

Appendix 4-1. NOACA Public Engagement Examples

Clean Water 2020

Clean Water 2020 is the first comprehensive update of Clean Water 2000, NOACA's wastewater management and water quality plan (208 Plan) since 2000. The 2020 plan contains the input of many Northeast Ohio stakeholders representing counties, municipalities, townships, sewer districts, watershed organizations, local health districts, wastewater treatment plants, and various state and federal agencies. State and federal agencies include the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA), Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Ohio Department of Health (ODH), and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Once approved by the NOACA Board of Directors (Board), certified by the Ohio Governor, and approved by USEPA, Clean Water 2020 will serve as the 208 Plan for Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina counties. Clean Water 2020 will supersede any previous 208 Plans for these counties.

208 Plan Development Engagement

NOACA involved a broad array of individuals, groups and interested parties in the development of the Clean Water 2020 Plan through multiple outreach methods. The information gathered from these efforts helped NOACA staff produce an up-to-date, user-friendly 208 Plan that serves the wastewater management and water quality planning needs of the region.

208 Plan Working Group. In 2016, NOACA staff organized the 208 Plan Working Group (Working Group) to assist with the development and review of the 208 Plan. The Working Group consisted of water professionals from around the NOACA region, including representatives from DMAs, local health districts (LHDs), regional drinking water agencies, county engineer offices, soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), stormwater utilities, local watershed groups, and state agencies (see Appendix 3B). Members selected a chair and vice-chairs to coordinate with NOACA staff to set meeting agendas and manage proceedings. The Working Group met quarterly to guide and review staff work on the 208 Plan (see Appendix 3B for meeting dates). Working Group members also assisted with engagement efforts, including the dissemination of two questionnaires (see below) and support at 208 Plan public meetings.

Chapter Focus Groups

NOACA staff and the Working Group formed focus groups for input into the materials included in Chapter 4 (Wastewater Management Facility Planning), Chapter 5 (Management of Residential and On-Site Commercial Sanitary Sewage Treatment Systems), and Chapter 6 (Management of Stormwater Runoff and Nonpoint Source Pollution). These chapters are technical, so staff invited active professionals and stakeholders with expertise in each chapter's subject matter to join one or more focus groups. Each focus group met as needed to assist staff with chapter development (see Appendix 3B for focus group members and meeting dates).

NOACA Water Quality Subcommittee

During the development of the 208 Plan, NOACA staff provided progress reports on completed work to the Water Quality Subcommittee. The subcommittee also reviewed, commented on and offered recommendations on the information produced by NOACA staff, the Working Group,

and the focus groups. The subcommittee provided initial review of the Clean Water 2020 Plan prior to consideration by NOACA's other committees and Board.

208 Plan Questionnaires

NOACA staff developed two online questionnaires to gather additional information from 208 Plan stakeholders and the public. Staff developed the first questionnaire, "NOACA Wastewater Decision Makers Questionnaire," to solicit input from the representatives of DMAs, LHDs and jurisdictions affected by FPA modifications ("208 Plan stakeholders"). Staff also developed a second questionnaire, "208 Public Questionnaire," to gather input from environmentally active citizens concerned with water quality issues ("208 Plan public"). Appendix 3C includes a copy of each questionnaire and summaries of distribution efforts, response rates, and response summaries.

Public Meetings

NOACA staff and members of the Working Group cohosted five public meetings, one in each NOACA county (Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina). The public meetings included a short presentation on NOACA's 208 planning responsibilities and local coordination efforts. After the presentation, attendees could visit information stations and ask questions of NOACA staff and local stakeholders about specific 208 Plan components. Staff incorporated feedback from the meetings into the draft Clean Water 2020 Plan. Appendix 3D includes each public meeting's agenda, sign-in sheet and summary.

NOACA Website and Social Media

NOACA used various online resources to promote the 208 Plan and collect feedback during its development. NOACA staff posted notices for each of its five cohosted public meetings on NOACA's website, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn pages. After the meetings, NOACA staff posted the presentations, posters, fact sheets, and other information on NOACA's website. Staff also promoted the 208 Public Questionnaire on NOACA's social media platforms.

Clean Water 2020 Virtual Public Meeting

NOACA staff utilized GoToWebinar to host a virtual public meeting on July 1, 2020. The meeting began with a welcome, introduction and overview of the meeting agenda. NOACA staff provided a 40 minute overview of the planning process and contents the Clean Water 2020 plan. The meeting ended with a question and answer session. A copy of the meeting agenda, attendee list, meeting summary and the power point presentation are included in NOACA's Virtual Public Meeting and Public Comment Period Results Report.

Public Comment Period

The public comment period for the draft 208 Plan ran from June 19 to July 20, 2020. A summary of the final draft plan is expected to be completed by August 7, 2020. NOACA staff publicized the public comment period and the availability to submit comments via NOACA's webpage. NOACA received seven comments via NOACA's webpage. More information can be found in NOACA's Virtual Public Meeting and Public Comment Period Results Report.

Ongoing Engagement

NOACA staff intend to continue engagement after Board approval to maintain the 208 Plan and keep it relevant to the evolving wastewater management water quality planning needs in Northeast Ohio. NOACA's engagement efforts will include, but are not limited to, the following:

Ohio EPA. NOACA is one of six Areawides designated by Ohio's governor to conduct wastewater management and water quality planning. Ohio EPA oversees updates to, and implementation of all, Areawide 208 Plans. NOACA works closely with Ohio EPA to ensure the agency effectively manages its 208 Plan responsibilities; NOACA's 208 Plan must meet Ohio's needs. To facilitate this coordination, Ohio EPA is a nonvoting member of NOACA's Board, Planning and Programming Committee, and Water Quality Subcommittee. As of 2019, NOACA also receives state and federal funding, distributed through Ohio EPA contracts. These funds, along with NOACA member dues, support staff efforts to maintain and implement the 208 Plan. NOACA staff collaborate with Ohio EPA to develop scopes of work within these annual contracts. NOACA staff provide quarterly status reports to Ohio EPA based on these contracts.

DMA and Stakeholder Meetings

DMAs are local, regional, or state agencies or political subdivisions that carry out specific water quality programs and responsibilities within the 208 Plan. DMAs lead local 208 Plan implementation.

Individual and Small Group Meetings

NOACA staff will meet as needed with one or more DMAs or stakeholders to discuss specific topics or issues associated with the 208 Plan. DMA(s), stakeholder(s) or NOACA staff can request and organize the meetings. Meeting topics may include 208 Plan modifications, FPA conflicts, watershed planning, stormwater management, land use planning, and water quality monitoring.

Regional Wastewater DMA Meetings

NOACA will organize and facilitate meetings with DMAs and interested parties to provide updates on NOACA's FPA-related work and a forum to improve communication among DMAs. NOACA will also host outside speakers to present on topics related to wastewater treatment and planning in the NOACA region. NOACA staff will determine the frequency and schedule of the meetings (at least two meetings per calendar year).

208 Plan Reviews by County

NOACA staff will regularly engage the DMAs identified in this 208 Plan to review the existing information and identify any needed modifications. NOACA's goal is to meet proactively with all the DMAs from a selected county at least once every five years. Each fiscal year NOACA staff will select a county to focus on DMA engagement and specific 208 Plan modifications.

NOACA Board, Committees and Subcommittee Meetings

As detailed above, NOACA's Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Planning and Programming Committee, and Water Quality Subcommittee play a role in the review and approval of 208 Plan information. NOACA staff will periodically provide updates on water quality information and activities to inform members of these bodies about 208 Plan issues and topics. NOACA staff will determine the frequency and content of the updates.

NOACA Website

NOACA's website will host a copy of the latest version of the 208 Plan approved by NOACA's Board of Directors. NOACA's website may feature other pertinent 208 Plan information at the discretion of NOACA staff.

ACTIVATE

ACTIVATE is NOACA's new pedestrian and bicycle plan and the first holistic study of pedestrian planning for the region. With the right resources, committed leaders, and a supportive public, communities can plan for the future and construct both short-term, low cost safety measures and visionary plans for connected biking and walking networks. The verb "ACTIVATE" means to make something active or to convert an immobile object or substance into an active form. Walking and biking are referred to throughout this plan as active transportation, and the title of this plan refers to NOACA's vision to ACTIVATE Northeast Ohio in several key ways (see Figure 4-1a).



Figure 4-1a. ACTIVATE Plan Components

- ACTIVATE STREETS into networks for safe biking and walking;
- ACTIVATE COMMUNITIES to plan for the future with local tools and resources
- ACTIVATE PROGRAMS to respond to the groundswell of demand for biking and walking by encouraging best practices;
- Ultimately, ACTIVATE PEOPLE to try biking and walking and reap the physical, economic, and social benefits of active transportation.

Early public and stakeholder activities provided significant inputs that coalesced into the themes shown below. These themes served to guide the development of the plan’s analyses and recommendations.



Figure 4-1b. ACTIVATE Themes

Engagement

To develop ACTIVATE, NOACA proactively collaborated with stakeholders and our member communities to identify concerns related to bicycle and pedestrian planning. NOACA offered transparent, well-advertised opportunities to exchange ideas and meaningfully contribute to the process. In addition to conducting activities dedicated to ACTIVATE, NOACA also “listened to the listeners” by gathering feedback collected by other organizations such as ODOT, advocacy groups, and local communities that have participated in our TLCI program. This approach ensures the plan is able to produce tools that benefit our regional partners and local communities.

Engagement is crucial to the success of active transportation plans for several key reasons:

1. People who bike or walk for transportation are more vulnerable to serious injury or death as a result of even a minor crash than those that use other modes,¹ and improving safety outcomes requires a deep understanding of needs and behavior.

¹ <https://highways.dot.gov/research/research-programs/safety/pedestrian-bicycle-safety>

2. In communities where car-dominant design has been the status quo for decades, it requires significant public and political support to include the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists in the goals of roadway projects.
3. Compared to vehicle travel, there is limited data available for trips taken by pedestrians and bicyclists. For example, crashes involving pedestrians or cyclists tend to be underreported by as much as 55% compared to vehicle crashes.² Instead, much of the information about safety risks, needs, popular destinations, and the behavioral and physical factors involved in biking and walking come from national or international research and need to be vetted for their relevance to Northeast Ohio.

NOACA staff gathered feedback for the plan in a number of ways listed below:

1. The Activate Public Survey was open from October 2019 to April 2020. Over 1,900 people responded to the survey. Its purpose was to understand how perceptions of walking and biking in Northeast Ohio may differ based on the modes of transportation an individual uses. While many of the questions were geared towards those who walk and bike for transportation, the survey was advertised intentionally to gather a wide range of responses.
2. The Activate Local Government Survey was open in Spring of 2020. This survey focused on identifying the needs of communities, park districts, and counties as they provide infrastructure for those that walk, bike, and take transit. 46 organizations responded.
3. In the summer of 2020, NOACA held three stakeholder focus groups to gather insight into specific challenges and gather input for the plan's analysis components. The topics included low-stress bike networks and bike boulevards, road diets, and the ACTIVATE pedestrian inventory. About 15-20 people attended each focus group, consisting primarily of planning and engineering staff throughout the region.
4. The NOACA region was chosen as a participant in the Walkability Action Institute training program, which ran concurrently with ACTIVATE's plan development. The Walkability Action Institute is a program of the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors that also receives funding from the Center for Disease Control. The institute selected a multidisciplinary team from Northeast Ohio to develop an action plan to meet the needs of pedestrians. The action plan was developed in coordination with the ACTIVATE plan (process currently underway, findings forthcoming).

Public Survey Results

The public survey gathered input from 1,916 people across the NOACA region with a variety of interests and experience levels. Demographic information is described in detail in the

² http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/factsfigures/facts_safety.cfm

ACTIVATE plan. The survey was not statistically significant, but below is a short list of characteristics of the respondents.

1. Almost an equal number of males and females responded to the survey (899 and 932 respectively). Only a small number of respondents identified as non-binary or another gender identity.
2. Most of the respondents were under the age of 65. Very few youth aged 17 and under responded to the survey.
3. The majority of respondents were white.
4. About 17% of the survey respondents indicated that they have a disability that prevents them from walking and biking with ease.
5. Respondents live in all five counties in the NOACA region, with the highest percentage of survey takers indicating that they live in Cuyahoga County (64%) or Lorain County (18%).

Transportation Trends

The survey asked a number of questions about the needs, experiences, and preferences related to biking and walking. Some key findings of the survey included:

1. Most people, especially those that indicated that driving a motor vehicle is a reliable form of transportation for them, use more than one mode of transportation. In fact, the average respondent indicated that they rely on at least three modes of transportation. This finding supports a growing understanding among transportation planners and engineers that most people are “multi-modal” transportation users, relying on more than one type of mode throughout their routine movements.
2. The feasibility of biking and walking depends largely on the type of trip. Over 65% of respondents indicated that it is feasible for them to walk or bike to accomplish errands, where commuting to work with active modes of transportation was seen as significantly less feasible. This finding demonstrates local support for a concept emerging in national public health and transportation discourse that prioritizes short, safe routes that connect people with everyday destinations over other types of investment in biking and walking infrastructure.³
3. The survey asked respondents how they would feel about some of their car trips taking up to five minutes longer in exchange for greater safety. Over 50% of respondents were strongly supportive and an additional 20% were somewhat supportive. Those that use active modes of transportation were even more supportive of longer car trips in exchange for greater safety. This is not to say that those that do not bike, walk, or take transit were unsupportive. Over 50% of active transportation users were “strongly supportive” of the policies, as compared to 30% of those that do not use active modes.
4. The survey asked respondents to rank their preference for their community’s approach to construction of a connected network of bike infrastructure. Nearly 60% of respondents most preferred the strongest approach: a new ballot initiative to build a trail network in 3-5 years. The greatest agreement was in the fourth, least preferred approach: over 80% of

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/activepeoplehealthynation/strategies-to-increase-physical-activity/activity-friendly-routes-to-everyday-destinations.html>

respondents ranked the “do nothing” option last (“I would prefer my community not attempt to build a trail network”). Two moderate approaches received similar levels of support as the 2nd and 3rd ranked preference.

Community Survey Results

The ACTIVATE Community Survey was open to cities, villages, townships, park districts, and county governments. Responses were received from May to August of 2020. The purpose of the survey was to learn how local governments and other regional agencies approach planning, engineering, enforcement, and maintenance related to walking and biking. 46 organizations responded across the NOACA region.

The overall survey results show that most communities need additional resources, education, and support to meet the needs of people biking and walking. The survey results found that many communities in the NOACA region lack access to planners, are not familiar with planning resources, and implement few bike or pedestrian projects that require site-specific transportation planning to construct. Projects required by traditional guidance, such as curb ramps, are installed routinely in roadway work, especially when communities have staff engineers assisting with projects. Planning expertise varies by communities, but less than half have in-house planning staff, and very few have implemented plans or policies that support biking and walking (such as Complete Streets Policies, traffic calming programs, or land use policies that built or retrofit walkable environments). The barriers to installing additional projects varied for project type, but in general included lack of budget, staff capacity, design expertise, and public or political support. Maintenance is also an ongoing concern in the NOACA region, and while communities have different needs and approaches to maintenance, many indicated that concerns around maintenance prevent them from installing additional bike or pedestrian projects.

Focus Group Result⁴

Pedestrian Inventory Focus Group

More regional data is needed on pedestrian conditions. The ACTIVATE pedestrian inventory of signalized and midblock crossing conditions currently includes only a portion of locations, but is meaningful and helpful to local entities. Most communities, especially core cities in the NOACA region, lack a streamlined inventory system of pedestrian infrastructure, and depend on ad-hoc communication between engineering and public work departments to identify and repair pedestrian infrastructure issues. Planning and community development staff can use regional data to identify specific infrastructure issues in local communities, such as where high-visibility striping or basic ADA enhancements are needed and where interventions like curb extensions or median islands should be explored. Some regional agencies and local governments

⁴ These are summaries of focus groups held on specific topics of analysis for the plan. As a result, they may not be useful for eNEO2050 without the accompanying analyses, which are forthcoming.

expressed willingness to update and maintain the inventory for their own purposes. Such collaborations may result in a more sustainable dataset that NOACA owns and manages. In general, communities were supportive of this dataset and were interested in seeing regional statistics and tracking progress into the future.

Road Diets Focus Group

Road diets are an underused countermeasure, but not necessarily one that communities are unfamiliar with. The barrier to their use is in navigating the financial and political landscape to construct them. Commonly, road diets are constructed when a roadway is resurfaced. Compared to a traditional resurfacing project, road diets are perceived as being significantly more work in sequencing the necessary analysis, community education, and political will. Additionally, accommodating transit is a special challenge. Communities expressed confusion about how to work alongside ODOT, NOACA, and other regional entities to advocate for road diet installation in resurfacing projects in their communities. Speed management on corridors is often viewed as an issue that complicates road diet implementation, and the process to lower speed limits on local corridors is also unclear to many communities. Tools like educational one-pagers that compile information about the safety performance, upcoming resurfacing projects, and high-level feasibility of road diet implementation would help communities develop project ideas and give staff necessary tools to educate local officials and the public.

Bike Boulevards Focus Group

Bike boulevards are a low-stress, relatively low-cost solution that communities across the region may have interest in implementing. The focus group for this topic was hosted by Lorain Connected, a coalition of city staff, public health officials, and local advocates working to implement active transportation strategies in the City of Lorain. The narrow audience offered NOACA an opportunity to understand what barriers to implementing new low-stress bike facilities may face in a community already working to install the bike infrastructure. In general, the strategy of implementing bike boulevards was viewed as highly desirable, and tools like the Lorain County Bicycle Transportation Map which shows Level of Traffic Stress, is a useful means of identifying possible opportunities. The group felt strongly that bike boulevards are a tool that can address multiple goals simultaneously like discouraging through-traffic from relying on neighborhood streets as “cut-throughs”, calming neighborhood traffic, and connecting destinations on easy, inexpensive routes for bicyclists.