs.

Finally, the potential affect of providing bicycle amenities in Amish country on buggy drivers was touched on. It was concluded that care had to be given to the design of these projects to avoid conflicts and unintended consequences.

Participants were asked to identify any unmet transportation needs in their jurisdictions on the series of county maps. They were also asked to identify any significant potential developments of which they might be aware.

At the end of the meeting, an exercise was conducted to identify planned transportation investments in each county by viewing maps created for the meeting. Each planner made annotations to the maps to indicate potential development areas and thereby highlight areas where coordination of priorities and activity should happen. The exercise resulted in the following outcomes.

Transportation Projects

Cuyahoga County:

- Lorain Avenue as a Priority Corridor for GCRTA from US 42 to West 140th Street
- Laketrans service to East 260th Street and Lakeland Boulevard

- Bicycle and BRT accommodations on Woodhill Avenue from Quincy Avenue to Miles Avenue
- Future of the Memorial Shoreway Bridge—ownership/responsible party for upkeep?
- Improved crossing at Bagley Road and Columbia Road in Olmsted Falls
- Improved crossing at train tracks on? Columbia Road in Olmsted Falls

Geauga County: No map annotations were made

Lake County:

- Continue GCRTA routes 30 and 39 to Shoregate (SR 283) as a transfer point for Laketransit
- A note was made that Lakeland Community College was at IR-90 and SR 306 on the Bicycle and Transit map. Perhaps support for the planned Laketransit routes? Or renovations floated for parking/transit at the college itself?
- Possible realignment of railroad in Grand River along Richmond Street and River Street
- Relocation of Jackson Street SR 44/SR-2 interchange to Renaissance Parkway

Lorain County:

- A US 20 spur from US 20 to the Lorain County Airport
- Full Improvement of Kolbe Road

Identified Areas of Development

Cuyahoga County:

- Continued medium residential development at upper Chester Avenue in the University Circle area
- Continued development potential on SR 87 between I-271 and SR 87
- Continued residential development south of I-80 in Olmsted Township

Geauga County: No map annotations were made

Lake County:

- Continue GCRTA routes 30 and 39 to Shoregate (SR-283) as a transfer point for Laketransit
- A note was made that Lakeland Community College was at IR-90 and SR 306 on the Bicycle and Transit map. Perhaps support for the planned Laketransit routes? Or renovations floated for parking/transit at the college itself?
- Potential 600-acre development at SR 615 and I-90
- Possible mixed-use development along Fairport Nursery Road in Painesville Township
- New Lake Metroparks park along shore north of Clark Road
- Multifamily and residential development north of US 20 in Painesville Township

- Large residential increase expected south of SR 20 in Painesville Township once sewer line to Painesville wastewater treatment plant is completed
- Increased residential a possibility at SR 84 and Vrooman Road when the bridge is done
- Residential development along the west side of SR 608 in Concord Township

Lorain County:

- More medical professional, retail, and light industrial development along I-90 from SR 83 to the Elyria Corporation Line
- Continued build-out in North Ridgeville—4,000+ housing units
- 2,000–4,000 new housing units in northern Columbia Township
- High developmental density expected along SR 82 from SR-57 to the Elyria Corporation Line –
- Expected population growth in Amherst Township
- The land at SR-2 and Middle Ridge Road is on the market for future development
- Transportation Warehousing potential at Turnpike and Baumhart Road and at Turnpike and SR-58

Final Public Engagement

After completion of the draft LRTP document, NOACA staff conducted a final round of public engagement activities to preview the LRTP draft, *AIM Forward 2040*. A final round of five public engagement meetings were scheduled, four of which were held outside Cuyahoga County to make these meetings more accessible to the region. The meetings were structured to present summaries of the LRTP document, Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and Overall Work Plan (OWP) and to provide additional context to all of NOACA’s major planning efforts.

A summary of the planning and execution of the final public engagement meetings follows.

Overview

NOACA is committed to informing and educating the public about its planning work, as well as providing opportunities for members of the public—including those in Environmental Justice areas and Low English Proficiency communities—to be involved in and participate in developing and implementing that work.

In 2017, NOACA updated its three major planning documents.

- The **Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)** provides a vision for the region’s transportation system of at least 20 years into the future. It is updated every four years.
- The **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** brings the vision of the long-range transportation plan to life. It includes all federally funded and regionally significant, non-federally funded highway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and freight-related projects scheduled for the next four years. It is updated every two years and may be amended quarterly.
- The **Overall Work Program (OWP)** outlines the transportation and environmental work of NOACA staff during the fiscal year running from July 1 through June 30.

Before drafts of these documents were submitted to the NOACA Board of Directors for final approval, NOACA made them available for public comment for at least 30 days. NOACA staff developed this plan to solicit feedback from stakeholders and the public that is consistent with NOACA's Public Interaction Policy and Public Participation Plan.

In 2017, draft copies of the LRTP, TIP, and OWP were submitted to the NOACA's committee structure for information and for help with publicity (see the Table 6-4, Key Dates below). The External Relations Division recommended that these three documents be brought before the public and stakeholders for comment together. Staff explained how the three documents are related: the LRTP takes a broad look at the transportation system over a span of 20 years, while the TIP is the implementation mechanism that schedules projects in four-year "chunks." The OWP outlines the annual work of NOACA staff (one-year planning horizon). Staff developed additional messages for stakeholders and the public specific to each plan. In this way, the public and stakeholders could get a broad understanding of NOACA's work.

NOACA staff planned a variety of techniques to reach the general public and interested parties, including populations that are typically underserved, such as low-income and minority populations (designated as Environmental Justice, or EJ, populations), the elderly, disabled, and those with limited English proficiency (LEP). Because some of these groups have limited access to transportation, NOACA held public meetings in locations that are Americans with Disabilities (ADA) accessible and accessible by public transit.

Target Audiences

NOACA built upon the LRTP public engagement sessions that occurred between June and September 2016. The title of NOACA's LRTP (*Aim Forward 2040*) served as a springboard for engagement.

NOACA targeted the following audiences:

- Stakeholders (e.g., public officials, project sponsors, etc.)
- Participants in previous engagement sessions
- General public (including those in EJ areas)
 - **Note: Environmental Justice Areas:** NOACA staff used GIS mapping technology to show the locations of Environmental Justice (EJ) populations (defined as low income and minorities) and TIP projects. Meeting locations were selected where the EJ areas and high concentration of projects overlapped.

Messaging

To simplify messaging, NOACA titled the outreach for all three major documents "Transportation Future." Staff created a web address (www.noaca.org/TransportationFuture) to house information regarding public engagement meetings and the documents themselves. Short descriptions of the documents were included as well as meeting dates/times.

Sample messages included:

- "We want to hear from you! View NOACA's planning documents at www.noaca.org/TransportationFuture."
- "Experience the Halley's Comet of transportation planning. That's when the three most important documents required by the federal government all occur in the same year. This only happens once every four years—and this is the year."

- “See how NOACA is laying a framework for transportation investments at a series of meetings throughout NE Ohio. *AIM Forward 2040*, NOACA's 20-year plan, offers a vision of the region's future and identifies \$15.8 billion in projects. Also check out a list of transportation projects scheduled for the next four years and NOACA's yearly work plan.”

Publicity

Note: Efforts were concentrated in the weeks around mid-May, when the public meetings were scheduled to be held, to maximize impact.

- **Engaged NOACA’s Board, Committees and Advisory Councils** to publicize the documents’ availability, public comment period, open houses, and public meetings.
- **Used email** to publicize the public meetings in May to a list of 1,643 recipients. Of that number, 404 people opened the email, for a 33.4% engagement rate (above the industry average of 22.8%).
- **Used the NOACA website** to inform stakeholders and the public.
 - Draft documents were posted to website (LRTP, TIP, and OWP).
 - Staff highlighted and promoted the TIP Tool to “find projects in your neighborhood.”
 - During the month of May, 2,457 people visited NOACA’s website and viewed 12,194 pages.
 - During the same time, the www.noaca.org/TransportationFuture page was visited 614 times, second only to NOACA’s “home” page. The *AIM Forward 2040* Web page (www.noaca.org/AIMForward2040) also cracked the top-10 most visited pages, with 265 page views.
- **Used robust social media efforts** to promote the documents’ availability, public comment period, and open houses; “boosted” posts to target EJ and/or underserved populations in Geauga, Lake, Lorain & Medina counties (“boosting” alone resulted in 4,733 total people reached and 178 total engagements). **In total, about 50,000 people were reached during this effort on social media alone.**
 - **Facebook:** From May 4-31, NOACA reached 10,300 people (up 113% over the previous 28 days). The number of page “likes” increased by 30 (a 30% increase over the previous 28 days).
 - **Twitter:** During the same time, tweets reached 37,000 people, and NOACA gained 39 new followers.
 - **LinkedIn:** Though harder to measure, during the same time thousands of people were reached on this network.
- **Issued press releases** about the documents’ availability, public comment period, public meetings, and TIP (ODOT) open houses.
- **Issued a postcard** that reached approximately 250 stakeholders.

Public Involvement

- Held five public meetings (one in each county) between May 16 and 18. Among all five meetings, NOACA engaged a total of 63 attendees.

Note: The Programming Division provided maps showing the overlap of EJ areas and TIP projects. Locations for the public meetings were chosen based on the overlap of EJ areas and projects.

- Attended two open houses about the TIP, scheduled and publicized collaboratively with Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Districts 3 and 12.
 - These were held on April 4 and 6, 2017. Notice of these meetings was shared in the [March 22, 2017, edition of NOACA Connection](#).
- Encouraged public comment through multiple platforms, including the telephone hotline, website, social media, email, U.S. mail, etc.

Content of Public Meetings: May 16, 17, and 18, 2017

Public meetings consisted of a short presentation/discussion, followed by the opportunity for participants to ask questions and offer comments and input.

- **Welcome & Short Presentation(s):** [Available online here.](#)
 - Short introduction to NOACA
 - Explanation of the three major planning documents (what they are, their purpose, why they're important, how they relate to each other)
 - **LRTP**
 - Highlighted the main points in the draft plan
 - Highlighted public input and comments received through the public engagement process
 - **TIP**
 - Highlighted the largest/most impactful projects in each county
 - Sought comment on the projects included in the TIP in the five-county NOACA region
 - **Overall Work Plan (OWP)**
 - Highlighted the notable work of NOACA staff for the coming year
 - Explanation of the different interactive stations and activities at each one
- **Interactive Stations**
 - Copies of all three documents (LRTP, TIP & OWP) were made available for viewing and comment.
 - Staff used visualization techniques to highlight important messages from the LRTP and TIP in a large infographic (titled [A Snapshot of the Region](#)) that was shared at each meeting and online.
 - Large-scale maps were created for each county to highlight major LRTP projects and county-specific TIP projects. A list with details of the projects was provided.

- Computers were used to display the [Interactive TIP Tool](#) to find other projects.
- Staff offered “comment cards” (none of which were returned) and an interactive fill-in-the-blank “mad-lib” to gauge transportation thoughts.

Public Comment and Response

The above activities are consistent with NOACA’s Public Participation Plan. In accordance, NOACA staff works to address all substantive comments received through public and stakeholder involvement either by meeting the request or arriving at a consensus compromise with project sponsors. Through the outreach efforts described above, NOACA staff addressed individual comments during the discussion portion of each meeting (as noted above). In addition, several electronic comments were received between May 23, 2016 and June 8, 2017. They related to:

- Expanding the RTA rail system, pedestrian assets and water assets; supporting a county-wide bus system; etc.
- How projects that generate savings can have those savings accurately incorporated into cost estimates and project lists (i.e., translating “societal savings” from bicycle infrastructure into hard cost savings)

We believe these comments are sufficiently addressed by Chapter 7: “A Visionary Future” and in Chapters 3.4: “Livable Communities” and 5.1: “Financial Plan.”

Figure 6-4: Key Dates

2017 Key Dates	
January	Internal staff consultation
February	Posted first draft of TIP to ODOT extranet site for review by review agencies
March	Posted second draft of TIP (addressing agency review comments) to ODOT extranet site for public involvement period
March 13	Draft LRTP made available for public review
March 24	Draft LRTP presented to Transportation Subcommittee
March 27	Second draft TIP made available for public review
March 27 – April 7	ODOT's two-week STIP public review period
April 4, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.	<u>TIP/STIP Open House at ODOT District 3</u>
April 6, 4-7 p.m.	<u>TIP/STIP Open House at ODOT District 12</u>
April 14	Draft LRTP presented to External Affairs Committee, Policy Committee, and Planning and Programming Committee Draft OWP presented to Planning and Programming Committee Draft TIP presented to Planning and Programming Committee
May	Posted final TIP (addressing agency review comments) to ODOT extranet site for federal agencies' review Posted final draft TIP to NOACA website for public review and comment
May 9	Draft OWP made available for public review
May 12	Draft LRTP (Financial Plan) presented to Finance and Audit Committee Draft LRTP presented to Executive Committee Draft OWP presented to Finance & Audit Committee and Executive Committee Final draft TIP presented to Executive Committee
May 16 – 18	Public Meetings held in each of NOACA's five counties regarding LRTP, TIP, & OWP
June 9	LRTP, TIP, & OWP presented to Board of Directors for approval LRTP, TIP, & OWP approved by Board of Directors Final LRTP, TIP, & OWP documents added to website

