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VIA REGULAR U.S. MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

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RE: NOACA Climate Action Plan

Dear fellow County Commissioners and County Engineers,

As county officials of the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) region, we have been charged with carrying out transportation and environmental planning in the five-county region. The established NOACA Code of Regulations encourages local decision-making to be in harmony with the region's transportation and environmental plans. Regrettably, the recent efforts to formulate a region-wide Climate Action Plan appear to be more of a top-down application of political power and opinionated policymaking, rather than a culmination of local decision-making. From the perspective of many of our

residents and businesses involved in the process, it is an affront to the limited powers granted to us that are derived from the consent of the governed.

To force or fabricate a consensus of regional policy when there is clearly none is not only specious, it is folly. It is a direct assault on the shared vision expressed in the Code of Regulations that the NOACA organization will strengthen regional cohesion. Forcing member counties to adopt and adhere to regional policies that are at odds with one another and where there is no consensus regionally or within the member counties will weaken regional cohesion, not strengthen it.

The board of Medina County Commissioners have observed several of the community engagement meetings held as part of the NOACA climate pollution reduction program in further development of a regional Climate Action Plan. We have also received comments from some residents and business owners that attended the meetings in Medina County with deep concerns that the community engagement sessions were simply held as a formality. Many of those expressing vocal opposition to the Climate Action Plan suggested that it was held so NOACA could check a procedural box, not to truly incorporate their feedback in the plan. The Cuyahoga County based firm that has been engaged by NOACA to conduct and report on these sessions will hopefully reflect accurately the full and diverse range of public opinions expressed.

It is hard to imagine that a “one size fits all” Regional Climate Action Plan is politically or practically possible for a five-county area that is so diverse in history, geography, and political culture. Just consider the businesses, human needs, and lifestyles of the very urban communities of Cuyahoga County versus the very rural towns, villages and countryside of Medina and Geauga counties. A “one size fits all” Regional Climate Action Plan won’t work for the NOACA region.

Clearly, there is no public consensus in Medina County regarding climate concerns, resiliency strategies, and what criteria should be used to evaluate possible actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, the anecdotal approach used by the meeting facilitator appeared to further divide the community members assembled, rather than identify a path for political consensus on a singular plan of action. We further believe that no such regional plan of action is possible at this time, which is built on mutual trust, respect for differences of opinion, and consensus on priorities for actions by the NOACA board or its committees.

There is no state or federal mandate for NOACA to adopt a regional Climate Action Plan. There is no financial penalty from either state or federal funding sources for NOACA or its constituent counties in the failure to adopt a regional Climate Action Plan. It also our understanding that individual local and county governments that are so inclined to apply for imminent federal funding associated with Climate Action will not be penalized for lack of a regionwide Climate Action Plan approved by a metropolitan planning agency, like NOACA.

Therefore, absent a mandate from either the State of Ohio or the Federal Government, the Board of Medina County Commissioners urge that all further spending on development of a regional Climate Action Plan by the NOACA agency shall cease and desist, until such time as all five constituent counties develop and adopt their own Climate Action Plans.

We have reviewed the Climate Action Plans adopted by Cuyahoga County and the cities of Oberlin, Cleveland, and Lakewood. Many if not most of the action strategies in those plans are already being implemented by Medina County residents, businesses, and local governments. Without the guidance of a regional plan, they have already been making significant strides to further the improvement of air quality,

reduce energy consumption, preserve natural resources, and encourage climate resiliency. Candidly, we don't need a regional government agency directing our efforts or taking undue credit for good government practices and thoughtful stewardship of our land, water, and air quality.

Air pollution programs administered and conducted by NOACA have a regional and national value. There is widespread support for many of the actions by the agency and its constituent governments to achieve the goals of the Clean Air Act of 1970. In NOACA's capacity as both the regional air quality and transportation planning agency, we fully support that the agency continue to collect information on regional air quality, educate the public on air quality and its linkages to transportation, and strive to increase transportation choice within the region. The Board of Medina County Commissioners fully support these efforts and encourage the NOACA Board to continue support for these programs and furtherance of the established air quality goals. However, the work to establish a regional Climate Action Plan at this time has no broad political or regional support and therefore should not be pursued by the agency until such time as there is agreement by all five county governments, as evidenced by the adoption of climate action plans by each county government.

The Board of Medina County Commissioners propose that necessary actions be taken by the NOACA Governing Board and committees to cease and desist on staff activities and spending that further the creation of a regional Climate Action Plan. Any funding which is currently budgeted for these program activities ought to be re-directed by the NOACA Board for the furtherance of transportation investments in accordance with regional priorities already established by the Board.

We are asking for your Board to consider, discuss and support this proposal at the NOACA governing board level. Commissioner Aaron Harrison and County Engineer Andy Conrad will be representing Medina County on this issue. If you are so inclined to join us in this proposal, please contact either of them at your earliest convenience. Together, we can ensure that regional issues are appropriately addressed in a cooperative and equitable manner.

Sincerely,



Aaron M. Harrison



Steven D. Hambley



Colleen M. Swedyk

Medina County Board of Commissioners

cc: Andy Conrad, Medina County NOACA Board Member *(via email only)*
Jeff Brandon, Medina County NOACA Board Member *(via email only)*
Robert Patrick, Medina County NOACA Board Member *(via email only)*
Bethany Dentler, Medina County NOACA Board Member *(via email only)*