

Geauga County Planning Commission

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<https://bocc.geauga.oh.gov/departments/planning-commission>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 23, 2025
TO: Geauga County Commissioners
FROM: Geauga County Planning Commission
RE: NOACA

Dear Commissioners Brakey, Dvorak, and Spidalieri

Fiscal responsibility regarding Geauga County contributions through the 18.4 cents/gallon federal gas tax is of the utmost importance. See Appendix 1 and 2 attached hereto and incorporated herein as though fully rewritten.

In September NOACA sent a survey *regarding the Vibrant NEO Plan* created by NOACA for Geauga County. This survey asks questions that pertain to the following:

- *'Does your jurisdiction pursue the remediation, assembly, marketing, and redevelopment of abandoned properties at the local and regional levels? Example: redevelop a vacant retail building through the use of incentives like tax credits.'*
- *'Does your jurisdiction encourage a higher frequency of mixed-use development and a range of diverse, affordable housing options? Example: include traditional small-lot, compact single-family, and townhouse residential designations in your zoning codes.'*
- *'Does your jurisdiction preserve natural areas for future generations, provide outdoor recreational opportunities, or support a regional approach to protect air, water, and soil quality? Examples: strengthen watershed partnerships in the areas of flood mitigation and stormwater run-off; use green infrastructure practices like raingardens and bioswales.'*

These types of questions are designed to elicit desired results. NOACA's charter, as defined in federal law, is to manage the funds associated with federal gas tax of 18.4 cents/gallon to maintain our federal(ized) roads. There is no authority to do land use planning, economic development, or climate action planning.

The original grant application submitted to HUD to obtain a \$4.5 million dollar grant contained the following statement:

'Historic patterns of development have not led to the equal distribution of community amenities or access to jobs, education neighborhood services, open spaces, transit, and municipal services. This has resulted in disparities in health, income, food access, education and employment options. Our regional planning effort will identify how to best deploy resources to address these historic inequities.'

The reasoning that justified the grant made it obvious from the start that NOACA's planning effort was not honest and it in fact contained covert progressive objectives. Anyone reviewing the data associated with the "Geauga Plan" would quickly discover that the data is corrupt and steered with an objective to guide the region in a progressive direction. Moreover, the survey questions attached to the recent NOACA letter are leading and designed to give a certain answer:

e.g., "2. Does your jurisdiction help develop a robust network of regional job centers connected by multimodal transportation corridors within and between counties? Example: use transit-oriented development (TOD) to create stronger and more accessible regional job centers. "

People in Geauga County elect county commissioners, city mayors and city councils, and township trustees to plan for future development to create outcomes for its citizens and to create local plans. The county has a planning commissioner that produces a county wide plan. NOACA has NO authority to plan or try to influence outcomes for a rural community like Geauga. Moreover, Cuyahoga County and Cleveland have a culture and set of values that are in direct conflict with rural communities such as Geauga County. Anyone attending NOACA meetings quickly discovers that the emphasis of every effort is Cuyahoga County and Cleveland centric. Each plan and effort produced by NOACA is to the detriment of rural counties like Geauga. Moreover, it is to the detriment of the NE Ohio region.

For these reasons the Geauga Planning Commission asks the Board of County Commissioners to either end its relationship with NOACA or work to explore creating a separate Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) with Lake County.

Planning Commission Members signatures:

Nicholas Gorris, Chairman

ABSTAIN

Dennis Bergansky, Vice Chairman

Gary Neola, Secretary/Treasurer

Caterina Cocca-Fulton

Matt Johnson

James McCaskey

Enzo Perfetto

Phillip C. Miller

Commissioner Carolyn Brakey

Commissioner James Dvorak

Commissioner Ralph Spidalieri

Commissioner Alternate:

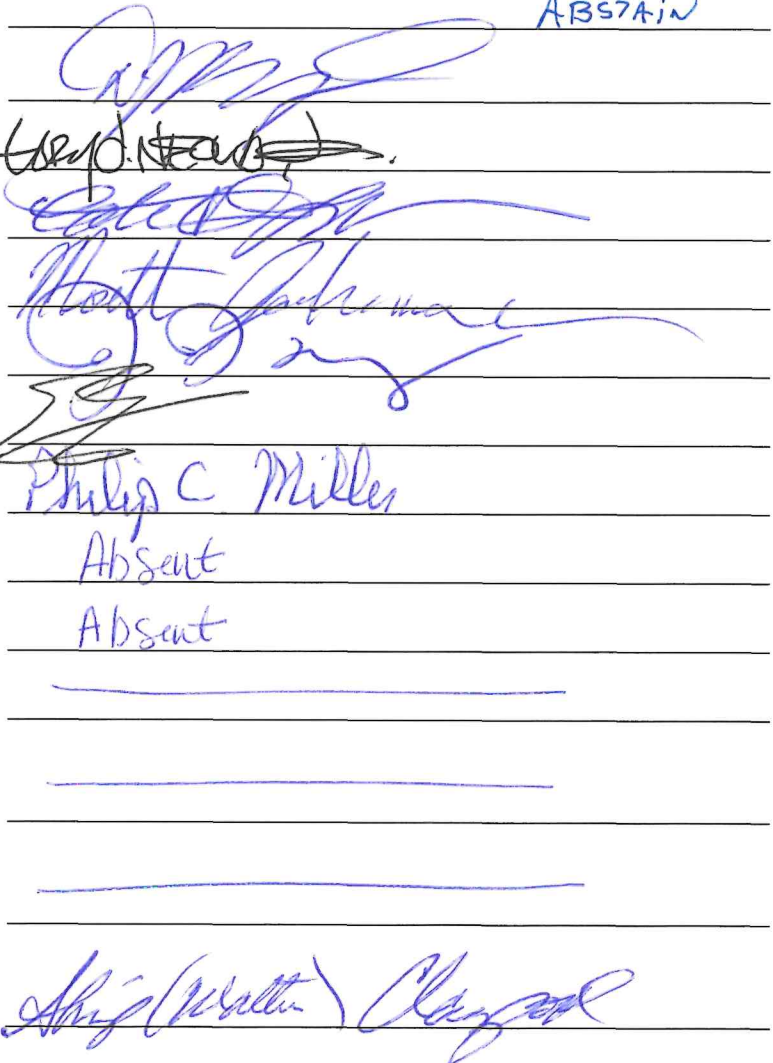
Dane Davis

Commissioner Alternate:

Dave Fabig

Commissioner Alternate:

Skip Claypool



Appendix 1 – Options for Leaving NOACA:

Leaving NOACA Option 1:

The downside to leaving NOACA is that Geauga County loses its rights to the funding received through NOACA. Historically this amount is less than 1 million dollars. However, Geauga would qualify for funding sources that are none MPO related. Many counties are not in MPO's and receive ODOT funding. There is an argument that the historic return received from NOACA is not worth the risk of having a progressive culture influence. Geauga County Citizens contribute about \$10 million tax dollars a year to the federal system and our return is less than 1 million of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) dollars.

Leaving NOACA Option 2:

Gauga and Lake Counties could form a separate MPO (23 CFR 450). There is an estimate that such an MPO would net Geauga and Lake County around \$7 million dollars of STBG dollars and it would qualify the county to apply for larger ODOT funding sources.

We request the Geauga County Commissioners to take serious note of the consequences of doing nothing as we are soon to be negatively affected by being in the MPO called NOACA!

No matter how one may feel about what the role of NOACA should or should not be, our Geauga County Commissioners need to recognize and acknowledge the financial sacrifice made to its citizens by being a part of this MPO. Moreover, the influence and attempt NOACA makes to influence land use planning and economic development.

The steps for us to leave NOACA and from a new MPO with Lake County would need to follow *23CRF 450.310 Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) designation and redesignation.*

Below is an abbreviated list of actions needed to establish a new MPO as per required by 23CRF450.310:

- *Create an agreement between counties within an Urbanized area.*
- *Establish a committee of local elected officials, public transit operators, ODOT representatives, and other transportation stake holders that can be designated as the MPO;*
- *Establish a governance structure for the MPO's transportation decision making processes;*
- *Identify a planning staff or contract with a consultant team to conduct and document the federal planning process, including development of multi-modal 20-year transportation plan, updated on a 4 or 5 year schedule.*
- *Establishing and maintaining cost accounting systems to accurately track MPO planning program expenditures and reimbursements; and*
- *Preparation of annual cost allocation plans to accurately establish reimbursement fringe and indirect rates.*
- *Obtain approval from largest city in planning area.*
- *Gain Governor approval.*

Appendix 2 – Estimate Gas Tax Paid by Geauga County Citizens:

Through NOACA, Geauga County receives only a small portion of it in return. NOACA keeps most of what Geauga County citizens pay in Federal tax. NOACA keeps most of it for Cuyahoga County and mostly uses it in the Cleveland area.

Gauga County citizens pay approximately \$10 million per year in Federal gas tax. Below is a Gas Tax Calculation:

Geauga County Gas Tax Calculation

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 95,000 | Number of registered cars per Geauga County Engineer |
| <u>15,000</u> | Average miles driven per year per the AAA. |
| 1,425,000,000 | Total number of miles traveled by Geauga County registered cars |
| | |
| <u>25</u> | Average miles per gallon of gas per AAA |
| 57,000,000 | Number of gallons of gas used per year in Geauga County |
| | |
| <u>\$0.184</u> | Federal gas tax per gallon of gas |
| \$10,488,000 | Annual Federal gas tax paid |