

2020

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NORTHWEST ARKANSAS REGIONAL  
PLANNING COMMISSION

## ANNUAL REPORT

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*Cover photo:*

*Image from the Fayetteville Public Library newly expanded building.  
The library was officially re-opened to the public in January 2021  
after completion of a major expansion project.*

*Photo above: Credit ARDOT*

*Bella Vista Bypass and Hwy. 71 Interchange construction*

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Para llamadas en español, marque el 866-656-1842; para llamadas en inglés, marque el 711 o directamente al 800-285-1131 or the following email address: [cscott-silkwood@nwarpc.org](mailto:cscott-silkwood@nwarpc.org). This notice is available from the ADA/504/Title VI Coordinator in large print, on audiotape and in Braille. If information is needed in another language, contact Celia Scott-Silkwood. Si necesita información en otro idioma, comuníquese Celia Scott-Silkwood, 479-751-7125, cuando menos 48 horas antes de la junta.





NWARPC

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## MESSAGE FROM **THE CHAIRMAN**

♦  
*Mayor Chris Keeney*

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Northwest Arkansas is an amalgamation of small towns, larger cities, and rural communities that are surrounded by forest, lakes, rivers, and creeks. A great place to live, work, and play, which the continued growth in our region confirms.

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission is an integral part of the regional process that we, the region, use to complete current projects while planning projects that will support the region to 2045 and beyond.

*As you read the report, I ask each of you to recall what Northwest Arkansas was 20 years ago, what it is today, and imagine where it will be in 20 years.*

This planning process includes aspects from multimodal transportation, with a focus on complete streets using best practices from around the world, to the preservation of natural resources through open space programs and engagement with local affiliates.



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This year's report is a summation of NWARPC's tasks that support the region and its partners to facilitate measured programs and projects that support the mission and vision of Northwest Arkansas. As you read the report, I ask each of you to recall what Northwest Arkansas was 20 years ago, what it is today, and imagine where it will be in 20 years.

In closing, NWARPC, the staff and partners are of paramount importance as we continue to make Northwest Arkansas the best place we can make for today and the future. The synergy that is generated when we plan and work as a region will always have the greatest impact.

Best Regards,

Chris Keeney  
*NWARPC/Policy Committee Chair*

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## NWARPC AT A GLANCE

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### ABOUT NWARPC

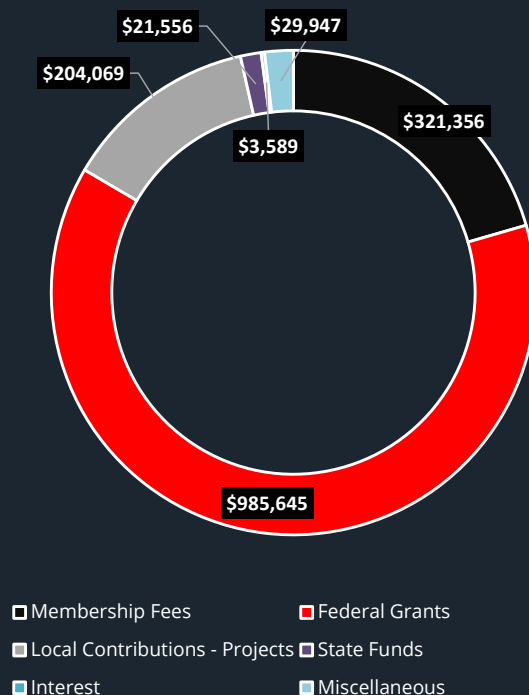
The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC) was formed in 1966. In 1983, NWARPC was designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) under U.S. DOT regulations for transportation planning purposes. In 2020, NWARPC had 45 members with 38 jurisdictions in Benton and Washington Counties in Arkansas and three jurisdictions in Missouri. The MPO has four permanent committees: the [Regional Planning Commission/Policy Committee \(RPC/Policy Committee\)](#), the [Technical Advisory Committee \(TAC\)](#), the [Active Transportation Committee \(ACT\)](#), and the [Northwest Arkansas GIS Users Group](#).

The RPC/Policy Committee is the chief decision-making body for the MPO and consists of the jurisdictions' chief elected official and/or other appointed representatives. The TAC develops the technical aspects of plans and reports and makes recommendations to the RPC/Policy Committee. The NWARPC is a multi-modal transportation planning agency for the region. In 2020 NWARPC focused on the update to its long range transportation plan, the [2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan \(NWARPC 2045 MTP\)](#) and the [FFY 2021-2024 Transportation Improvements Program \(TIP\)](#). The NWARPC, as the designated [Metropolitan Planning Organization \(MPO\)](#), is responsible for the coordination of transportation planning activities in Benton County, Washington County, and a portion of McDonald County, Missouri. This geographic area is known as the [Metropolitan Planning Area \(MPA\)](#). The TIP document applies to the MPA and is required under federal transportation legislation and lists all federally funded transportation and transportation-related projects to be undertaken within the transportation study area by implementing agencies over the next four years. NWARPC develops the [Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Study \(NARTS\) TIP](#), in cooperation with the [Arkansas Department of Transportation \(ARDOT\)](#) and [Missouri Department of Transportation \(MoDOT\)](#).

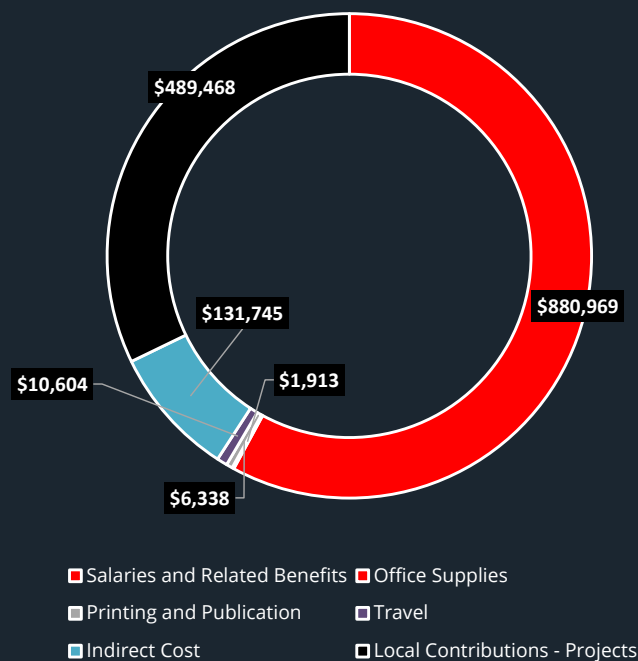


The graphics below illustrate the income and expenses summary for NWARPC's Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020).

## NWARPC INCOME TOTAL: \$1,566,162



## NWARPC EXPENSES TOTAL: \$1,521,037



## CLEARINGHOUSE REPORT

NWARPC is the federally designated review agency and [Clearinghouse for Washington and Benton County portion of the Fayetteville/Springdale/Rogers, Arkansas, Metropolitan Statistical Area \(MSA\)](#). The purpose of this designation, which is made pursuant to Executive Order #12372, is to ensure that requests for federal funding are reviewed to determine compatibility with local and regional plans, and that such funding will not be used for duplicative purposes. In 2020, federal-aid grants with a total value of [\\$334,475,968](#) were submitted and were cleared in order to ensure that proposed uses were consistent with, and in furtherance of the goals, objectives and planned development for the MSA.

*The 2020 Public Participation Plan (PPP) recognizes regional growth and changing demographics by providing a more flexible set of tools, taking into account that technology has and continues to change. It has been shown that the way people want to contribute ideas and opinions is different today than it was 20 years ago, and will likely be different in the future as technologies for communicating with people continues to accelerate at a fast pace. This PPP does not attempt to document every public participation and involvement possibility, but rather points out what has been successful in the past in this region, and what might be successful going forward.*

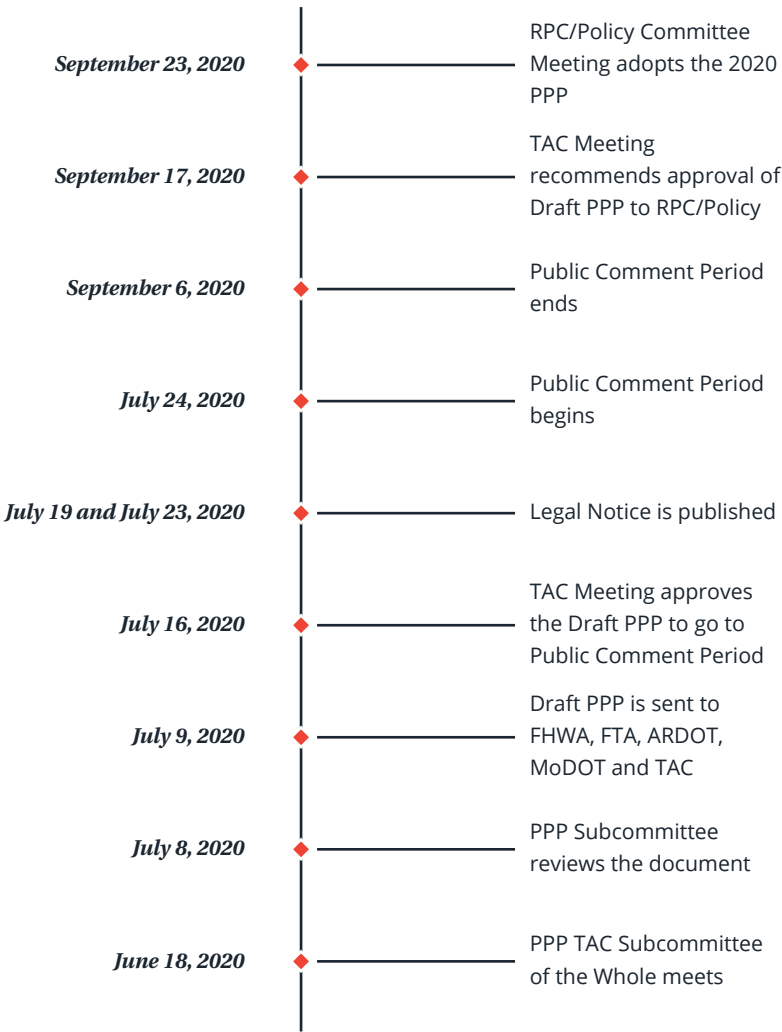
Public Involvement and Participation

NWARPC  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

RPC/Policy Committee Approved in September 2020

The NWARPC has established a proactive public involvement process in the planning of regional projects through the Public Participation Plan (PPP). This document outlines procedures that are designed to promote and encourage public participation and involvement in the transportation planning process.

The original PPP was adopted in 2007, with an update approved in September 2014. As part of the NWARPC 2045 MTP development, the PPP went through a third update. The plan is available [at this link](#). The 2020 NWARPC PPP went through the following approval process:





*Photo  
Public Involvement Event  
for the Connect Northwest  
Arkansas - 10 Year Transit  
Development Plan*



**Several new items were included in the 2020 PPP:**

**Virtual Meetings** – When warranted, the NWARPC may decide to hold a virtual meeting in place of an in-person meeting.

- Each instance will be evaluated individually.
- An example where a virtual meeting was warranted is the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 that made in-person meetings dangerous.
- This may pertain to TAC and NWARPC/Policy Committee meetings and other subcommittee meetings, as well as public involvement/input meetings.
- In any case, the public will be notified by standard legal notice and notification will be posted on the NWARPC website. Additionally, when available, public notification may be made by email and/or social media.

**The Interagency Consultation Process** – This section was added in response to a suggestion from FHWA.

- This can be found in Chapter V and says that – “In the development of the MTP and TIP, NWARPC will consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA”.

**Performance Measures and Targets** – Successful measures of effectiveness of the PPP requires tracking outreach activities and establishing initial baseline measurements.

- Chapter XI was added to comply with federal requirements for performance-based planning.
- The first performance measure, Measuring Participation Opportunities and Participants, is designed to track what opportunities were available and who was involved in public participation efforts.
- The second performance measure, Measuring Public Exposure to Transportation Issues, attempts to measure how the public learns of transportation issues and public participation opportunities.
- Measuring Public Sentiment is the third performance measure and is intended to link public transportation sentiments to fulfillment of MTP goals.

## Title VI Program **UPDATE**

The NWARPC is a designated recipient, as well as a subrecipient, of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding assistance and is therefore subject to the Title VI compliance conditions associated with the use of these funds. NWARPC is committed to preventing discrimination as defined in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. This program outlines the procedures in place that help guide the NWARPC in preventing such discrimination. The NWARPC Title VI Program provides information on the various processes which are in place as well as an analysis of the populations and programs impacted by Title VI requirements.

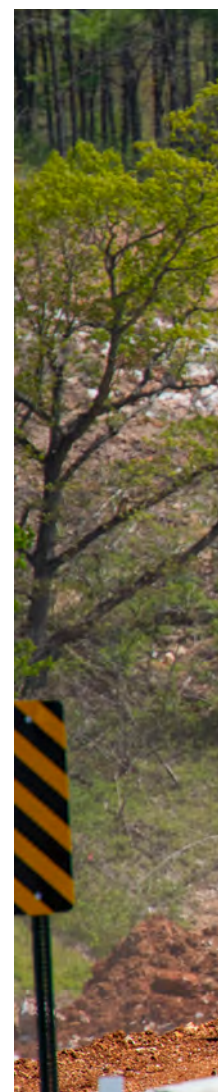
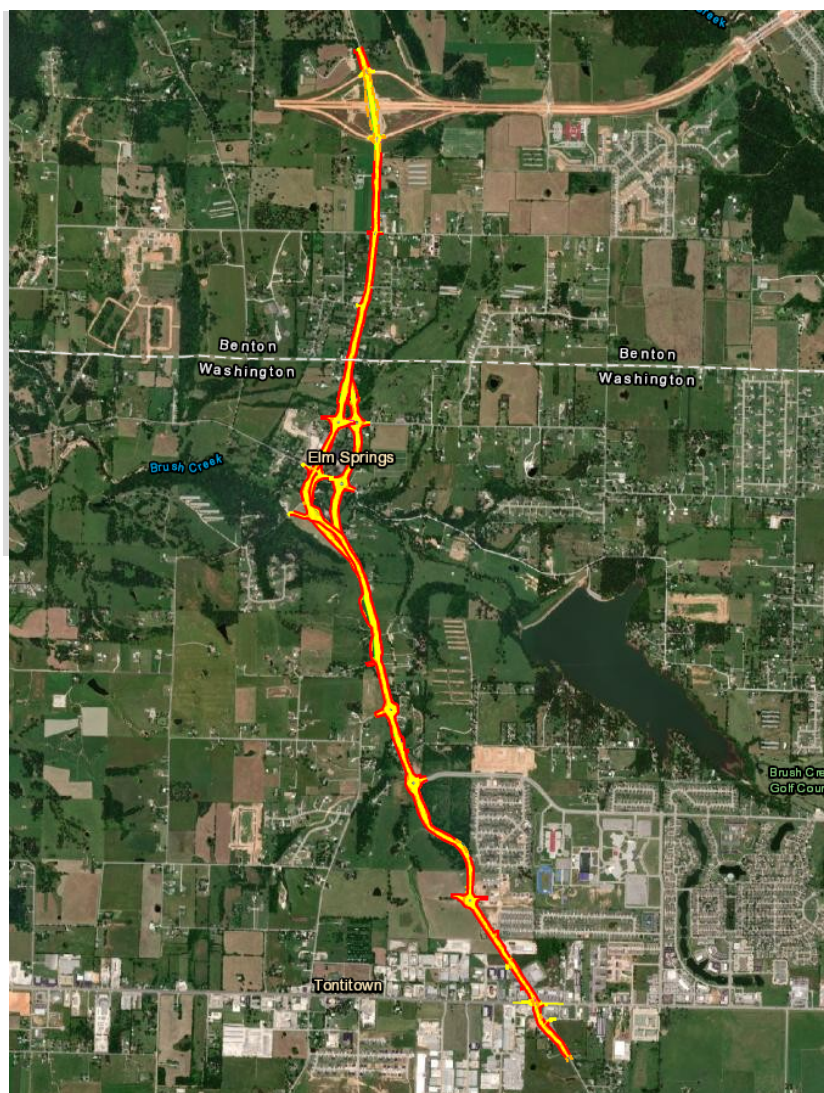
In 2020 NWARPC updated its Title VI Program and, after a two week-public comment period, in December 2020, the RPC/Policy Committee approved the NWARPC 2021 Title VI Program.

Photo left

AR Hwy 112 - Hwy 412 to Springdale Bypass  
Project - Job 01305 [ARDOT Interactive Map](#)

Photo right - Credit ARDOT

Bella Vista Bypass construction work continues  
on adding lanes to the bypass in April 2020 - The  
project is part of the NARTS FFY 2021-2024



## FFY 2021-2024 TIP DEVELOPMENT

### NARTS FFY 2021-2024 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

NWARPC develops the Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Study (NARTS) TIP in cooperation with the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) and Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). The FFY 2021-2024 TIP includes all transportation improvements planned or programmed within the MPA that will utilize federal funding for all or part of their implementation costs. The purpose of the TIP is to assist in coordinating the use of these funds for area-wide transportation improvements and to ensure that the projects that are the recipients of these federal funds are in conformance with the most recently adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan (NWARPC 2045 MTP adopted on March 24, 2021) and is available [at this link](#).





***The concept of fiscal constraint means that there is a reasonable expectation of federal funding for the individual projects contained in the TIP. Reasonable expectation is defined as the guarantee or probability of federal funding within the four-year time frame of the TIP. The NWARPC 2045 MTP shows the FFY 2021-2024 TIP as the Fiscally Constrained Project List.***

The FFY 2021-2024 TIP was also developed through a performance-driven, out-come based approach, as established under planning regulations of the U.S. Department of Transportation. NWARPC continues to coordinate with ARDOT and MoDOT on the establishment of a performance-based approach to transportation planning. ARDOT and MoDOT have each developed a Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) that includes a discussion of the anticipated effect of the STIP toward achieving identified performance targets.

NWARPC passed Resolution #2018-13, Resolution #2020-01 and Resolution # 2020-02 supporting both DOT's established performance targets for Safety, Pavement Condition, Bridge Condition, and Travel Time Reliability. The Surface Attributable Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP-A), Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and transit projects are also included in the TIP.

The anticipated effect of the NARTS TIP toward achieving the performance targets are addressed in projects like the ones listed below:

- **Highway 112** – Six projects are programmed in the current TIP.
- **Interstate 49** – One project is programmed in the current TIP.
- **US 612 (US 412 Northern Bypass)** – Two projects are programmed in the current TIP.



# 2045 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

## NWARPC 2045 MTP

One of the biggest undertakings of 2020 was updating the 2040 NWA Metropolitan Transportation Plan to the NWARPC 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The NWARPC 2045 MTP update process officially began in the fall 2018 with the initial Public Open House, however, public engagement and involvement began in fall 2017 with the first of a series of educational public events. Events, newspaper articles, surveys, legal notices, flyers, and other forms of public notification and involvement continued up to the adoption of the NWARPC 2045 MTP in March 2021. Development of the NWARPC 2045 MTP began in earnest in July 2019. In October 2019 two Public Open Houses were held, one in Benton County and one in Washington County, where staff from NWARPC, ORT, Razorback Transit, and ATG Consultants presented information, surveys, and recommendations for public comment.

*"It is time to look towards the future and design our communities for car ownership to be optional."*

*"We urgently need to plan a mass transit system to avoid the problems plaguing other cities on the coast, such as traffic, sprawl inhibiting fiscally solvent growth, and lower quality of life."*

*Public Comments*

The year 2020 brought a halt to all in-person public meetings, events, etc., due to the corona virus and COVID-19 pandemic and health emergency. However, NWARPC continued to notify the public of virtual public engagement meetings and events. NWARPC staff ensured that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the RPC/Policy Committee, the Active Transportation Committee (ACT), the Transit Development Plan Steering Committee, and others, were actively involved in plan development. All recommendations were forwarded to the RPC/Policy Committee for formal approval or adoption, as necessary. The plan can be accessed [at this link](#).

## NWARPC 2045 MTP ADOPTION

**January 21, 2021** - The TAC met virtually and approved a motion to recommend the Draft NWARPC 2045 MTP to the RPC/Policy Committee for review and to go to a Final Public Open House. The RPC/Policy Committee met virtually on **January 27, 2021** when the final Public Open House for the Draft NWARPC was held.

**Between January 28, 2021 and February 28, 2021** - A 30-day Public Comment Period for the NWARPC 2045 MTP took place.

**In March 2021** - The Public Comment Report was delivered to the TAC and the RPC/Policy Committee. The TAC met virtually on **March 18, 2021** and voted unanimously to forward the Draft MTP document to the RPC/Policy Committee for consideration and adoption. The RPC/Policy Committee met virtually on **March 24, 2021** and voted unanimously to approve **Resolution #2021-02 to Approve the NWARPC 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (NWARPC 2045 MTP)**.



## PUBLIC Input

Pulling together public comments, suggestions, survey answers, federal, state and local planning partner input, as well as TAC and RPC/Policy Committee recommendations allowed NWARPC staff to fully develop the 2045 MTP. The NWARPC 2045 MTP is comprised of 12 chapters, each with its own emphasis.

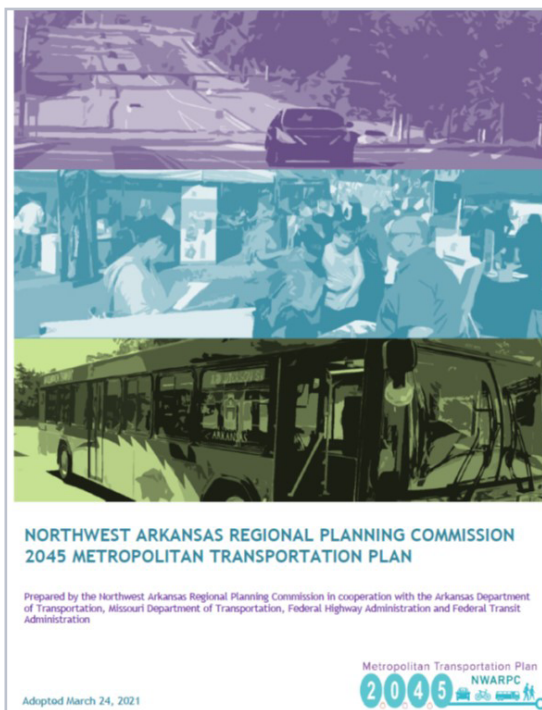
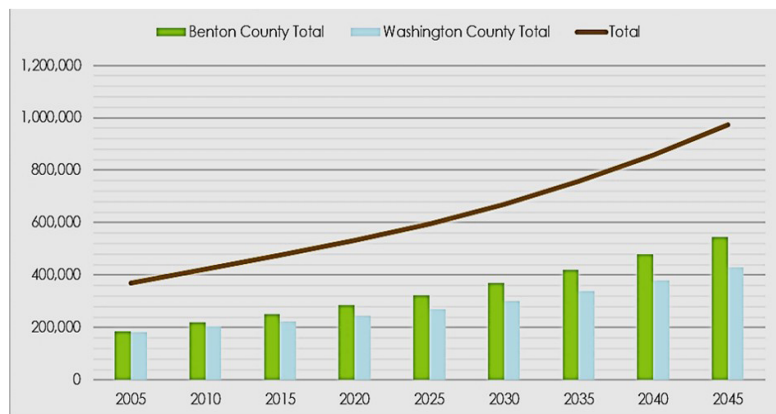
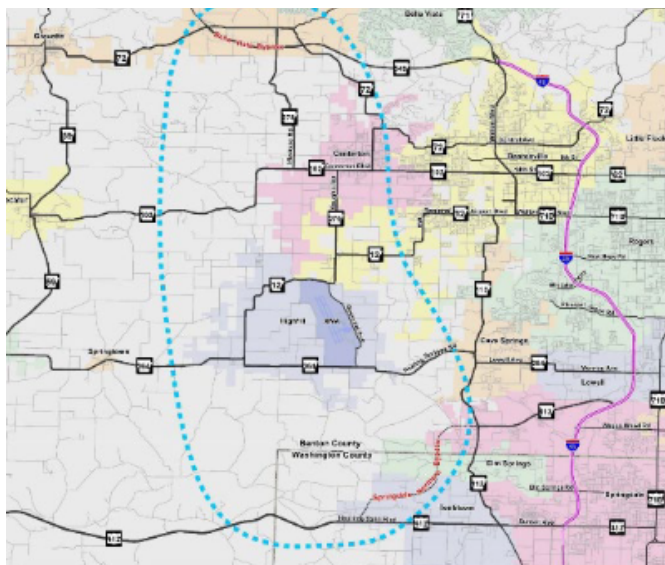


Photo Credit ARDOT  
Fall Colors in the Ozark  
National Forest

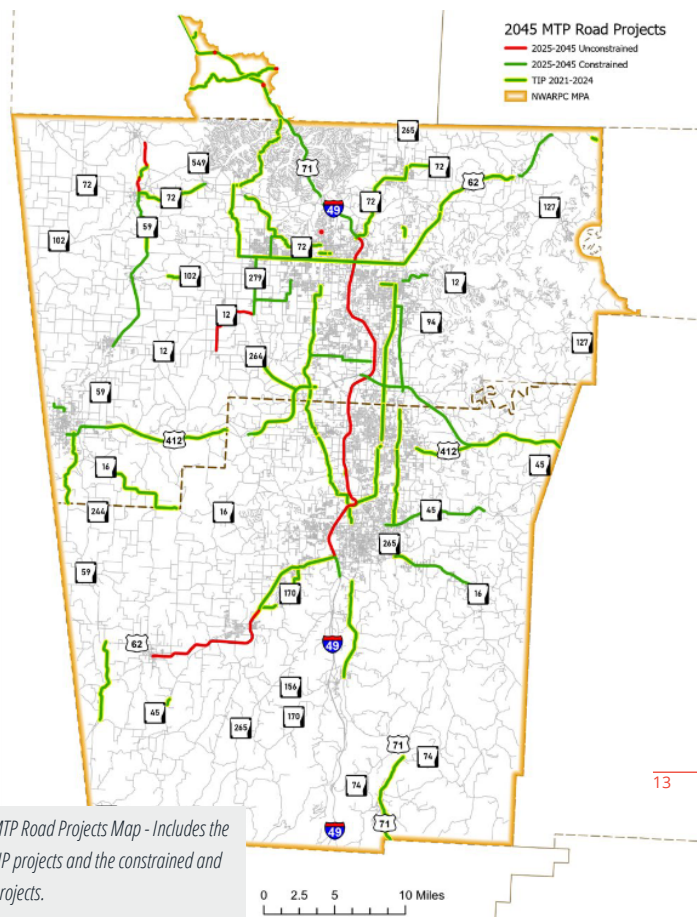
## POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT Projections



In 2019, the Arkansas Economic Development Institute (AEDI) developed detailed demographic population projections for Benton and Washington Counties by using an age, gender, births, deaths and migration cohort methodology. Based on this methodology, AEDI projected that by 2045 the population of Benton and Washington Counties will reach **974,275 people (545,893 people in Benton County and 428,382 people in Washington County)**. In 2020, the NWARPC incorporated these projections into the NWARPC 2045 MTP. This continuous population growth poses challenges to the transportation infrastructure in the region, therefore regional and local jurisdiction planners are working on addressing them now and for the near and long term future.



Western North-South Corridor Study - The study will address existing and future traffic operations, historical crashes, and infrastructure conditions. In 2020 ARDOT conducted a Public Involvement Meeting to obtain public input about the study.

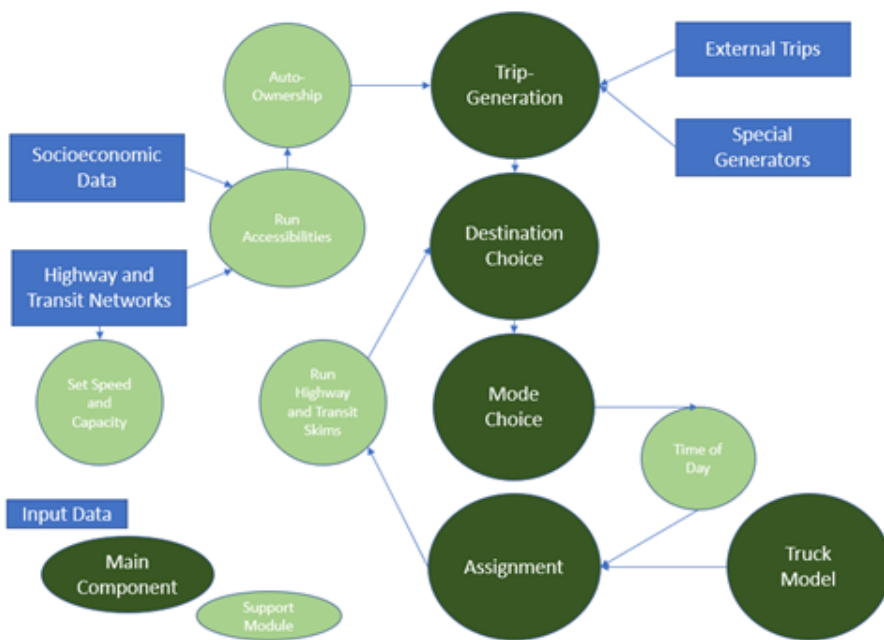


NWARPC 2045 MTP Road Projects Map - Includes the FFY 2021-2024 TIP projects and the constrained and unconstrained projects.

## Travel Demand FORECASTING MODEL

*Focus on growth*

In 2020, the Northwest Arkansas Travel Demand Forecasting Model was updated and enhanced by refining the model calibration and incorporating new modules and additional tools for the base and forecast years. The model played an important part in the development of the NWARPC 2045 MTP.



The newly improved version of the model was calibrated to confirm that changes made to the new model subcomponents and the transit assignment were validated against observed data in the 2018 base year. The model includes forecast years 2025, 2035 and 2045. The future networks were developed to include both fiscally constrained and unconstrained projects and the forecasted socioeconomic data is incorporated into the traffic analysis zones.

Another important improvement to the model was the inclusion of the recommended *Connect Northwest Arkansas Transit Development Plan* network for the Phase I and Phase III of the plan. This allows the model to forecast the mode choice split in the forecast years and inform planners on the type of trips and the mode share of these trips for individual cities, as well as for the counties.

*Photo left*

*NWA Travel Demand Forecasting Model Steps*

*Photo Credit ARDOT*

*Interchange Improvement on I-49*



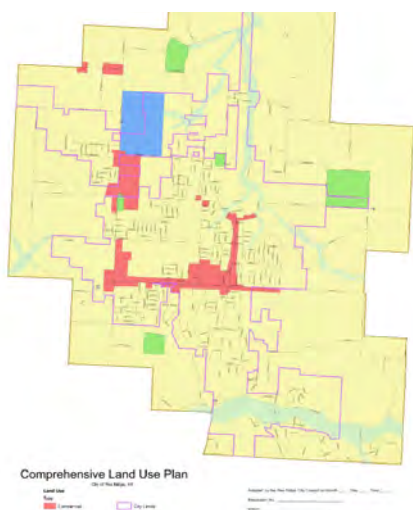


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## GIS and Mapping **SUPPORT**

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### *Focus on growth*



NWARPC continued to provide mapping and GIS support for its member jurisdictions through numerous projects. In 2020, NWARPC provided GIS services for city zoning, Master Street Plans and Future Land Use Plans for 20 cities in Benton and Washington Counties. Staff at NWARPC also provided GIS services for annexation preparation, and planning related research.

NWARPC is currently hosting interactive maps for 16 cities in the MPA region. These interactive maps provide access for the city staff and general public to view and analyze planning maps that include a variety of GIS datasets.



*Photo top*  
View of Kessler Mountain in South Fayetteville  
from the 2020 Washington County imagery

*Photo left*  
Pea Ridge Comprehensive Land Use Plan Map  
developed by NWARPC

NWARPC also continued its commitment to coordinating and distributing the annual aerial imagery for both Washington and Benton Counties.

NWARPC staff coordinated the distribution of aerial imagery data via its online interactive maps, as well as to each individual imagery project participant jurisdiction or organization.



*Photo above*  
View of the Bella Vista Bypass  
Interchange from the 2020 Benton  
County Imagery





*Photo above*  
The Razorback Greenway in Johnson



*Photo right*  
Kessler Mountain Park in Fayetteville

## ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION



*Siloam Springs City Lake Park - Mountain Bike  
Trails over Flint Creek*

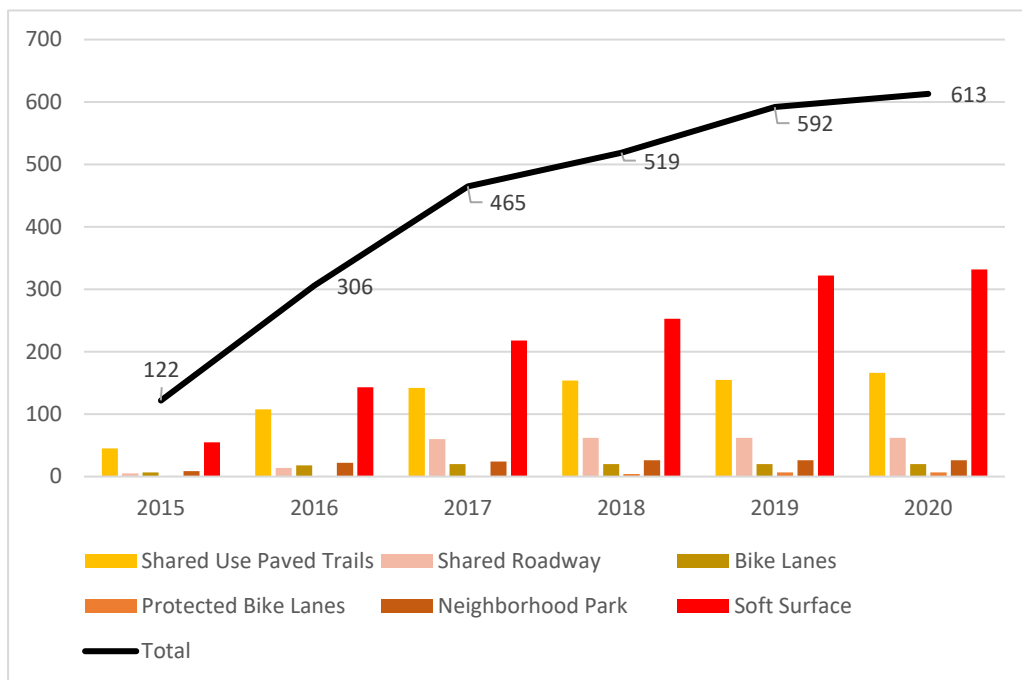


*Lake Atalanta Trail System in Rogers*

NWARPC continued to host and lead the Active Transportation Committee (ACT) meetings on a bi-monthly basis. Some of the recommendations that ACT pursued in 2020 included amending the NWA Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan with catalyst project #14 Bentonville to Cave Springs and Elm Springs to the Highway 112 Corridor and Catalyst Project #16 from the Razorback Greenway Fayetteville/West Fork via the Razorback Greenway along AR/MO Railroad to the Greenland Nature Park. The Committee also reviewed and made a recommendation to support the US Bicycle Route System. ACT also reviewed and discussed signage and street markings and detour and cross section consistency as a policy for the region.

ACT also discussed emergency response on the trail system and shared best practices with member jurisdictions. Multiple members worked together to improve emergency response within their cities. Fayetteville and Bentonville updated their CAD systems and improved the GIS data to assist with quicker response.





Prior to 2020, ACT served as the Razorback Regional Greenway Committee and discussed activities on the Greenway including construction projects, detours, adding signage, striping, etc.

In 2020, the NWA Greenway Alliance was formed to function as a committee exclusively for the Razorback Greenway.

The graphic above shows the total mileage of trails by type built in the two-county area since 2015.

## RAZORBACK GREENWAY ALLIANCE SUPPORT

In 2020, the *Northwest Arkansas Razorback Greenway Alliance* was formed by member cities that own and maintain the Razorback Greenway to function as an independent committee exclusively for the Razorback Greenway. The organization was created for the purpose of fulfilling a commitment made by each of the cities along the Razorback Greenway through the adoption of the "Northwest Arkansas Razorback Greenway Operations and Management Plan" to participate in a regional committee with the purpose of jointly and cooperatively facilitating the policies, goals, objectives, and recommendations outlined in the adopted Plan. The objective of the Alliance is to operate, promote, and maintain the world-class facility as an amenity of regional significance in a cooperative and coordinated manner to sustain the quality of the facility with consistency of standards, cooperation, and coordination building enduring partnership. The Alliance designated the Razorback Greenway to begin at Kessler Mountain adding 3 additional miles, thus making it over 40 miles long.

Since the *Northwest Arkansas Razorback Greenway* was designed and constructed as a world-class facility and as an amenity of regional significance, the cities acknowledged that, while each had its own operations and maintenance departments, a key to a sustainable quality Greenway over the length of the corridor would be a consistency of standards, cooperation and coordination and building enduring partnerships. Because of its unique regional characteristics, stewardship of the Greenway requires a nontraditional and uniquely cooperative approach to



Photo above  
Razorback Greenway 6ft social distance signage in Fayetteville- "Do your part! Stay 6+ Feet Apart!"

*NWARPC worked with ARDOT, MODOT, local government entities and advocacy groups on creating and adopting the development of the US Bicycle Route System 51 (USBR51) routes through Benton and Washington Counties in Arkansas and McDonald County Missouri. On December 4, 2019, the RPC/Policy Committee adopted Resolution 2019-08 designating the preferred route. The Committee continues discussion regarding additional routes/spurs following the heritage trail from Bentonville to Springfield.*

## HERITAGE TRAIL PLAN UPDATE

*"When major road improvements are made to Heritage Trail routes where the Northwest Arkansas Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan calls for a paved sidepath, and where other major road improvements have the potential to connect to the region's existing and future paved multi-use trail network, the preferred cross section from the Heritage Trail Plan would be a 10 to 12-foot multiuse side path along one side of the route with a six-foot sidewalk on the other side."* - Approved recommendation by the Heritage Trail Partners Board for the Heritage Trail Plan Update on December 15, 2020.

The following were accomplishments reported by the Heritage Trail Partners (HTP) in 2020:

- Updated map and Updated Plan;
- Resolution for Hwy 112 and sidepaths;
- HTP Board has pushed for the National Designation Butterfield Overland Trail. On August 10, 2020, during a visit to the Fitzgerald Station, a stop along the historic route between St. Louis, Mo, Memphis, TN, and San Francisco, CA, US Senator John Boozman announced legislation to designate the Butterfield Overland Trail as a National Historic Trail;
- Forty Heritage Trail signs were purchased by the Benton County Historical Preservation Commission and began being placed in November 2020 along Civil War Routes from the Pea Ridge National Military Park area to Highway 43 north of Siloam Springs.

The Heritage Trail Plan was adopted by Heritage Trail Partners on January 15, 2021 and then adopted by the RPC/Policy Committee by Resolution #2021-01 on January 27, 2021.



*Photo above* Rick Parker with the Heritage Trail Partners and Bob Dow with Benton County installing road markings in Benton County



The NWA Open Space Coalition continued to support partners in their efforts to conserve properties that added up to over 1,200 acres in 2020. The Coalition worked with Northwest Arkansas and national partners over several years to conserve a Civil War Battle site. In 2020, the Wilson property joining Pea Ridge National Military Park was purchased by the Conservation Fund.

The 140 acres site was a priority for the Open Space Plan because of its proximity to the Pea Ridge National Military Park, the historic and scenic value of the property and also because local partners were interested in conserving it. More information about this site can be found at the [Conservation Fund website](#).

## OPEN SPACE PLAN PARTICIPATION

**In 2020, NWARPC staff continued to actively support the efforts of the Open Space Plan Committee by participating in all their meetings throughout the year.**



## STBGP-A AND TAP PROJECTS AWARDED IN 2020

Jurisdiction	Project	Type Work	TAP	STBGP-A and HIP
Siloam Springs	Lake Francis/Washington St. Sidewalks	Construction	\$ 125,000	
Bella Vista	Mercy Way Bridge and Road Imps - Razorback Greenway Ext.	Construction + All Phases		\$ 2,509,710
Lowell	Hwy 264/Belview Road Intersection Imps. Roundabout	ROW-Utilities-Const.-CENG		\$ 750,000
Springdale	Watkins Ave. Bike-Ped Bridge over I-49	Construction	\$ 125,000	
Bentonville-Centerton	Greenhouse Road Improvements	Design and Environmental		\$ 850,000
Bentonville	Razorback Greenway Relocation - I-49 SPUI CA	Construction	\$ 250,000	
Tontitown	US 412 and Klenc Rd Signalization	All Phases		\$ 360,000
Farmington	Hwy 170 (Hwy. 62 to Clyde Carnes Road)	Construction + All Phases		\$ 1,930,000
Fayetteville	Sain Street Ext. (N. Front St. to Vantage Blvd.)	Construction + All Phases		\$ 2,500,000
Springdale	Gene George Blvd Phase II	Row and Utilities		\$ 1,036,970
Benton County	Wagon Wheel Road	Construction		\$ 1,200,000
Siloam Springs	Lake Francis/Washington St. Sidewalks HIP Funding	Construction		\$ 72,215
Springdale	Watkins Ave. Bike-Ped Bridge over I-49 HIP Funding	Construction		\$ 184,222
Springdale	Gene George Blvd. Phase II HIP Funding	Row and Utilities		\$ 1,062,605
Bentonville-Centerton	Greenhouse Road Improvements - Hwy 12 to Hwy 102 HIP Funding	Design and Environmental		\$ 132,640
Springdale	Don Tyson Parkway Ext. (S. 56th St. to Hwy. 112) HIP Funding	ROW and Utilities		\$ 1,228,145
University of Arkansas	Razorback Road -ADSB to Hotz -Widening HIP Funding	Construction + All Phases		\$ 334,055
Fayetteville	Highway 112 Side path Trail (TAP) HIP Funding	Construction		\$ 230,891
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 500,000</b>	<b>\$ 14,381,453</b>



*Photo above*  
Centerton STBGP-A Project - Hwy. 102B/Main St. - Seba/Town Vu  
Road Intersection Improvements and Signalization - July 2020



*Photo right*  
Public officials and residents at a Public Involvement Meeting on  
Hwy. 112 improvements in March 2020

## CONNECT NORTHWEST ARKANSAS 10-YEAR TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

*Connecting people and places*

Connect Northwest Arkansas (NWA) is a 10-Year Transit Development Plan (TDP) that will serve as a “Blueprint” for improving and expanding transit in the NWA region. The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC), Ozark Regional Transit (ORT) and Razorback Transit (RT) are committed to ensuring that this plan improves transit by connecting NWA at the regional and local levels, saves people time and ultimately provides the community with greater mobility and freedom. *Connect NWA* was adopted by the NWARPC/Policy Committee in December 2020. The adopted plan is available [at this link](#).

If you **connect** people and save them **time**, you give them **freedom**.

The Connect Northwest Arkansas plan started in 2019 and analyzed ridership, travel patterns, travel time and on-time performance for the entire NWA study area. The first major milestone of the project was to develop a Public Engagement Plan that ensured the entire study area had an opportunity to learn about transit and provide input to directly inform the recommendations of the Connect NWA TDP.

Parallel to the public engagement effort was the existing conditions analysis that included the following technical analyses:

- Benchmarking Review
- Market Analysis
- Fixed Route Transit Operational Analysis

The steps involved in the process of developing a Regional Transit Framework included recommendations for regional and local transit solutions with service level and route alignment modifications and additions.



*Photo above  
Connect NWA Public Input event in Springdale*

Three critical elements to help guide and implement Connect NWA were identified:

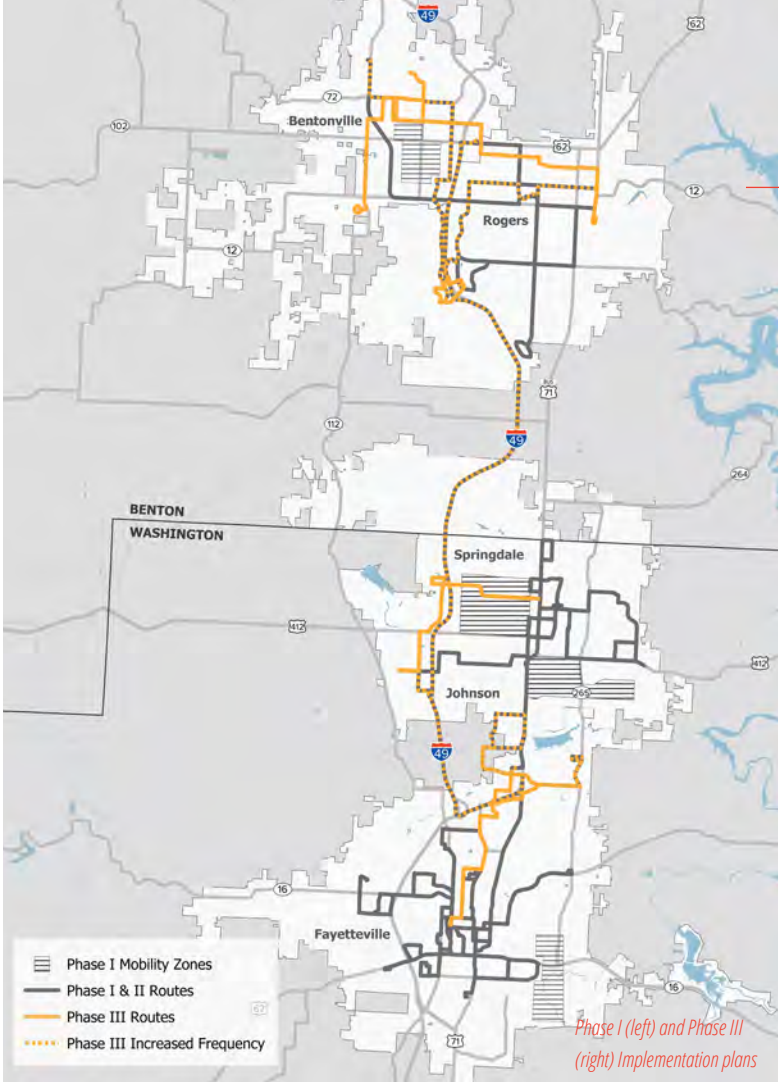
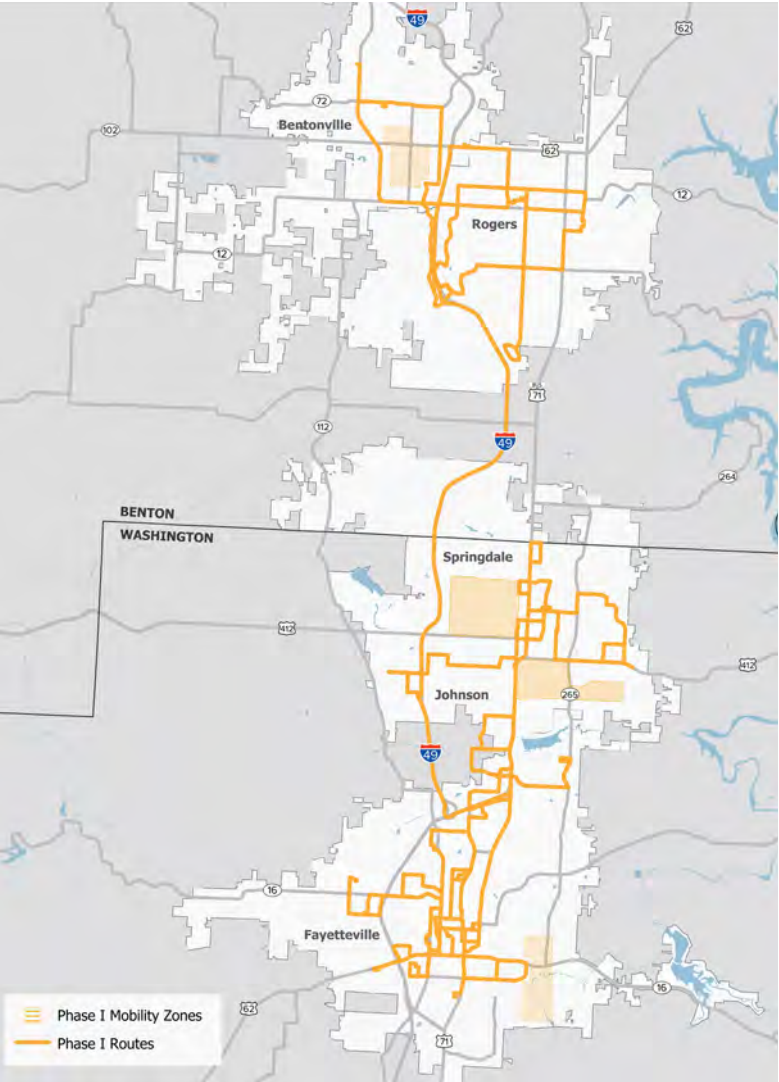
- Regional Service Standards
- Detailed implementation plan with prioritized routes and phasing
- Funding recommendations on allocating federal and local funds

The Regional Transit Framework took the shape of customized route and network recommendations built upon the technical analysis and informed by the public engagement process.

Key transit corridors with enhanced connectivity and direct routing focused on moving NWA residents in an intuitive, time efficient manner not restricted by political boundaries were recommended.

The draft recommendations were provided to the public for comment through both a series of community events and online and paper surveys to obtain public feedback about the proposed changes.





Phase I (left) and Phase III (right) Implementation plans

Following the public outreach phase of the alternatives development, the feedback was incorporated back into the draft recommendations to create a locally preferred alternative (LPA) truly supported by the community.

Connect NWA recommendations focused on a phased implementation plan derived from previous technical analyses, proven transit concepts, and public and staff input.

This implementation plan will work in tandem with the Regional Service Standards to implement successfully and sustainably the recommendations that will create high quality transit throughout the entire NWA region. The implementation plan was separated into three phases:

- Phase I: 1 to 2 years
- Phase II: 2 to 5 years
- Phase III: 5 to 10 years

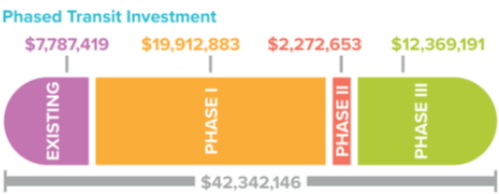


Photo above  
Bus riders on the Razorback  
Transit

Each phase was further prioritized to provide a more detailed structure for future implementation. The three main components informed the prioritization process and ensured that it supports the vision of the Connect NWA by connecting people and saving them time.

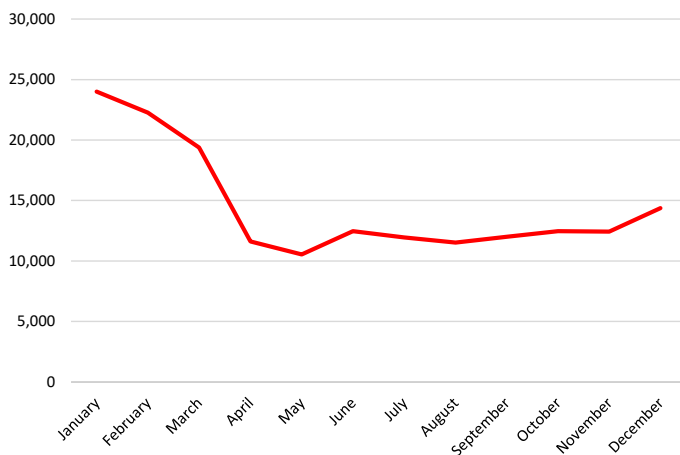
## TRANSIT AGENCIES UPDATE

### OZARK REGIONAL TRANSIT

Ozark Regional Transit (ORT) has a new home as of December 2020. The new administration building has 8,600-square feet. The new building was constructed between the old 7,000-square-foot office and Robinson Ave., on U.S. Highway 412 East in Springdale. A second phase of the project will remove the old office that was built in the 1970s, and replace it with a parking lot.

ORT has three fixed routes in Fayetteville, three in Springdale and one in Bentonville. The provider offers on-demand transit in Rogers using two buses. An express bus service that runs between Fayetteville and Bentonville is used mostly by students at the Northwest Arkansas Community College. A \$144,269 grant from the Walton Family Foundation will allow ORT to offer free service through 2021.

Ridership in 2020 has been down, consistent with the national trend due mainly to the Covid-19 pandemic. The total annual ridership, including paratransit was 175,039. The graph below shows total monthly ridership and trend between January and December 2020.



*Photo Above*

ORT's new administration building - The new building was built between the old 7,000-square-foot office and Robinson Avenue, or U.S. Highway 412 East.

*"It's been a long time coming, but we've finally moved into our new building. Our new facilities will give us the administrative room to grow to what NWA needs in a regional public transit system." Jeff Hatley, Mobility Manager/Public Information Officer for ORT.*

9

FIXED ROUTES

296

STOPS

51,172

WITHIN 0.25MI OF STOPS

8,984

AVG. MONTHLY PASSENGERS



NWARPC, is the designated recipient for the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers AR-MO Urbanized Area and Formula Grants apportioned by FTA. It is also responsible for monitoring compliance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements for the life of FTA Section 5339-funded projects that are maintained by subrecipients in the MPO area: Ozark Regional Transit and Razorback Transit.

## RAZORBACK TRANSIT

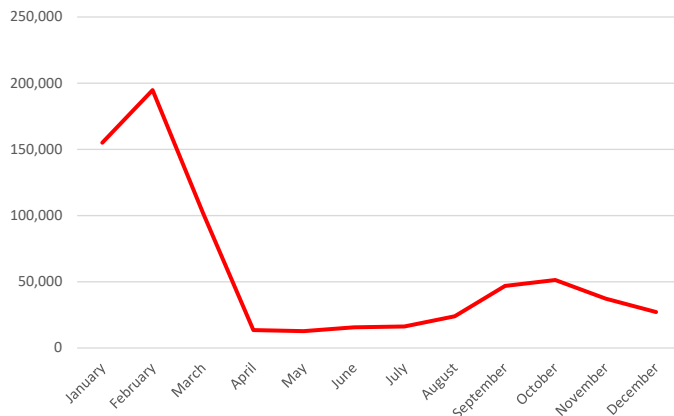
*Photo right*  
Razorback Transit bus on the University of Arkansas Campus



Since its origins as a bus shuttle program in the late 1970s, Razorback Transit has continuously served the University of Arkansas community and the City of Fayetteville, carrying as many as 2 million passengers during a normal year.

During 2020, the ridership has been reduced drastically due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Total ridership dropped to 696,267, including paratransit ridership.

The graphic below shows monthly ridership in 2020 on Razorback Transit.



Razorback Transit is running at least 10 routes and, on a typical day, the routes run from 6:30AM to 10:40PM.

Razorback Transit riders can use the app [PassioGo](#) to see the current routes and schedule and access live routing.

Razorback Transit employs about 30 drivers who have been working as essential personnel every day during the pandemic. Adam Wadell, Associate Director said recently:

*"In their role as providing an essential service, they have been helping people get to the doctor or to get to work or to get anywhere they need to be."*



## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

*Working together*

### STORMWATER MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES IN 2020



Available to all Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) jurisdictions, the pre-construction educational program is developed for contractors and includes post-test examinations eliminating the “I didn’t know” response that is often used during site inspections. In 2020, there were an additional 264 construction industry personnel trained on Stormwater Construction Best Management Practices (BMPs).



Additional stormwater construction inspection trainings were conducted with local builders.

As part of the permit requirements, 455 employees of MS4 cities, counties and UA were trained on stormwater and good housekeeping BMPs.

*Photos to the left:  
Storm drain art program  
participants and Lake  
Fayetteville Cleanups in  
October 2020.*

Seventeen Northwest Arkansas cities, Benton and Washington Counties, and the University of Arkansas are partnering with the University of Arkansas (UA) System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service and the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC) on a regional approach to stormwater management.

The 16-year partnership creates the NWA Urban Stormwater Education Program and is responsible for the educational components that are required through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) jurisdictions.

## ABOUT THE STORMWATER EDUCATION PROGRAM

*The program reached an audience of 26,992 through 5 social media accounts and 102,765 residents through mass media outlets such as radio, television and newspaper.*



During the 2020 year, the Extension's stormwater program held 36 in-person or virtual events and displays that reached 1,458 MS4 residents with the message of stormwater pollution prevention. Approximately 977 residents participated in public involvement activities such as litter clean-ups, pledges to reduce stormwater pollution, served on steering committees, completed surveys on opinions and knowledge of stormwater pollutants. In 2020, the 5-yr NPDES MS4 permit educational emphasis was storm drain infrastructure awareness and that storm drains do not flow to wastewater treatment plants. In response, an innovative eco-art project was installed that showed the flow of stormwater from the inlet to the outfall above ground to visualize the infrastructure below ground using blue survey whiskers and concrete stickers.

This project was installed in two cities along the Razorback Regional Greenway reaching an audience of potentially 51,333 trail users. In addition to the Know the Flow project, 407 storm drain markers were installed.

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The goal of the NWA Urban Stormwater Education Program is to help jurisdictions stay in compliance of permit requirements which are set to maintain local water quality standards. To do this, the program, with NWARPC, conducts bi-monthly stormwater compliance meetings for MS4 representatives to ask questions of what others in the area are doing.

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The regional program provides shared knowledge and individualized audit support for each jurisdiction. Additional guidance is given to MS4s as unique situations arise to find resources that ensure they are staying compliant with federal and state stormwater regulations.

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This regional program has received praise from the Arkansas Division of Environmental Quality which oversees the permit requirements as an innovative and cost-efficient way to help jurisdictions stay compliant.

# NWARPC

## MEMBERSHIP

### AGENCY

Avoca  
Bella Vista  
Benton County  
Bentonville  
Cave Springs  
Centerton  
Decatur  
Elkins  
Elm Springs  
Farmington  
Fayetteville  
Garfield  
Gateway  
Gentry  
Goshen  
Gravette  
Greenland  
Highfill  
Hindsville  
Huntsville  
Johnson  
Lincoln  
Little Flock  
Lowell  
McDonald County, MO  
Pea Ridge  
City of Pineville, MO  
Prairie Grove  
Rogers  
Siloam Springs  
Springdale  
Springtown  
Sulphur Springs  
Tontitown  
Washington County  
West Fork  
Winslow  
ARDOT – Planning  
ARDOT Districts  
MODOT  
Beaver Water District  
University of Arkansas  
Northwest Ark. National Airport

### REPRESENTATIVE

Mayor Robert Whitehorn  
Mayor Peter Christie - Vice-Chair  
Judge Barry Moehring, Josh Beam, Jay Frasier  
Mayor Stephanie Orman, Shelli Kerr  
Mayor Randy Noblett  
Mayor Bill Edwards, Rick Hudson  
Mayor Bob Tharp, James Boston  
Mayor Bruce Ledford  
Mayor Harold D. Douthit  
Mayor Ernie Penn, Melissa McCarville  
Mayor Lioneld Jordan, Chris Brown, Jonathan Curth  
Mayor Gary L. Blackburn  
Mayor Andrew Tillman  
Mayor Kevin Johnston  
Mayor Max Poye  
Mayor Kurt Maddox  
Mayor Bill Groom  
Mayor Michele Reiff  
Mayor X Dotson  
Mayor Darrell Trahan  
Mayor Chris Keeney - Chair  
Mayor Doug Hutchens  
Mayor Tracy Englebrecht  
Mayor Chris Moore, Rick Stone  
County Commissioners Bill Lant, John Bunch, David Holloway  
Mayor Jackie Crabtree - Treasurer  
Mayor Greg Sweeten, Melissa Ziemianin  
Mayor Sonny Hudson - Secretary  
Bob Crafton, Lance Jobe, John McCurdy  
Mayor Judy Nation, Phillip Patterson  
Mayor Doug Sprouse, Patsy Christie, Jim Ulmer  
Mayor Terri Glenn  
Mayor Shane Weber  
Mayor Paul Colvin, Jr.  
Judge Joseph K. Wood, Nathan Crouch  
Mayor S. Heith Caudle  
Ann Malkier  
Steve Frisbee  
Chad Adams (District 4)  
Dave Taylor and Britni O'Connor  
Lane Crider  
Scott Turley  
Aaron Burkes

### Non-Voting Transportation Planning Partners:

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Amy Heflin  
Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – Lynn Hayes  
Arkansas State Highway Commission  
Razorback Transit – Gary Smith, Adam Waddell  
Ozark Regional Transit - Joel Gardner  
Human Service Agencies  
Arkansas Missouri Railroad

## NWARPC STAFF

Jeff Hawkins - Executive Director  
Tim Conklin, AICP - Assistant Director/ NARTS Director  
Donna Lange - Office Manager  
Celia Scott-Silkwood, AICP - Regional Planner  
Cristina Scarlat - GIS Coordinator/Travel Demand Modeler  
Elizabeth Bowen - Project Manager  
Stephanie Shaw - Transportation GIS Analyst  
Brandon Ives - IT/GIS Specialist



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## RECOGNITION

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### CELIA SCOTT-SILKWOOD

#### RETIREMENT



Celia Scott-Silkwood is retiring after 27 years of service with NWARPC. Celia started working for NWARPC in December 1989 and, after taking a break to work as the Planning Director for Washington County for 5 years, she returned to work as a Regional Planner for the Commission in 2005. The Commission will miss Celia's invaluable institutional knowledge as a planner and also as a resident of Northwest Arkansas. Celia knows everybody in Northwest Arkansas and has worked with a lot of people and institutions on behalf of the Commission. She helped develop countless plans and projects for the region and cities and managed the stormwater management program at NWARPC for many years. Her organizational skills kept everybody she worked with up to task and on track and she made sure that deadlines were met on time or, her preference, before the deadline. Celia will be missed by the NWARPC staff and the numerous people she has worked with over the years. We are happy to see that her dedication and hard work are rewarded by a well-deserved retirement. We wish her the best on her plans to retire in Washington, her home State, and hope she will enjoy many, many years of retirement bliss. Thank you Celia, you will be missed!



### MIKE JOHNSON

#### RETIREMENT

Mike Johnson, associate vice chancellor for facilities, retired from his position after serving 17 years at the University of Arkansas. He was the University of Arkansas' representative on TAC and the RPC/Policy Committee for the duration of his appointment. He was also an active contributor to the Northwest Arkansas community including serving on the Northwest Arkansas National Airport Authority Board since 2008, when he was appointed by the City of Fayetteville. We are grateful and honored to have worked with Mike for all this time and will definitely miss his guidance and expertise. We wish him a long and wonderful retirement!



### REMEMBERING PAUL JUSTUS

#### IN MEMORIAM

We are deeply saddened by the news that our former colleague, Paul Justus, passed away recently on a walk in Salem, OR, his home over the past few years. Paul retired as a Regional Planner with NWARPC in 2014, after 15 years of work and dedication to the Commission and the Northwest Arkansas community. Paul was deeply loved by his family and friends and he will be sorely missed by all of us.

This report was funded in part through grants from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S.DOT). The views and opinions of the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC) expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Cristina Scarlat: writing, editing, layout and graphics  
All photos by NWARPC and partners except where noted



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