



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

• John Hamercheck, Commissioner, Lake County

First Vice President

• Jeff Brandon, Trustee, Montville Township

Second Vice President

• Chris Ronayne, Cuyahoga County Executive

Secretary

• Justin Bibb, Mayor, City of Cleveland

Assistant Secretary

• John Plecnik, Commissioner, Lake County

Assistant Secretary

• Annette M. Blackwell, Mayor, City of Maple Heights

Assistant Secretary

• James W. Dvorak, Commissioner, Geauga County

Treasurer

• Timothy C. Lennon, Commissioner, Geauga County

Assistant Treasurer

• Andrew Conrad, P.E., P.S., Medina County Engineer

Assistant Treasurer

• Michael Dylan Brennan, Mayor, City of University Heights

Assistant Treasurer

• Frank Whitfield, Mayor, City of Elyria

Immediate Past President

• Jeff Riddell, Commissioner, Lorain County

Samuel J. Alai, Mayor, City of Broadview Heights

Larry Antoskiewicz, Mayor, City of North Royalton

Pamela Bobst, Mayor, City of Rocky River

Jack Bradley, Mayor, City of Lorain

Ben Capelle, Chief Executive Officer, Laketran

Kenneth P. Carney, Sr., P.E., P.S., Lorain County Engineer

Matthew Castelli, Mayor, City of Middleburg Heights

Mary Cierbiej, Executive Director, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission

Kevin Corcoran, Mayor, City of North Ridgeville

Mark Cunningham, Trustee, Columbia Township

Timothy J. DeGeeter, Mayor, City of Parma

James DeRosa, Director Office of Capital Projects, City of Cleveland

Michael W. Dever, Director of Public Works, Cuyahoga County

Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, Chief Executive Officer, NEORSJ

William D. Friedman, President and CEO, Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority

Kirsten Holzheimer Gail, Mayor, City of Euclid

Meghan George, Mayor, City of Lakewood

James R. Gills, P.E., P.S., County Engineer, Lake County

Blaine A. Griffin, Council President, Ward 6, City of Cleveland

Aaron M. Harrison, Commissioner, Medina County

Stephanie Howse, Councilwoman, Ward 7, City of Cleveland

Joyce Pan Huang, Director, Cleveland City Planning Commission

Brian Kazy, Councilman, Ward 16, City of Cleveland

Rev. Charles Lucas, Board President, GCRTA

Kerry McCormack, Councilman, Ward 3, City of Cleveland

Dale Miller, Cuyahoga County Councilman, District 2

David J. Moore, Commissioner, Lorain County

Robert Patrick, Service Director, City of Wadsworth

John Picuri, P.E., Deputy Director, District 12, ODOT

Richard Repovich, Commissioner, Lake County

Khalil Seren, Mayor, City of Cleveland Heights

Ralph Spidaliere, Commissioner, Geauga County

Bonnie Teeuwen, Chief Operating Officer, City of Cleveland

Kim Thomas, Mayor, City of Richmond Heights

Ex Officio Members:

Ferzan M. Ahmed, P.E., Executive Director, Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission

District Chief, Northeast District Office, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

Grace Gallucci, Executive Director & CEO

Ohio Senate Transportation Committee House Bill 23

Interested Party Testimony
March 1, 2023

*Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA)
Grace Gallucci, Executive Director and CEO*

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Ohio Senate Transportation Committee – thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 23, the state’s transportation budget for fiscal years 2024-2025.

I am the Executive Director and CEO of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) that conducts transportation and environmental planning for Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina Counties. On behalf of NOACA, I appreciate the opportunity to testify.

NOACA would like to thank Governor DeWine, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), and the Ohio General Assembly for their continued support of transportation funding in Ohio -- and in particular, for proposing a budget that does not reduce funding for public transit, relative to the previous budget. In Northeast Ohio, public transit represents a significant portion of the region’s overall transportation network. Consistent, reliable funding for transit is vital to the continued planning and investment needed to provide all residents with convenient and affordable access to jobs, health care, and a good quality of life.

NOACA also appreciates the proposed Ohio Regional Workforce Mobility Partnership Program. This represents an important investment in workforce mobility, and will lead to collaborative solutions that will improve job creation, workforce retention, and talent recruitment in Ohio.

In fact, NOACA continues to support the recommendations contained in ODOT’s 2015 Ohio Transit Needs Study, which suggested investing \$185 million annually in statewide public transportation funding by 2025. Furthermore, NOACA continues to support the creation of a long-term dedicated source of funding for public transportation, in order to ensure that Ohio remains competitive with other states as it endeavors to attract new businesses, jobs, and residents. Distributions from such a fund should reflect and leverage local investments made by communities -- for example, by providing matching funds to locally generated transit revenue. This would generate even more value for Ohio's transit investments.

With regard to inter-city passenger rail, NOACA applauds Governor DeWine’s recent decision to seek federal funding and technical support to explore increased passenger rail opportunities in Ohio. NOACA will support Ohio’s applications through the federal Corridor Identification and Development program for two new rail corridors, and we will also submit applications for improvements to three existing corridors. Better inter-city passenger rail connections will improve Ohio’s overall economic competitiveness, and will make Ohio a better place to live and conduct business. NOACA respectfully urges the Governor and the Ohio Legislature to provide the resources necessary to move these projects forward, and to view inter-city passenger rail as an important component of the state’s transportation network.

1299 Superior Ave., Cleveland, Ohio 44114-3204 Phone: 216-241-2414 FAX: 216-621-3024

Web: www.noaca.org

[noaca.org](https://www.facebook.com/noaca.org)

[@noaca_mpo](https://twitter.com/noaca_mpo)

Last week, I testified before the House Finance Committee regarding several items that were recently added to a previous version of HB 23, including language that would have prohibited a bicycle lane in the middle of a street or highway in a municipality with a population of more than 300,000 residents. This would have jeopardized an important project in the City of Cleveland, the Superior Midway project, for which NOACA has facilitated substantial planning and funding with input from the City of Cleveland and many partners. I am very pleased that, based on discussions during and after the hearing, this language was removed from the bill approved by House Finance Committee yesterday. I appreciate the responsiveness of Chair Edwards, Representative Patton, and other committee members in removing that language. In particular, I appreciate Representative Patton's willingness to listen to our sincere concerns and work with NOACA and other partners in a constructive and thoughtful dialogue. NOACA commits to working with Representative Patton, our entire Statehouse delegation, business owners, and first responders to address all concerns as we advance this important project.

In addition, NOACA has concerns over several other provisions included in HB 23:

- Language requiring that interstate highway interchanges exist every 4.5 miles with regard to adjacent municipal corporations meeting specific population characteristics
- Language creating the Rural Highway Fund and transferring \$1 billion into the fund (with 80% used to finance projects on rural state highways and 20% designated for local governments as local matching funds for TRAC eligibility)
- Language ensuring that any loan to a municipal corporation eligible for Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT's) Small Cities Program, from the State Infrastructure Bank, must be a zero-interest loan.

NOACA has concerns about language requiring the existence of interstate highway interchanges among certain adjacent communities, and believes this approach infringes on the decision-making authority of local elected officials. MPOs, like NOACA, were established by federal law to enable consensus-building among communities and local elected officials in order to facilitate a regional approach to transportation planning and funding, and to address needs that are specific to a given region. The proposed language would appear to attempt to overrule this consensus-based approach, as established under federal law. This language instead prescribes a specific outcome based on very specific metrics. In fact, the language would appear to circumvent processes that already exist, including ODOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements that an Interchange Justification Study be completed prior to the development of new interstate highway interchanges, as well as NOACA's Board-adopted interchange policy.

Also, NOACA has concerns about language creating the Rural Highway Fund and transferring \$1 billion into the fund (with 80% used to finance projects on rural state highways and 20% designated for local governments as local matching funds for TRAC eligibility). NOACA represents urban, suburban, and rural communities, and believes that they must be treated with fairness. Urban, suburban, and rural interstates are all important components of the state interstate system, and no specific funds should be designated for any particular part of this system. If anything, an equitable system would simply use vehicle miles traveled (VMT) to allocate funding for all interstates, regardless of location. And if there's a particular need in a

specific place, ODOT already has the means and mechanisms to address any situations or needs that might arise.

Finally, NOACA is concerned about language proposing that zero-interest loans from the State Infrastructure Bank would be available to municipal corporations eligible for ODOT's Small Cities Program – those with populations from 5,000 to 24,999 that are not located within a MPO's boundaries. NOACA believes there is no compelling reason to provide special consideration to these cities that is not also available to all Ohio cities (and other government entities such as port authorities, metro park districts, transit authorities, counties, and townships) that may also use the State Infrastructure Bank. NOACA represents governmental jurisdictions of all shapes and sizes. In the interest of fairness, NOACA believes that all governmental jurisdictions should be entitled to equal treatment with regard to loan programs.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony; I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of NOACA.