

# Memorandum

## 10/4/2023

To: Ralph Spidalieri  
Tim Lennon  
Jim Dvorak

From: Geauga County Planning Commission

Subject: Geauga County Economic Development and NOACA/CED/EDD

Dear County Commissioners,

In our last county planning meeting, we discussed the recent action in the NOACA board to create an Economic Development Subcommittee and Economic Development District (EDD) operating under NOACA (Attachment 1). The EDD is a federal designation, and this board has concerns that NOACA will use this organization to usurp the authorities of Geauga County Elected officials and do harm to Geauga County Residents. The case is clear and parallels the argument made to the Geauga County Commissioners in a letter send to the Commissioners office in and around 11/3/2022 asking the Commissioners to end any involvement in the NOACA led CED (Attachment 2).

The harm created by NOACA to surrounding counties is clear and based on an Urban based set of strategies located on the NOACA website and in the eNEO2050 plan. The EDD provides mechanisms to replace local elected official authority with this coalition of governments board. Their ideas, policies, and strategies promoted by NOACA are all Urban based on not aligned with Geauga County values. Moreover, the Federal programs are worse in that they promote political agendas. Our founders specifically created the 10<sup>th</sup> amendment limiting Federal involvement in state and local affairs because the Federal government always creates issues in sovereignty and broad outcomes that do not address local issues and concerns. There are some that argue that NOACA is a violation of the 10<sup>th</sup> amendment. Since that battle has not be fought we must at least be aware of the potential harm that is created by Federal programs and the federal agents like NOACA.

NOACA (an MPO) was created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning and NOT economic, land use planning, or climate action planning. MPO planning should be limited to the specific and narrow ideas that focus on roads and infrastructure. The recent motion language created by NOACA and that was passed in the board meeting clearly violates this mandate.

### **BACKGROUND/JUSTIFICATION FOR CURRENT ACTION**

Aligning land use, economic development and transportation is key to sustainable infrastructure and development. Land use policies regulate land for a better quality of life. Economic development connects businesses with opportunities. Adding a multimodal transportation system creates a mobile community. The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) in its role as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and environmental planning agency for the region recognizes the importance of linking land use, economic development, and transportation.

This broad language is establishing NOACA (Cleveland and Cuyahoga County) as some sort of authority to create “sustainable” infrastructure and development (no definition provided). This is the nose of the camel under tent concept, and we should be very weary. Citizens elect officials in Townships and Cities who are responsible to them to make such decisions and giving away this authority to an unelected body such as NOACA will not turn out well. There are many questions and issues that are created by this federal designation that revolves around the sovereignty of Geauga County. There are many critics of the EDD program generally and among the criticisms.

Critics argue that EDDs often provide subsidies to large corporations that do not need them while neglecting small businesses that could benefit more from the assistance <sup>3</sup>. Additionally, some critics argue that EDDs can be overly secretive and unaccountable. They claim that EDDs often operate behind closed doors and do not provide enough information about their activities to the public <sup>3</sup>.

Even with the best intentions, considerable resources, and unbridled ambition, many innovation district leaders are challenged in their efforts to create a balance between growing the innovation economy, enhancing social and professional networks, and creating a high-quality physical environment that facilitates both

NOACA has demonstrated a lack of transparency, a focus on Urban priorities, NO understanding of the rural communities, and an obvious (see eNEO2050) plans to alter the cultures of rural communities. Moreover, NOACA has been promoting a Climate Action Plan that appears to be based on a corrupt process, that is not based on evidentiary science, exceeds its statutory authority, and will create recommendations that have not hope to change a global climate. Many are waking up to this reality (Attachment 3 Medina County Letter).

The case is strong and obvious. That said, the Geauga County Planning Commission is asking that the Geauga County Commissioners make a bold public statement that it will not participate in the NOACA led CED/EDD and Climate Action Planning effort. Moreover, we ask that a letter be drafted and sent to NOACA stating the same.

Sincerely,  
John Oros  
Chairman of the Geauga County Planning Commission Board

Attachment 1

**TO:** NOACA Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Grace Gallucci, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer  
**DATE:** September 1, 2023  
**RE:** **Resolution: 2023-038 Economic Development Subcommittee Formation**

**ACTION REQUESTED**

Request the Board of Directors to approve the Subcommittee charter and membership. Action taken would finalize the creation of the subcommittee and the appointment of its twenty-nine members.

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In 2020, NOACA engaged its stakeholders by forming a steering committee and working group to develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). CEDS is a strategy-driven plan to align funding for regional economic development. The US Economic Development Administration (EDA) approved the CEDS in March 2023, which opens additional funding opportunities to support economic development in the region.

The next step in the process is the designation of an Economic Development District for the region. The formation of an Economic Development Subcommittee (EDS) to replace the Economic Development Steering Committee and Working Group is necessary to maintain and implement CEDS. The EDS will provide advice and policy recommendations to the Policy Committee to support economic growth and enhance quality of life for the region.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no financial impact.