

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION ORGANIZATION CASE STATEMENT



**PLANNING FOR A SAFE,
CONNECTED, AND RESILIENT
NORTHWEST ARKANSAS**

OVERVIEW

MISSION STATEMENT

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission serves as a Council of Governments and the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization. The Commission supports cities and counties through innovative planning, transportation choice, and responsible growth to shape a safe, connected, and resilient region.

LONG TERM GOALS

- 1: Advance plans and policies that enable transportation choice, respect the natural and human environment, and enhance the region's quality of life.
- 2: Implement a safe, connected, and reliable multimodal transportation system.
- 3: Foster regional collaboration and reinforce economic competitiveness.

MOVING NORTHWEST ARKANSAS FORWARD

Opportunities and Needs

Northwest Arkansas has experienced extraordinary growth, adding more than 100,000 residents each decade for the past 30 years. This momentum shows no signs of slowing, with projections indicating the region will surpass 1 million residents by 2050.

Sustaining this level of growth presents both a challenge and an opportunity. It demands proactive, collaborative planning among local governments and planning partners to preserve and enhance the qualities that attract new and long-term residents to Northwest Arkansas.

As our region continues to grow, the demands on our infrastructure, natural systems, and shared resources are increasing. Addressing these pressures requires coordinated planning and strategic investment across key areas such as: transportation, land use, water quality, stormwater and wastewater management, solid waste, parks and natural resources, and regional economic development. Proactively confronting these challenges is essential to sustaining and enhancing the region's quality of life—now and for generations to come.



Shaping Growth Through Partnership

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC), serving as both the region's Council of Governments and Metropolitan Planning Organization, is a critical convener—collaborating with local, state, and federal partners to advance shared priorities that ensure long-term regional success.

Unlike many metro areas, Northwest Arkansas does not center around a single core city. Instead, its polycentric structure, anchored by 39 dynamic communities, demands a uniquely collaborative approach to regional planning. As cities and counties grow, so too does the recognition that regional coordination is essential for managing development, infrastructure, and environmental stewardship.



At the same time, each community continues to emphasize its distinct identity, culture, and priorities. Balancing this commitment to local character with the need for collective action requires a flexible, inclusive framework that fosters both regional cohesion and local autonomy.

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC) plays a vital role in this process—providing data, tools, funding opportunities, grants, awards, and partnerships needed to ensure that growth is strategic, equitable, implementable, and reflective of the communities it serves.

WORK TOGETHER

“As Northwest Arkansas continues to grow, our strength lies in collaboration. At NWARPC, we're committed to helping communities work together to plan wisely, invest strategically, and preserve the unique character of our region. By aligning resources and priorities across jurisdictions, we're not just managing growth—we're shaping a more connected, resilient, and vibrant future for everyone who calls this region home.”

Tim Conklin,
NWARPC
Executive Director



PLAN. COLLABORATE. CONNECT.

Sharing the Benefits

The work of the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC) is both a federal requirement and a regional responsibility. As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region, NWARPC leads performance-based transportation planning. At the same time, it functions as a Council of Governments (COG)—a joint cooperative of local jurisdictions working together to address issues that cross city and county lines. This dual role and adaptive structure positions NWARPC as a trusted forum for collaboration, helping align federal and state requirements with local priorities to support responsible growth, infrastructure investment, and enhanced quality of life across Northwest Arkansas.

NWARPC provides essential planning services to local governments, many of which are critical for accessing federal and state funding. The commission facilitates cooperative planning efforts, encourages cross-sector partnerships, and supports regional initiatives that would be difficult for individual jurisdictions to undertake alone. Through active communication, data sharing, and coordinated dialogue, NWARPC helps communities identify practical solutions and

leverage available resources to address shared challenges.

Path of Performance

Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC) is a governmental organization established pursuant to A.C.A. § 14-56-501 et seq. and was formed in 1966 through a cooperative agreement among local governments. NWARPC has since grown to include 39 member jurisdictions and public agency partners.

As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region since 1983, NWARPC leads long-range visioning, short-term investment planning, and ongoing performance measurements to ensure the regional transportation network meets federal requirements and the needs of a growing population. NWARPC is also the designated recipient for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Urbanized Area Formula Grants.

Funding Impacts

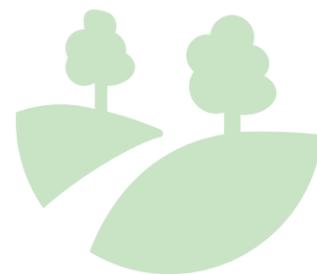
Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission delivers significant regional benefits by securing, administering, and leveraging diverse funding sources to advance priority projects. These investments improve safety, connectivity, resiliency, and quality of life across Northwest Arkansas.



1. Federal Formula Funding
Through the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – Attributable (STBGP-A), Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), and Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), NWARPC allocates approximately \$15 million annually. Between 2013 and 2025, the agency administered over **\$140 million in formula funding** for regionally significant transportation projects.

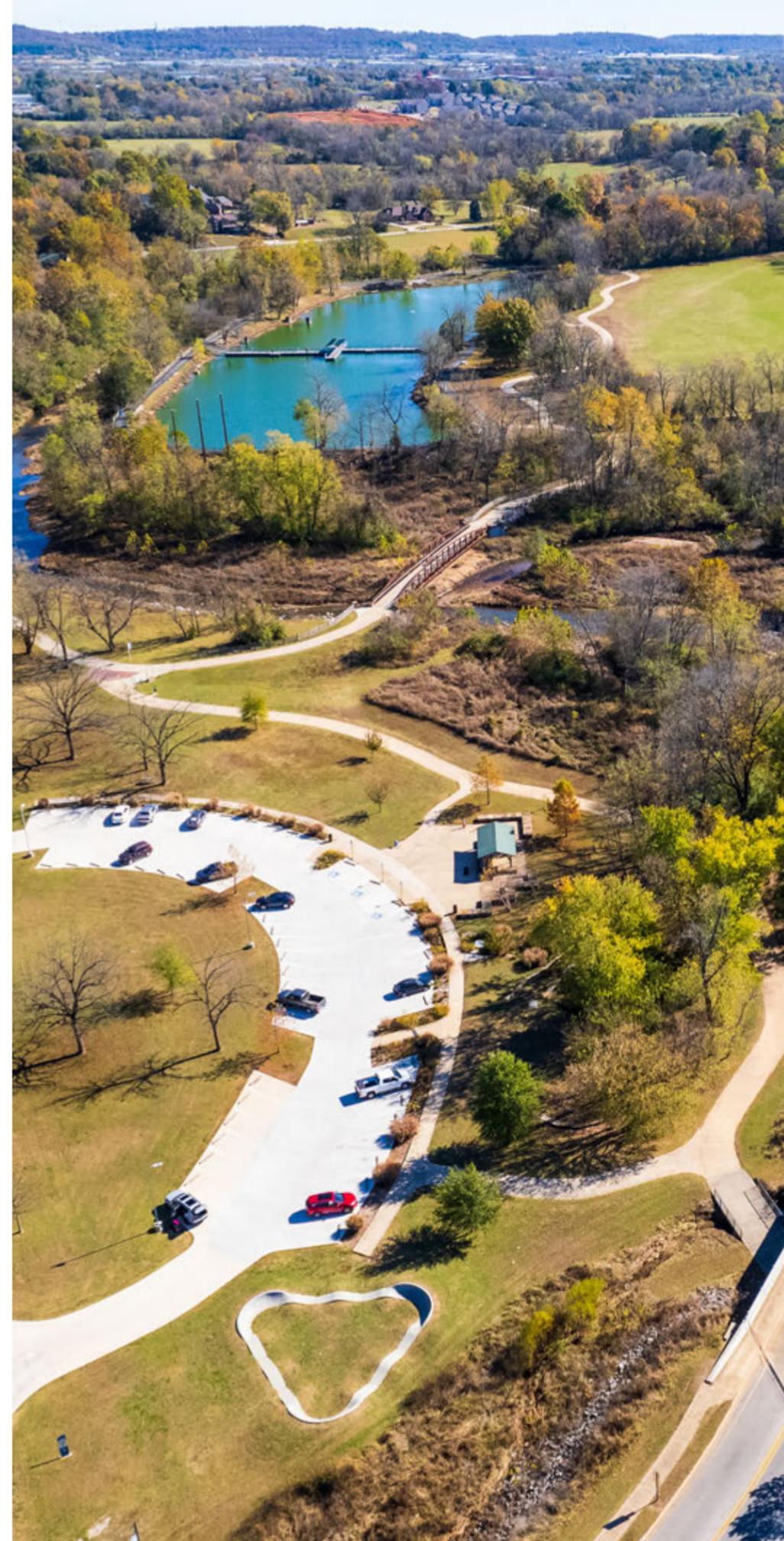
2. Competitive Federal Discretionary Grants
NWARPC's planning and coordination efforts have secured over **\$100 million in nationally competitive federal grants** for transformative regional initiatives, including:

- Razorback Greenway — \$15 million TIGER grant (2010)
- Arkansas — Missouri Connector / Bella Vista Bypass — \$25 million BUILD grant (2018)
- Northwest Arkansas Green Network — \$36.25 million CPRG grant (2024)



- Highway 112 Corridor Improvements between Bentonville and Fayetteville — \$25 million RAISE grant (2025)
- Federal Grants to Local Communities — More than \$30 million in awards made possible through NWARPC's planning work, supporting local projects throughout the region

3. Private Grant Funding
In addition to public funds, NWARPC has leveraged private grant support to advance major regional projects—further amplifying the impact of its planning efforts and delivering long-term benefits to communities across Northwest Arkansas.



NWARPC MEMBERSHIP & PLANNING PARTNERS

Jurisdictions:

Avoca
Bella Vista
Benton County
Bentonville
Cave Springs
Centerton
Decatur
Elkins
Elm Springs
Farmington
Fayetteville
Garfield
Gateway
Gentry
Goshen
Gravette
Greenland
Highfill
Hindsville
Huntsville
Jane, MO
Johnson
Lincoln
Little Flock
Lowell
Madison County
McDonald County, MO
Pea Ridge
Pineville, MO
Prairie Grove
Rogers
Siloam Springs
Springdale
Springtown
Sulphur Springs
Tontitown
Washington County
West Fork
Winslow

Other Agencies:

ARDOT
MoDOT
Beaver Water District
NWA National Airport Authority
Ozark Regional Transit
Razorback Transit
University of Arkansas

Non-Voting Transportation Planning Partners:

Ozark Regional Transit Authority
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Amy Heflin
Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – Ronisha Hodge
Arkansas Highway Commission – Philip Taldo
Human Service Agencies
Arkansas Missouri Railroad

CORE SERVICES FOR PLANNING REGIONALLY

Bridging Big Ideas and Local Solutions

The Commission delivers services that enable our member governments to navigate the details without losing sight of the bigger picture, turning complexity into clarity and plans into Progress.

To address the region’s evolving needs and manage interconnected challenges, the Commission’s work is organized across three key planning areas: planning services, transportation planning, and environmental planning. Each area reflects a strategic set of services and deliverables designed to support local governments, enhance regional coordination, and guide responsible growth.

1. Planning Services

As a Council of Governments, NWARPC serves as an extension of local planning capacity—offering professional planning support to member jurisdictions across a range of community development initiatives. The Commission provides technical expertise, data analysis, GIS mapping, and facilitation services that help communities make

informed decisions, align local plans with broader regional goals, and promote responsible, coordinated growth.

These services include:

- Demographic and growth forecasting
- GIS mapping and spatial analysis
- Technical assistance for local and regional planning initiatives
- Technical assistance for comprehensive planning and zoning updates
- Policy research and best practice guidance
- Public engagement and stakeholder facilitation
- Infrastructure planning coordination
- Interjurisdictional initiatives coordination
- Supports specialized studies and assists with competitive grant applications

2. Transportation Planning

As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), NWARPC leads long-range and short-range transportation planning efforts to ensure a safe, connected, and resilient regional transportation system. These initiatives ensure that the region’s transportation priorities are fiscally constrained, performance-based,

and aligned with federal and state goals, while also reflecting the needs and values of local communities.

Key work products include:

- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Travel demand modeling and congestion management
- Active transportation and transit planning
- Intelligent transportation systems, and transportation systems management and operations planning
- Performance-based planning initiatives

3. Environmental Planning

NWARPC provides leadership and coordination on key environmental challenges to protect and enhance the region’s natural systems.

Work in this area is expanding, and includes:

- Conservation of parks, open space, and natural resources planning
- Energy and environment innovation planning
- Resilience planning
- Air quality monitoring
- Stormwater and wastewater planning coordination

Agency Structure

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC) operates with a dedicated team of eight professional staff members who manage the agency’s programs, facilitate regional coordination, and provide technical expertise to member communities.

The Commission itself is composed of two primary bodies:

Board of Directors (Regional Planning Commission/ Policy Committee) – Sets policy direction, approves plans, and allocates funding for regional priorities.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – Provides technical review, analysis, and recommendations to the Board on transportation and regional planning matters.

NWARPC holds monthly public meetings for both committees, ensuring transparency, accountability, and opportunities for community input.

With an efficient structure, expert staff, and open collaboration, the Northwest Arkansas Planning Commission turns collective vision into coordinated action that benefits every community in NWA.

Through continued collaboration and proactive planning, the Commission remains committed to its mission:
Plan. Collaborate. Connect.

MAJOR MILESTONES

The following timeline highlights some of the major milestones and achievements realized over the past two decades, underscoring the power of regional collaboration and NWARPC’s leadership in driving progress across Northwest Arkansas.

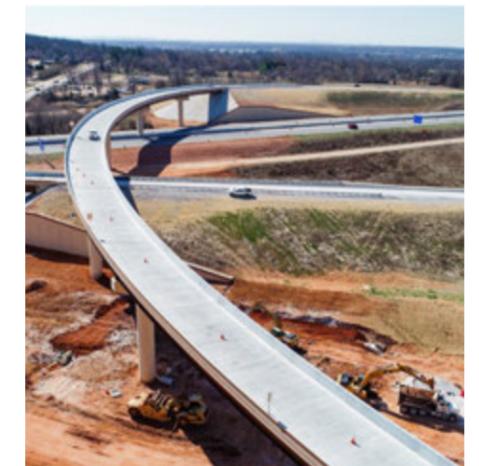
2025

- NWARPC Board awarded \$16.6 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- \$25 million USDOT RAISE Grant awarded to NWARPC for Highway 112 corridor improvements.
- NWA Regional Complete Streets Design Guide adopted.
- NWA Energy & Environment Innovation Action Plan (NWA EEI Action Plan) adopted.
- Public Participation Plan (PPP) update adopted.
- Individual Community Vision Zero Safety Action Plans developed for the five largest cities in the region.



2024

- NWARPC Board awarded \$15 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- \$99.999 million EPA CRPG Implementation Grant awarded to the Arkansas Tri-Region Coalition for “Energy and Environment Innovation for the Natural State”; \$36.25 million allocated for NWA Green Network projects and programs.
- NWA Energy & Environment Innovation (EEI) Priority Action Plan adopted.
- NWA Regional Transportation Public Opinion Survey (Wave 2) conducted.
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Triennial Review completed



2023

- NWARPC Board awarded \$14.2 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- \$300,000 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Planning Grant awarded to NWARPC for development of Regional Complete Streets Design Guidelines and five (5) Individual Community Vision Zero Safety Action Plans.
- \$400,000 Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Planning Grant subaward to NWARPC, supporting regional supplements for the statewide Arkansas Energy & Environment Innovation Plan.
- NWA Regional Vision Zero Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP) adopted; leading to \$25 million Fayetteville and \$5.2 million Springdale SS4A Implementation Grants.
- Transportation Systems Management & Operations (TSMO) Plan adopted.
- Intelligent Transportation System Architecture Plan (ITS) update adopted.
- NWARPC organized a regional delegation to attend the 2023 NACTO and CNU Conferences through a Walton Family Foundation grant.
- NWA Regional Complete Streets Design Guide, and five individual Community Safety Action Plans launched
- Razorback Greenway Trail designated as a National Recreation Trail.

MAJOR MILESTONES

2022

- NWARPC Board awarded \$12.7 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- Congestion Management Plan (CMP) update adopted.
- Regionally significant capital projects programmed: Highway 612 (Future I-412), XNA Access Road, and Highway 112 improvements.
- SS4A NWA Regional Vision Zero Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP) launched.
- Jeff Hawkins retired after 22 years of service; succeeded by Tim Conklin, AICP, as Executive Director.

2021

- NWARPC Board awarded \$10.3 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- Ribbon cutting held for opening of the I-49 Arkansas-Missouri Connector (Bella Vista Bypass).
- US Highway 412 is designated as a future interstate by Congress.
- Launched the following projects: Congestion Management Process (CMP), Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO), Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).
- NWARPC completed its Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Triennial Review.

2020

- NWARPC Board awarded \$15.3 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update adopted.
- Connect NWA – 10-Year Transit Development Plan (TDP) adopted.
- Public Participation Plan (PPP) update adopted.
- Heritage Trail Plan update adopted.
- Northwest Arkansas Razorback Greenway Alliance formed to implement coordinated management and operation of the Greenway across the seven (7) cities.
- Senator John Boozman introduced legislation to designate the Butterfield Overland Trail as a National Historic Trail; a major step in implementing the Heritage Trail Plan (HTP).



MAJOR MILESTONES

2019

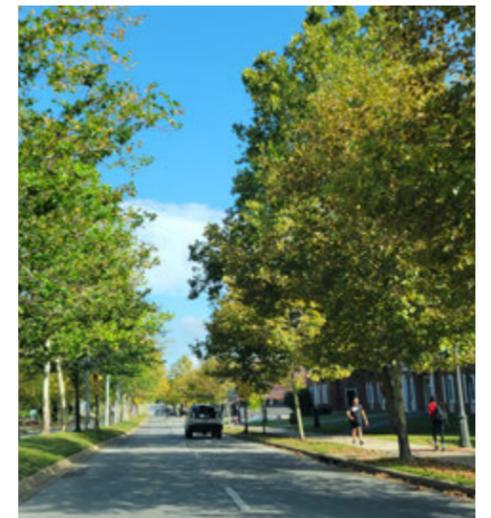
- NWARPC Board awarded \$8.6 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- NWA Bike Infrastructure Plan adopted, identifying the highest priority bicycle and pedestrian projects in the region.
- 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update process initiated.
- NWA Regional Transportation Public Opinion Survey (Wave 1) conducted.
- League of American Bicyclists Bicycle Friendly Community Silver level designation awarded for the two county NWA Region (Benton and Washington Counties), upgrading from 2015's Bronze designation.
- NWARPC organized a regional delegation on a bicycle infrastructure study tour to the Netherlands, funded through a Walton Family Foundation grant.
- Regional Vision for Highway 112 Improvements, including a 12-ft side path and roundabouts adopted.
- Heritage Trail Partners Installed 17 Trail of Tears Historic Route signs in Benton County.

2018

- NWARPC Board awarded \$10 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- \$25 million BUILD Grant awarded to NWARPC for the I-49 Missouri-Arkansas Connector project.
- Development of 10-year Transit Development Plan (TDP) launched.
- Highway 612 (I-49 to Hwy 112) project completed.
- Ozark Regional Transit Systemwide Origin & Destination Survey and Report completed.
- As of 2018, over 150-miles of paved shared use trails had been developed in the region.
- NWARPC facilitated region-wide adoption of Remix software for ORT and Razorback Transit route planning.

2017

- NWARPC Board awarded \$8.2 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- NWARPC completed its inaugural Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Triennial Review.
- Over 1,000 acres conserved in NWA since the adoption of the Open Space Plan.



MAJOR MILESTONES

2016

- NWARPC Board awarded \$7.8 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- Celebrated NWARPC's 50th Anniversary (1966–2016).
- 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) adopted.
- NWARPC received the Henry Award for tourism and community enhancement, recognizing the commission's role in development of the Razorback Regional Greenway.
- New Razorback Greenway signage installed, including 38 new mile markers and wayfinding signs.
- Razorback Greenway 1-Year Anniversary celebrated with first annual Square 2 Square ride.
- Open Space Committee formed to implement NWA Open Space Plan.



2015

- NWARPC Board awarded \$7.8 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- NWA Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan adopted.
- NWA Open Space Plan adopted.
- Inaugural Congestion Management Process (CMP) Final Report completed.
- Cave Springs Karst Resource Conservation Study completed.
- League of American Bicyclists Bicycle Friendly Community Bronze designation awarded for the two county NWA Region (Benton and Washington Counties).
- A major upgrade of the regional travel demand model (TDM) was completed.
- Ribbon cutting held for 37-mile Razorback Regional Greenway.



2014

- NWARPC Board awarded \$7.2 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- Transit Alternatives Study (TAS) completed, evaluating feasibility of light rail, commuter rail, and bus rapid transit (BRT) for the region.
- 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update process initiated.
- Major upgrade of the regional travel demand model (TDM), adding a transit component for future forecasting launched.
- NWARPC underwent its first federal planning certification review as a Transportation Management Area (TMA).



MAJOR MILESTONES

2013

- NWARPC Board awarded \$7.4 million in federal funding to regional projects.
- Northwest Arkansas Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan initiated.
- Bella Vista, Cave Springs, Centerton, Pea Ridge, Prairie Grove, and Tontitown were added to the NWA Urbanized Area, initiating requirements to obtain coverage for stormwater discharges under the MS4 General Permit.
- NWARPC implemented its new TMA responsibilities by establishing competitive processes for distributing Surface Transportation Program-Attributable (STBGP-A) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds.
- Cave Springs Karst Resource Conservation Study initiated.



2012

- NWARPC Board awarded \$7.3 million in federal funding to regional projects.



2010

- The Fayetteville–Springdale–Rogers, AR–MO Urbanized Area surpassed 200,000 in population, reaching the threshold to be designated a Transportation Management Area (TMA) by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). This designation triggered greater authority and responsibility in regional transportation planning and federal funding program administration.
- \$15 million TIGER Grant was awarded to NWARPC for the construction of the Razorback Regional Greenway.



PLANNING FOR NORTHWEST ARKANSAS SINCE 1966

The Northwest Arkansas Planning Commission was formed in 1966 through a cooperative agreement between Benton County, Washington County, and the cities of Bentonville, Fayetteville, Rogers, Siloam Springs, and Springdale. Later, in 1983, NWARPC became the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) under U.S. Department of Transportation regulations, enabling eligibility for federal transportation funding.

Today, NWARPC has grown into a collaborative network of 39 member jurisdictions and public agency partners, working together to address regional needs, guide infrastructure investment, and shape the future of Northwest Arkansas.



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