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**NWARPC STAFF:** Jeff Hawkins, Tim Conklin, AICP, Celia Scott-Silwood, AICP, Elizabeth Bowen, Cristina Scarlett

**OTHERS:** Rob Smith (NWA Council), Sandra Gonzales (UA Student); Aaron Hekele (ETC Institute Consultants); Beth Johnson and Ethan Hunter (Rogers Planning); Tom Brown (ORBT)
1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS
   Chair Bill Edwards called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

2. APPROVE RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES FOR MAY 22, 2019
   MOTION
   Chair Edwards asked for a motion to approve the July 24, 2019 RPC/Policy Committee Minutes. Chris Keeney made the motion to approve the Minutes as distributed. Sonny Hudson provided the second. Motion passes unanimously.

3. DIRECTOR’S REPORT
   Jeff Hawkins gave the following report:
   - The Clearinghouse Review was included in the meeting materials – there were no questions. The purpose of the review is to report any duplicates, overlaps, inconsistencies. The NWARPC does not fund any of these grant applications.
   - The NWARPC 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan was formally initiated with the holding of two public open house events (see 5. Below). The Plan development process will take approximately 15-16 months and culminate with TAC and RPC/Policy Committee approval.
   - Other items the director would usually cover are mentioned throughout the following agenda discussion items.

4. NARTS FFY 2019-2022 TIP PROPOSED AMENDMENT #6 – TO ADD MODOT PROJECTS
   Tim Conklin explained that the Proposed Amendment #6 was necessary to bring the NARTS TIP into alignment with the MoDOT STIP. He said that NWARPC, in conjunction with MoDOT, determined an amendment to the Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Study (NARTS) FFY 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is necessary to include two MoDOT FFY 2020 projects in McDonald County, MO:
   - Job #013006Y, on I-49, calls for contracting for pavement repair from Rte. 59 to 0.7 mile south of Rte. H, a length of 10.7 miles.
   - Job #7P0601 calls for constructing new interstate roadway to complete I-49 from Pineville to the Arkansas State line (Bella Vista), a length of 5 miles. Federal BUILD Grant funds, federal NHPP funds, federal STBGP-A funds, and federal Highway Infrastructure funds, plus additional state funds, will be used on this project.
A legal notice was published in the NWA Democrat Gazette, the La Prensa Libra, and the McDonald County Press announcing the opening of a two-week public comment period on the Proposed Amendment #6 beginning Thursday, October 3 and running through Wednesday, October 16, 2019. The legal notice also announced that the NWARPC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) would meet on Thursday, October 17, 2019 at 10:30 am and the RPC/Policy Committee would meet on Wednesday, October 23, 2019 at 1:30 pm at the NWARPC office to consider the Proposed Amendment #6. NO PUBLIC COMMENT WAS RECEIVED.

At its October 17, 2019 meeting the TAC recommended forwarding the Proposed Amendment #6 to the RPC/Policy Committee for consideration and approval.

**MOTION**
Chair Edwards asked for a motion to approve the NARTS FFY 2019-2022 TiP Proposed Amendment #6 to FFY 2020. Sonny Hudson made the motion, with Jim Ulmer providing the second. Motion passes unanimously.

5. **REPORT ON 2045 MTP AND CONNECT NWA (TDP) PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE EVENTS AND PROGRESS OF THE PLANS**
Tim Conklin informed the group:
- The Metropolitan Transportation Plan must be updated every five years, consequently, a new 2045 MTP must be approved no later than March 2021.
- New population forecasts for Benton and Washington Counties, provided by the Arkansas State demographer, show:
  - Approaching 1 million +/- population in the Metropolitan Planning Area (both counties and a portion of McDonald County, MO).
  - Allocation of Households and Employment by TAZ.
  - Will be using these figures in the Travel Demand Model update to base year 2018 and to year 2045.
- All 2040 MTP chapters will be reviewed and updated as necessary.
- Additional chapters will contain the 10-year Transit Development Plan (TDP), targeted bicycle network concepts, and a chapter considering housing, transportation, and land use.
- Two Public Open Houses were held in conjunction with the Connect NWA Transit Development Plan:
  - Wednesday, October 16, 2019 at the Rogers Public Library (4-7pm) – 49 people at the open house.
  - Thursday, October 17, 2019 at the Fayetteville Town Center (4-7pm) – 60 people attend.
  - Public Input garnered from the open houses will be included in the 2045 MTP and used to assist in formulation of Plan recommendations.
NWARPC/POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019 @ 1:30 PM, APPROVED DECEMBER 4, 2019

You’re Invited!

to our Public Open House

Connect Northwest Arkansas: Please come learn about Connect NWA’s proposed recommendations. Connect NWA has developed new route alignments and opportunities for service delivery enhancements that will improve connectivity, save people time and provide a foundation for transit for years to come. Come see the benefits that each local community and the region as a whole could achieve through Connect NWA.

The 2045 MTP: Update to the current 2040 NWA MTP as the 5-year regional transportation plan. The plan provides a long range, comprehensive look at the region’s transportation needs and implementation strategies for highways, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The open house will highlight the current plan’s recommendations, the arterial network, the transit network, the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program, and the regional bicycle and pedestrian network, as well as other displays.

- Staff from NWARPC, Ozark Regional Transit, Razorback Transit and ATG Consultants presented information, posters, and handouts about the 2045 MTP update process and the recommendations for transit routes as part of the Connect NWA future local transit system. Paper 2045 MTP opinion surveys were available for participants to complete at the open house. Lap tops were provided so participants could take the survey online. Additionally, they could take the survey on their smart phone. Paper surveys with three questions were also available for opinions on the individual transit routes presented as part of Connect NWA. Both surveys are available on the NWARPC website – MTP: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NWA2045MTP
  Connect NWA: https://connectnwasurvey.questionpro.com (only through November 1, 2019)
- Public Participation
  - Over 100 people participated in the Open House events
  - To date, 110 surveys have been completed online and on paper
  - Media coverage – newspaper articles, TV and radio interviews and reports

- During Tim Conklin’s presentation a question from the audience was asked concerning the public notification for the open house events. Celia Scott-Silkwood answered the question with the following:
  - The NWARPC follows the requirements as set forth in the NWARPC Public Participation Plan (PPP), a document that has been approved by the RPC/Policy Committee, ARDOT, and FHWA and FTA
  - Legal Notices were published in the NWA Democrat Gazette, La Prensa Libra (Spanish), McDonald County Press
  - Display Ads were published in the Sunday, October 13, 2019 edition of the NWA Democrat Gazette, and the Thursday, October 10, 2019 edition La Prensa Libra (Spanish)
  - Email Blast – 3 to 4 reminders
  - Newspaper Articles written by Ron Wood detailed both plans and the open houses
6. SCIENTIFICALLY-BASED TRANSPORTATION SURVEY – UPDATE

Elizabeth Bowen introduced Aaron Hekele with ETC Institute. Mr. Hekele said that he was presenting information from the 2019 NWA Regional Transportation Survey – Draft Findings Report:

- The purpose of the survey was to gather input from residents to better understand the level of satisfaction with the region’s transportation system and attitudes toward prioritizing transportation improvements.
- The survey was conducted during September 2019 and was a scientifically based random sample survey of 835 households with a confidence level of 95%.
- Method of Administration
  - By mail and online to stratified random sample of households in the Washington and Benton Counties.
  - Each survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete (approximately 5 pages in length).
- Response
  - Mail vs Email – 835 total surveys (370 by mail and 465 by email/online).
  - Good representation by race/ethnicity and gender.
  - Income – Low income households well represented. $120,000+ household slightly higher representation. Will weight the data as the next step.
  - Home address of resident respondents were geocoded.
- Final Phase of the Project
  - Reporting
    - Analyze results OVERALL
    - Started processing data by Sub-Groupings
    - Next Steps
      - Determine if there are major differences in perception/priorities – Income/Weight
      - Breakout results by additional GIS layers – City/Census Block Groups
      - Compare results to recent regional transportation benchmarking
      - Finalize Report findings

- SAMPLE OF FINDINGS
  - The highest levels of satisfaction expressed about any aspect of the NWA area transportation system were: “Availability of off-street paths/trails” (60%) and “Flow of traffic on streets at non-peak times” (53%).
  - Respondents were least satisfied with “Flow of traffic during peak times of day” (77%).
  - Rated the overall quality of the transportation system as: Excellent 2%; Good 27%; Average 42%; Poor 28%.
  - The majority of respondents said that traffic congestion in NWA has increased over the past 5 years (94%).
  - The majority of respondents said that the current level of funding for road and highway improvements should be greater (72%).
8 of 10 respondents said that it is somewhat or very important for local governments in the region to support and fund public transportation (81%).
- The majority of respondents said that expanded public transportation services are needed in the region (78%).

- Key Overall Findings in the Report to Date:
  - Residents were MOST satisfied with
    - Availability of off-street paths/trails
    - Flow of traffic on streets during nonpeak times
    - The ease of travel by car on interstates/highways
  - Residents were LEAST satisfied with
    - Flow of traffic on streets during peak times
    - Availability of public transit options
    - Ease of travel using public transit
  - Transportation Planning Priorities
    - Relieving traffic congestion
    - Traffic flow on streets during peak times
  - High levels of interest in ridesharing programs – with dedicated driving lanes
  - Funding
    - High levels of importance placed on funding transit
    - Support for increasing the level of funding for public transportation
    - Support for increasing level of funding for road and highway improvements

- The final report will be available in the near future and will be shared with the RPC/Policy Committee, as well as the public.

7. BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN RELATED ITEMS

Elizabeth Bowen reported on the following:
- At the Arkansas Transportation Planning Conference, the second week of September 2019, ARDOT showed a presentation on its Arkansas Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan. Several objectives were noteworthy:
  - Objective 2: Sustain and continue to improve the bicycle and pedestrian program in Arkansas.
    - Pedestrian Safety Countermeasures
      - Raised Crosswalks
      - Crosswalk Visibility Enhancements
      - Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons
  - Objective 4: Review of the bicycle and pedestrian accommodation guidelines for Arkansas highways.
    - The current Bicycle Accommodation Policy is considered a rule for purposes of administrative procedural law. As a result, any proposed changes to the rule would require a Notice to the Public about the proposed change, and an opportunity to be heard by those affected by the change.
  - Objective 5: Develop a Statewide Bikeway Network using a tiered system that coordinates and connects to the United States Bicycle Route (USBR) Numbering System.
U.S. Bike Route 51 & 80 Through Arkansas

Feasibility Study
Funded by the State Physical Activity & Nutrition for Arkansas (SPAN)

Purpose: to study and recommend a UBRR from Memphis to Little Rock

Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NARTS) and the Harry S. Truman Coordinating Council (HSTCC)
Partnering to expand the Razorback Greenway Trail into the Southwest corner of Missouri.
AN UPDATE TO THE NWA REGIONAL BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN DECEMBER 2019. The RPC/Policy Committee will vote in the near future on amendments to the Master Plan. Items to be added to the Plan include the following:
- The Highfill City Plan
- Hwy 112 Sidewalk Recommendations
- Update to Sign Manual
- Bike Infrastructure Projects
- Bike Infrastructure Proposed Network Update
- Bike Infrastructure Templates
- The FHWA Selection Guide
- Update to NWA Active Transportation Facilities

THE BICYCLE NETWORK/NACTO TRAINING PROJECT (FUNDED BY WFF):
- Tool Design Group has completed the NWA Bike Infrastructure Plan.
- The final plans for each city, Springdale, Rogers, Bentonville, and Fayetteville, are complete and the cities have received them.
- This project is complete.

A new group has been formed in NWA, the NWA Bicycle Safety Alliance, with the mission of promoting bicycle safety.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT
Chair Edwards asked if anyone in the public would like to speak and if they did want to speak to limit their comments to statements rather than questions. Two people stated they felt that not enough outreach had been given to low income and minorities who depend on the transit system for
transportation. They asked what percentage of the (Connect NWA) survey respondents were white and how many Spanish surveys were filled out. Staff did not know the answer to these questions since an analysis of the survey respondents will be conducted by ATG Consultants. There seemed to be some confusion on the part of these two and other audience members as to how long the transit survey would be open online. According to the consultants, the survey will be open until November 1, 2019, at which time it will be closed and an analysis of the responses will be done. Chair Edwards said that in the interest of time, anyone in the audience that had further questions and comments was welcome to stay after the meeting and speak with NWARPC staff about their concerns. NOTE: Staff talked with these folks for over an hour after the meeting, answering questions and discussing other means of public outreach.

9. OTHER BUSINESS
Chair Edwards said that the next meeting of the RPC/Policy Committee will be on December 4, 2019 at 1:30 pm.
Other Business:
• Chair Edwards said that the RPC/Policy Committee will need to elect officers at the December 4, 2019 meeting. He appointed Melissa McCarrville to head the Nominating Committee.
• WFF HOUSING REPORT

➢ The Report is a call to action – Success will hinge on the integration of three considerations:
  1) Equity; 2) Education and Outreach; 3) Capacity Building.
➢ The most urgent housing issues to tackle in the next 10 years:1) Regional Housing Policy; 2) Diverse Housing Options; 3) Limited Choices for Households with the Lowest Incomes; 4) Weak Links between Housing and Transportation.
➢ Five Critical Actions to take in the next 10 Years:
  1) Establish a regional housing compact; 2) Create a regional housing trust fund; 3) Introduce development incentives to promote participation in regional and local housing initiatives; 4) Use publicly owned land for housing production; 5) Expand and leverage federal, state and local resources for affordable and workforce housing.
NWARPC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019 @ 1:30 PM, APPROVED DECEMBER 4, 2019

- NWA OPEN SPACE COLLABORATIVE
  - Developing a plan for sustainable funding source.
  - Continue to do outreach and education.
  - Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission is conducting an inventory of biological and ecological information concerning rare species, habitats, exemplary natural communities, and intact landscapes.
  - Conservation efforts in progress:
    - Seven acres in City of Rogers with rare plant species.
    - Williams Hollow – Jackie Crabtree told the group that the Conservation Fund is working with the National Park Service and local partners to acquire the Williams Hollow Farm, which is boarded by Pea Ridge National Park on three sides. The Conservation Fund has secured a contract to purchase ($800,000 for acquisition and initial site management) but requires additional funds to complete the transaction.

10. ADJOURN

Chair Edwards had a motion and second to adjourn the meeting. Motion passes unanimously. Meeting was adjourned.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS ___ DAY OF DECEMBER, 2019:

MAYOR BILL EDWARDS, CHAIR, NWARPC OR
MAYOR CHRIS KEEN, VICE CHAIR, NWARPC

ATTEST:

MAYOR CHRIS KEEN, VICE CHAIR, NWARPC OR
MAYOR PETER CHRISTIE, SECRETARY, OR
JEFF HAWKINS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NWARPC