

RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2025 AT 1:30 PM; *DRAFT*

ENTITY	MEMBER	ATTENDING	PROXY
AVOCA	MAYOR ROBERT WHITEHORN		
BELLA VISTA	MAYOR JOHN FLYNN TAYLOR ROBERTSON	X X	
BENTON COUNTY	JUDGE BARRY MOEHRING (TREASURER) JOSH BEAM JAY FRASIER	X	
BENTONVILLE	MAYOR STEPHANIE ORMAN SHELLI KERR	X	
CAVE SPRINGS	MAYOR RANDALL NOBLETT		
CENTERTON	MAYOR BILL EDWARDS (VICE CHAIR) LORENE BURNS		
DECATUR	MAYOR BOB THARP		
ELKINS	MAYOR TROY REED		
ELM SPRINGS	MAYOR HAROLD DOUTHIT		
FARMINGTON	MAYOR ERNIE PENN	X	
FAYETTEVILLE	MAYOR MOLLY RAWN CHRIS BROWN JONATHAN CURTH	X X	
GARFIELD	MAYOR GARY L BLACKBURN	X	
GATEWAY	MAYOR CHERYL TILLMAN		
GENTRY	MAYOR KEVIN JOHNSTON	X	
GOSHEN	MAYOR RUSSELL STROUD		
GRAVETTE	MAYOR KURT MADDOX	X	Ami Murray
GREENLAND	MAYOR JIM RENFROW		
HIGHFILL	CASSIE ELLIOT		
HINDSVILLE	MAYOR STEPHANIE CASEY		
HUNTSVILLE	MAYOR TRAVIS DOTSON		
JOHNSON	MAYOR CHRIS KEENEY (SECRETARY)	X	
LINCOLN	MAYOR DOUG HUTCHENS		
LITTLE FLOCK	MAYOR JEFF VAN SICKLER	X	Nicole Gibbs
LOWELL	MAYOR CHRIS MOORE		
PEA RIDGE	MAYOR NATHAN SEE	X	Keegan Stanton
PRAIRIE GROVE	MAYOR DAVID FAULK		
ROGERS	LANCE JOBE JOHN McCURDY QUNITON HARRIS	X X	
SILOAM SPRINGS	MAYOR JUDY NATION CHRISTINA PETRICHES (INTERIM ADMIN.)	X	Ben Rhoads
SPRINGDALE	MAYOR DOUG SPROUSE (CHAIR) BEN PETERS JIM ULMER	X X	
SPRINGTOWN	MAYOR TERRI GLENN		
SULPHUR SPRINGS	MAYOR SHANE WEBER		
TONTITOWN	MAYOR ANGELA RUSSELL		
WASHINGTON CO.	JUDGE PATRICK DEAKINS BRIDGETT RUSSELL SAM ATA	X	
WEST FORK	MAYOR HEITH CAUDLE		
WINSLOW	ANN MALKIE		
ARDOT PLANNING + DISTRICTS	TRAVIS BROOKS JASON HUGHEY (DISTRICT 4)	X	Sunny Farmahan
BEAVER H2O DISTRICT	LANE CRIDER		
McDONALD COUNTY	COMMISSIONER BRIAN HALL		
MoDOT	MARVIN MORRIS (EZEKIEL HALL)		
NAT. AIRPORT AUTH.	AARON BURKES	X	
PINEVILLE, MO	MAYOR GREG SWEETEN		
RAZORBACK TRANSIT	GARY K. SMITH (ADAM WADDELL)	X	
U OF A	MIKE OESTEREICHER (DIANE MEEK)	X	
OZARK REG. TRANSIT	JOEL GARDNER (NON-VOTING)		
ARDOT TRANSIT	GREG NATION (NON-VOTING)		
HWY COMMISSION	PHILLIP TALDO (NON-VOTING)		

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NWARPC STAFF: Tim Conklin, Nicole Gibbs, Tim Reavis, Cristina Scarlat, Luke Aitken, Shimon Beazer, Madison Kienzle, Jeff Hawkins, and Stephanie Marpe

OTHERS: Doug Thompson (NWADG), Nelson Peacock (NWA Council), Aaron Benzing (Hawkins Weir), Luke Jost (Crafton Tull), Dan Weese (Bentonville), Tristen Farris (Sen. Cotton), Ashley Wardlow (Botanical Garden of the Ozarks), Aaron Boll (Half), Joshua Johnson (Pea Ridge), David Siskowski (ARDOT), JP Schafer (Toole Design), Adam Waddell (Razorback Transit), Scott Doyon, Hazel Borts & Susan Henderson (Place Makers), Matt Lambert & Camille Cortes (DPZ Co-Design)

NOTE: THIS MEETING WAS HELD IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY; VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION CONTINUES TO BE OFFERED AS NWARPC REMAINS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

(1) CALL TO ORDER

The hybrid, in-person and virtual NWARPC/Policy Committee meeting was called to order by Mayor Doug Sprouse at 1:30p.m. Members attending in person and virtually were welcomed.

(2) ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

In-person attendees introduced themselves and Tim Conklin named the virtual attendees. Luke Aitken recorded member names and tallied votes. A quorum was reached.

(3) APPROVAL OF AUGUST 27, 2025, RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse asked for any revisions to the August 27, 2025 meeting minutes, and none were heard. He requested a motion for approval of the meeting minutes.

MOTION: Jim Ulmer made a motion to approve the RPC/Policy Committee Meeting Minutes from August 27, 2025. Seconded by Mayor Ernie Penn. Motion carried unanimously.

(4) DIRECTOR REPORT & CLEARINGHOUSE REPORT

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse introduced the item and Executive Director Tim Conklin provided updates on recent activities at the commission. He highlighted that the Razorback Greenway received the APA AR Great Places Award at the APA Bi-State conference in St. Louis. Conklin discussed the upcoming expiration of the IJA in 2026 and reviewed the Congressional reauthorization timeline. He also discussed the NWA Regional Comprehensive Safety Action Plan, which positions NWARPC's member communities to be eligible for significant SS4A federal grant funding. Conklin then presented the past month's federal clearinghouse report and announced the promotion of Nicole Gibbs to Assistant Director.

(5) NWA Council Regional Growth Strategy Presentation

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse introduced the item and Tim Conklin introduced Nelson Peacock (NWA Council), Matt Lambert (DPZ CoDesign), and Susan Henderson (Place Makers), noting that the team had just completed a week-long "roadshow" for the NWA Growth Strategy. Lambert said DPZ CoDesign has been contracted by the NWA Council to develop the Regional Growth Strategy outlining recommended strategies to address and accommodate regional growth in Northwest Arkansas. He said the project focuses on five key areas of growth for the region and highlights challenges within each area and strategies to address them: Housing Cost and Availability, Transportation and Growth, Infrastructure and Utilities, Community Character Impact, and Collaboration and Regional Tools.

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There was discussion regarding the level of detail to be included in the plan and specifically if it would provide roadmaps for individual cities to successfully implement the proposed strategies. DPZ staff mentioned that the goal of the plan is to provide hard materials supporting implementation and actionable data for the region. He said details of the plan's progress and all presentations, materials, roadshow public engagement results, and preliminary reports will be made available on the web page growinghomenwa.com

Several members showed support for the plan vision presented by DPZ staff with some members emphasizing the importance of continuous municipal buy-in and regional cooperation in working towards the plan's development and implementation.

(6) WASTEWATER STUDY UPDATE

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse introduced the item and Tim Conklin introduced Aaron Benzing of Hawkins-Weir Engineers who provided an update on the ongoing Regional Wastewater Strategy Project. Benzing mentioned that his team is currently in week 4 of the 18-month study and they are focused on data acquisition. He reviewed the project's three phases: development of the master plan, stakeholder engagement, and final implementation. Benzing mentioned that they are beginning their one-on-one stakeholder meetings soon and that at the end of October, they will host their first workshop with the steering committee focused on governance issues.

(7) OPEN A NEW BANK ACCOUNT FOR CPRG ELECTRIC BICYCLE INCENTIVE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse introduced the item and Tim Conklin explained the Commission is establishing a new bank account for the administration of the \$7 million Tri-Region Electric Bicycle Incentive Program. In addition to opening a new bank account, NWARPC is requesting to update their designated check signers for all existing accounts as well as the new E-Bike Incentive Program account.

A. Resolution #2025-17 – Updating Check Signers and Establishing a New Bank Checking Account Dedicated to the Administration of the Tri-Region Electric Bicycle Incentive Program

Chair, Mayor Sprouse asked whether there were any questions, and hearing none asked for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-17 Updating Check Signers and Establishing a New Bank Checking Account Dedicated to the Administration of the Tri-Region Electric Bicycle Incentive Program.

MOTION: Jim Ulmer made a motion to approve resolution #2025-17 Updating Check Signers and Establishing a New Bank Checking Account Dedicated to the Administration of the Tri-Region Electric Bicycle Incentive Program. Seconded by Mayor Stephanie Orman. Motion carried unanimously.

(8) NARTS FFY 2025-2028 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) AMENDMENT #3- Western North-South Connector Project Development

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse introduced the item, and Nicole Gibbs said ARDOT requested a TIP Amendment to program project development for the Western North-South Connector. She said, in accordance with the NWARPC Public Participation Plan, a public comment period for the amendment was held September 8–22, 2025.

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Gibbs said the Arkansas Highway Commission adopted the study on August 20, 2025 and identified a long-term need to improve north-south travel between Bentonville, Gravette, Centerton, Highfill, Tontitown, and XNA. She explained that public feedback supported network improvements but raised concerns about property and environmental impacts. She said these concerns were largely due to confusion over the proposed connector being a freeway facility. She said the recommendation is not for a freeway facility, but instead for an arterial roadway which would prioritize the improvement of existing roads where feasible, with priority given to the northern area of the study, north of Hwy 264.

A. Resolution #2025-18 – Amending the Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Study (NARTS) FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Chair Mayor Sprouse asked whether there were any questions, and hearing none asked for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-18 Amending the Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Study (NARTS) FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

MOTION: Judge Barry Moehring made a motion to approve resolution #2025-18 Amending the Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Study (NARTS) FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Seconded by Mayor Ernie Penn. Motion carried unanimously.

(9) HIGHWAY 612 BYPASS & AIRPORT CONNECTOR – REGULATION OF BILLBOARDS DISCUSSION

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse introduced the item, and Tim Conklin opened the floor for the discussion of regulating billboard placement along Highway 612 and the XNA Airport Connector. There was discussion regarding existing county and city ordinances and about the requirements surrounding designation of a road as a scenic byway.

(10) PROJECT AND OTHER UPDATES

A. NWARPC Funding Programs (STBGP-A/TAP/CRP)

Nicole Gibbs presented standing reminders for members to submit quarterly reports for active federal aid projects and noted that FFY 2025 is now closed and NWARPC was able to obligate approximately \$24.2 million for that funding cycle. She thanked project sponsors and ARDOT staff for their work to get the projects in shape to obligate the funding. Gibbs stated multiple projects are ready to obligate once FFY 2026 funds are available. She also noted that FFY2026 award letters have been sent out and that 14 out of the 22 agreements have been received and signed.

Gibbs also presented a timeline for FFY2027 projects as shown below:

Action/Activity	Date
Call for Projects (Applications Open)	Early January 2026
Application Deadline (Resolution Required)	Early April 2026
Project Sponsor Presentation to TAC Committee	April 2026
Selection Committee Site Visits/Scoring/Rec	April/May (TBD)
Selection Committee Recommendation to TAC	May 2026
TAC Recommendation to RPC/Policy	May 2026

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B. Forward2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transit Alternatives Study (TAS) and Travel Demand Model (TDM) Updates

Tim Reavis said that Forward 2050 (MTP) Chapters 1 & 3 were presented and reviewed by TAC this month with Chapters 4 & 5 slated to be reviewed by TAC members at the October meeting. A full draft of the 2050 MTP will be complete and presented to TAC in November with Public Open House events and comment period scheduled to begin in early December. The target adoption date for the updated 2050 MTP is February 2026.

Tim Reavis also provided an update on the ongoing Transit Alternative Study (TAS), which evaluated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Light Rail, and Commuter Rail as options for high-capacity transit to be implemented in the region. BRT scored highest overall based on mobility, land use, socioeconomic benefits, and cost-effectiveness. BRT will not be announced as the designated “preferred transit alternative” until the study is complete and has been adopted by TAC and RPC respectively.

C. Other Ongoing Project Updates

Tim Reavis provided updates on the Razorback Greenway Corridor Plan, including recent advisory committee workshops, public engagement at Square 2 Square events, and upcoming city one-on-one meetings scheduled for early October.

Madison Kienzle provided an update on the CPRG Implementation Grant, which funds 17 projects across the region. She said NWARPC is working alongside Metroplan and assisting with monitoring these projects. She also relayed that the CPRG Implementation Grant also includes a \$7 million Tri-Region E-Bike Incentive Program which will be administered by NWARPC. Three firms were invited to submit RFPs for this program with a deadline of September 26, 2025.

Madison Kienzle also provided examples of recent staff efforts to support member communities in comprehensive planning, highlighting how NWARPC assists its members through its role as a Council of Governments. She also shared key takeaways from the NWA Housing Supply and Affordability Summit, which created space for open dialogue between cities, counties, planners, and state legislators for discussion on the region’s housing challenges and opportunities.

D. Other Grant Opportunity Updates

Tim Conklin shared information concerning the currently open grant applications through the IJA.

(11) COMMITTEE AND GROUP UPDATES

A. Active Transportation Committee (ACT)

Luke Aitken stated ACT meets every other first Thursday with the next meeting will be held virtually on October 2, 2025 at 1:30pm.

B. NWA Open Space Coalition

Luke Aitken stated that the NWA Open Space Coalition meets every other second Wednesday with the next meeting being held October 21, 2025 at 11:00 am at Wilson Springs Preserve in Fayetteville.

C. MS4 Stormwater Compliance Group

Tim Conklin shared the next MS4 Compliance Group meeting will be held virtually on October 15, 2025.

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D. NWA GIS User Group

Tim Conklin stated staff will be attending the Arkansas GIS Symposium October 14-16, 2025 in Eureka Springs in lieu of the October 14, 2025 NWA GIS User meeting.

(12) PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse stated one public comment was received in writing prior to the meeting, which was included in the meeting materials sent out to committee members. He asked whether there were any other public comments in the room to be heard for consideration, and none were heard.

(13) OTHER BUSINESS

A. Future Meeting Dates:

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse noted upcoming meeting dates as shown below:

- **TAC Meeting – Thursday, October 16 @ 10:30 AM**
- **RPC/Policy Committee Meeting – Wednesday, October 22, 2025 @ 1:30 PM**

B. Other Dates to Note:

- CNU Save the Date: May 12-16, 2026, held in NWA
- Friendraiser River Rally for Beaver Watershed Alliance: September 25th
- Arkansas GIS Users Symposium: Oct. 14-16, 2025, Eureka Springs,
- NWA Land Trust Acre by Acre Fundraiser: Oct. 16, 2025, Fayetteville,
- ARDOT Arkansas Transportation Summit: Oct. 27 –30, 2025, Jonesboro,
- ULI NWA Place Summit: Nov. 12 –14, 2025, Fayetteville, AR

The last note of business presented by Tim Conklin was that the USDOT BUILD NOFO Grant applications are opening in November.

(14) ADJOURN

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:46 PM.

PASSED AND APPROVED ON THIS _____ DAY OF _____ 2025.

Mayor Doug Sprouse, Chair, NWARPC

ATTEST: _____