

Vibrant NEO 2040 – Vision Session Q&A Transcript
Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium

Stark State College (North Canton, OH)
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Panel: Hunter Morrison, Executive Director NEOSCC (HM)
Joe Hadley, Executive Director, Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning
Organization (JH)
Robert Nau, Executive Director, Stark County Regional Planning Commission (RN)

Question/Comment You have given us quite a lot of information today. Quite a lot to digest in one sitting. I was wondering if this presentation is available on-line or a booklet that you can pass out that contains the same information.

H.M: We have put a lot of information out today. This presentation along with others from previous workshops and meetings is all available on-line on our website. Vibrantneo.org. There is also additional information on the Conditions and Trends platform.

Question/Comment thank you. John McNally is on the record saying that the discussion of the move to a charter form of government in Mahoning County. He wants a discussion on exactly what our government should look like. In his very next statement he says if we want to blindly follow what and how the state law says our county government would need to change. This obviously applies to

H.M: I am not aware of charter government in Mahoning County. I know that Summit and Cuyahoga counties have use that to create the Executive Director function. I don't know where it currently stands in Mahoning County.

Question/Comment Also, you have taken a lot of different ideas about how you can improve our state and the environment but you really have not spelled out how you would achieve these things. When are you going to start giving us more details on the exact measures you are going to make sure your objectives are met?

H.M: As I indicated this is a broad overview. This will be accompanied in the final report with specific recommendations for the actions that could be taken by different levels of community. Those again will be posted to the web when we are done. That is one of the questions, what can work? At this stage what we are trying to identify the broad direction. We have been meeting with different actors throughout the region to see what can be done.

J.H: An important product from this effort is to catalogue what those best practices have been. SO there will be an information sharing that has taken place and will continue. There are 33 organizations that are involved with this many of which have environmental activities within their work program.

R.N: The decisions we make are based on what our arena of authority and expertise consists of. As an MPO we make decisions for Stark County. A fix it first approach is what we have been focused on. Ohio is a very strong home rule state.

Question/Comment Do you know John McNally, he is running for mayor of Youngstown. He is also a director under the same group that you are in. I worked for companies for 36 years. I know everybody above me and who I answered to. John McNally is a director over you. Am I correct?

A: No, not at this point. John McNally was a County Commissioner in Mahoning County. John and his representative from Mahoning on the board while he was serving as commissioner. About 6 or 9 months ago, he resigned from the County Commission. He is presently running for mayor and in private practice as a lawyer. He is no longer affiliated with our organization.

Question/Comment You say that you met him. On the 4-990, Internal Revenue report, he is a director over you along with Connie Krauss. Who do they answer to? If you answer to them?

H.M: NEOSCC has 33 board member organizations, one of which is Summit County. The Counties are the organization. Connie Krauss and it had been John McNally when he was commissioner, I believe it is Carol Righetti. I think you are using a previous year tax record. In the case of Connie Krauss she would be appointed by the County Executive. In the case of John McNally, he would be sitting on the board representing the Mahoning County commissioners.

Question/Comment Can you tell me how big these compact houses are going to be per acre?

H.M: What we are considering is housing stock that you would see in many of our existing neighborhoods. That could be 4 to 6 units per acre.

Question/Comment In your presentation, you alluded to a study in the 1970's. What did it focus on and what has happened to it?

H.M: There were a set of studies that were done by the predecessors to MPO's. Those studies were used to develop long range transportation plans. Taken together the projections were that the region would grow from about 3 million people to 5 million people between 1970 to 2000. There was a similar study commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce. These studies all projected a sense of optimism for population and job growth.

Though the projections did not pan out we did end up utilizing 23% more developed land with less population than in 1970. We have more to maintain and less people to pay for it.

Question/Comment You did not seem to show the shoreline as an area to develop into park and recreation areas. We are fortunate to have such a large shoreline, it seems if we developed this more, we could bring in a lot more tourist dollars. Has your Consortium discussed the development of the shoreline into recreational areas?

A: We have discussed this a little bit. You will notice that there are some communities that are beginning to do this. One of the things that we have identified is building connections between the lakefront assets and taking better care of them. Being able to ride a bike along the shoreline would be great.

Question/Comment the past two weeks with the partial government shutdown, we have seen the national parks have been closed to people who are to be said owners of such parks. My question is how

do we know that parks and green space proposed in your plan will not someday be closed off to the people.

A: That is a very good question. The biggest asset is the county based metro parks supported by each county. We think that there is very good support for them with local control. One of the opportunities is how to connect those place.

Question/Comment your website mentions that there are over 33 organizations involved in NEOSCC efforts. Why do you say over 33 rather than specifying the amount? There are more than 100 organizations. The Fund for our Economic Future is a consortium with 64 members. I know that we are not here to talk about math but 64 and 33 do not make over 100. I am assuming Mr. Morrison that you have no idea who these other organizations are. The reason that you have been and continue to be met with resistance from fundamentalists or right wing extremists or whatever you would call them is because the actions you are undertaking have always been followed by an oligarchy. Governed by the few with public private partnerships. Certain companies get ridiculous tax benefits while others are drown out by ridiculous regulations. The Fund for Our Economic future is a bigger consortium by themselves than NEOSCC would be if they were not members. This consortium promotes keynsian economic ideas advocating for government intervention in the market at the local level. The idea that government intervention in the market won't hurt certain businesses just as much as it helps others is a fallacy. Government cannot enter the market without favoring one business while injuring another and to advocate otherwise shows your economic ignorance or blatant malcontent for the free market system. Of course with these questions in the past, you have claimed that NEOSCC has no connection to the United Nations Environmental Program. However, ICLEI has pledged to growth policies of Agenda 21 through the UN. To add to that many members of very consortium are ICLEI members. The fact that you chose to lie to me and the rest of the group last week is absolute journalistic gold. I thank you for choosing to lie to me about that rather than giving me some kind of spin. We see the language of sustainable development in five main tiers of political power and influence. From my local municipal to the County government to NEOSCC to ICLEI to the UN-EP. So, of course I am misinformed that this has nothing to do with Agenda 21 from you. Consider the language about sustainability and sustainable development. Does it make you warm and cozy to see that language in five tiers of political influence from the United Nations all the way down to my local trustees?

A: Sustainability is a word that is in the dictionary and many organizations use it. I can assure you that the United Nations is not concerned about the regulations in Northeast Ohio. This is an effort by local governments to look into the future to make better decisions.

Question/Comment When we were going through the presentation, one of the issues that came up was trails. Can we more effectively delineate trails for transportation purposed and trails for recreation? Because of the current wording, I had trouble voting for that since it was mixed in with greenways.