RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026, 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 X	
BENTONVILLE	MAYOR STEPHANIE ORMAN SHELLI KERR	X X	
CAVE SPRINGS	MAYOR RANDALL NOBLETT		
CENTERTON	**MAYOR BILL EDWARDS (VICE CHAIR)** LORENE BURNS	X X	
DECATUR	MAYOR BOB THARP		
ELKINS	MAYOR TROY REED		
ELM SPRINGS	MAYOR HAROLD DOUTHIT		
FARMINGTON	MAYOR ERNIE PENN	X	Melissa McCarville
FAYETTEVILLE	MAYOR MOLLY RAWN CHRIS BROWN JONATHAN CURTH	X	
GARFIELD	MAYOR GARY L BLACKBURN		
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	X	
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	
LOWELL	MAYOR CHRIS MOORE	X	
PEA RIDGE	MAYOR NATHAN SEE	X	Keegan Stanton
PRAIRIE GROVE	MAYOR DAVID FAULK	X	
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 X	
SPRINGTOWN	MAYOR TERRI GLENN		
SULPHUR SPRINGS	MAYOR MICHAEL DRIVER		
TONTITOWN	MAYOR ANGELA RUSSELL	X	Mark Latham
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)		
BEAVER H2O DISTRICT	LANE CRIDER	X	
McDONALD COUNTY	COMMISSIONER BRIAN HALL		
MoDOT	AMANDA BARCH (FRANK MILLER)	X	
NAT. AIRPORT AUTH.	AARON BURKES		
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)		

RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026, AT 1:30 PM; *DRAFT*

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

OTHERS: Doug Thompson (NWADG), Dan Weese & Patrick Johndrow (Bentonville), Phillip Patterson & John Wilkerson (ARML), Trinity Smith, Nicci Tiner & Justin Tackett (Garver), Greg Simmons (Freese & Nichols), Karen Minkel (Walton Enterprises), Brett Meek (XNA), Ryan Carr (Springdale), Mayci Blankenship (MHP-SI), Michael Beaver & Dan Chapman (HNTB), Aaron Benzing (Hawkins-Weir), Rob Smith (NWA Council), Kristen Knight (U of Ark), Casey Covington (Metroplan), Ami Murray (Gravette).

NOTE: THIS MEETING WAS HELD IN-PERSON AT THE SPRINGDALE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS 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 Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse at 1:34 p.m. Members attending in person and virtually were welcomed, and a note of appreciation was offered to Mayor Sprouse for hosting the meeting in the beautiful Springdale City Council Chambers.

(2) ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

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

(3) APPROVAL OF MARCH 25, 2026, MEETING MINUTES

Chair Mayor Sprouse asked for any revisions to the March 25, 2026, meeting minutes, and none were heard. He requested a motion for approval.

MOTION: Lane Crider made a motion to approve the RPC/Policy Committee Meeting Minutes from March 25, 2026. Seconded by Mayor John Flynn. Motion carried unanimously.

(4) DIRECTOR REPORT & CLEARINGHOUSE REPORT

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item and Tim Conklin presented the Director's Report and Clearinghouse Report.

Conklin highlighted several ongoing federal and regional transportation coordination efforts, including the recently approved I-49 Congestion Management Strategies Minute Order approved on February 11, 2026. He also noted that NWARPC continues monitoring federal surface transportation reauthorization discussions, including the Bridges and Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) Act (H.R. 7437), and coordinating with partner organizations including AMPO, NARC, NLC, and NACO regarding potential impacts to transportation funding and planning requirements. Conklin also reminded members that the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) 60th Annual Meeting is scheduled for June 7–9, 2026 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Additionally, Conklin noted that the Northwest Arkansas Regional Mobility Authority (RMA) meeting immediately following the RPC meeting would include guest presentations regarding managed lanes and user-funded transportation approaches, including presentations from staff of the Kansas Department of Transportation, HNTB, the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority, and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

The March-April 2026 Federal Aid Clearinghouse Report was also presented to attendees.

A. Accepting the 2025 NWARPC Audit

The completed FY2025 NWARPC Audit prepared by Harris CPAs, LLC, was presented by Conklin. He noted that the independent auditors issued an unmodified opinion stating that the financial statements fairly present the financial position of NWARPC for fiscal years ending June 30, 2025 and 2024 in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Chair Mayor Sprouse asked for any questions on the item, and hearing none, requested a motion to accept the 2025 NWARPC Audit.

MOTION: Judge Barry Moehring made a motion to accept the 2025 NWARPC Audit. Seconded by Mayor Jeff Van Sickler. Motion carried unanimously.

(5) REGIONAL WASTEWATER STRATEGY PROJECT UPDATE

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item and welcomed Aaron Benzing of Hawkins-Weir Engineers. Benzing provided an update on the *Planning for Growth: Regional Wastewater Strategy for Future Development* project. He stated that the final listening session for Phase I was held on Monday, April 18, 2026. Benzing explained that once a draft version of the plan is completed and released in September 2026, additional listening sessions will be conducted as part of the Phase II stakeholder engagement process.

Benzing also noted that attendees may have heard news of the City of Centerton connecting to the Northwest Arkansas Conservation Authority (NACCA) wastewater system. He explained that this recommendation resulted from analysis completed by Hawkins-Weir as part of the regional wastewater strategy effort. Benzing stated that Hawkins-Weir is scheduled to present their findings to the NACCA Board in May, regarding connection fee considerations associated with the proposed service expansion. Lastly, Benzing shared that Hawkins-Weir will provide a more comprehensive update on the wastewater strategy project during the upcoming Arkansas Water Conference. He noted that the project remains on schedule, with a draft version of the regional wastewater strategy anticipated for completion in September 2026.

(6) FTA SECTIONS 5307 & 5339 FFY 2026 PROGRAM OF PROJECTS (POP) APPROVAL

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item and Nicole Gibbs presented the proposed Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026 Program of Projects (POP). Gibbs explained that NWARPC serves as the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Designated Recipient for the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers AR-MO urbanized area formula grants. She stated that the Section 5307 and Section 5339 funding sources support regional transit planning, operating assistance, preventative maintenance, ADA paratransit service, bus procurement, and related enhancements. Gibbs noted that FFY 2026 Section 5307 funds total approximately $4.56 million, including $100,000 allocated to NWARPC for transit planning activities. The remaining funding is allocated in accordance with previously approved split, with 55% to Ozark Regional Transit and 45% to Razorback Transit.

She also reviewed FFY 2026 Section 5339 funding totaling approximately $379,000, which would be split evenly between Ozark Regional Transit and Razorback Transit for bus procurement activities. Gibbs concluded her remarks stating that a public comment period for this item was held from April 16 through April 20, 2026.

Chair Mayor Sprouse asked for any questions on the item, and hearing none, requested a motion.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mayor Ernie Penn to approve FTA Sections 5307 & 5339 FFY 2026 Program of Projects. Seconded by Taylor Robertson. Motion carried unanimously.

(7) AUTHORIZATION FOR OPERATIONAL CAPACITY & REGIONAL COLLABORATION GRANTS

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item and Tim Conklin presented the proposed Operational Capacity and Regional Collaboration Grants. Conklin explained that the Operational Capacity Grant totals $347,740 and is intended to strengthen NWARPC's internal capacity through strategic planning, communications modernization, and expanded staffing support. Specific grant components include: development of a five-year Strategic Plan to align agency structure, resources, and priorities with regional needs; Communications Phase 3 efforts, including agency rebranding and website redevelopment; development of an internship program supporting planning, policy, GIS/data, and engagement work through four sequential student interns over a one-year period.

Conklin also discussed the proposed Regional Collaboration Grant totaling $620,000, which is intended to strengthen regional coordination and shared infrastructure planning capacity across jurisdictions. Grant activities include: development of a Regional Capital Improvements (CIP) Program/Plan Framework to support scalable capital planning and project prioritization across member jurisdictions; and local match support for the US-71B Corridor Plan to advance Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), corridor planning, land use coordination, and future federal funding opportunities.

A. RESOLUTION #2026-08 – Authorization to Accept and Administer Operational Capacity and Regional Collaboration Grants.

Chairman Sprouse asked whether there were any questions and, hearing none, requested a motion to approve Resolution #2026-08 Authorizing the Acceptance and Administration of the Operational Capacity and Regional Collaboration grants.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mayor Jeff Van Sickler to approve Resolution #2026-08 Authorizing NWARPC to Accept and Administer Operational Capacity and Regional Collaboration Grants. Seconded by Mayor Chris Keeney. Motion carried unanimously.

(8) AUTHORIZATION FOR NONPROFIT EXCELLENCE PROGRAM (NEP) GRANT

Chairman Sprouse introduced the item, and Tim Conklin presented the proposed Nonprofit Excellence Program (NEP) Grant. Conklin explained that the grant would support budgeting and financial management improvements focused on strengthening and modernizing budgeting procedures, internal controls, grant tracking, cost allocation, and forecasting systems to support long-term organizational sustainability. Conklin emphasized that the grant would assist NWARPC in developing standardized and scalable financial systems capable of supporting continued organizational growth and increasing grant administration responsibilities.

A. RESOLUTION #2026-09 – Authorization to Accept and Administer Nonprofit Excellence Program (NEP) Grant

Chairman Sprouse asked whether there were any questions and, hearing none, requested a motion to approve Resolution #2026-09 Authorizing the Acceptance and Administration of the Nonprofit Excellence Program Grant.

MOTION: A motion was made by Judge Barry Moehring to approve Resolution #2026-09 Authorizing NWARPC to Accept and Administer the Nonprofit Excellence Program (NEP) Grant. Seconded by Lane Crider. Motion carried unanimously.

(9) AUTHORIZATION FOR REGIONAL FUSE EXECUTIVE FELLOWS

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item and Tim Conklin presented the proposed Regional FUSE Executive Fellows partnership. Conklin explained that FUSE is a national nonprofit organization focused on increasing the capacity of local governments through placement of experienced private-sector executives within public agencies to lead strategic initiatives and improve public services.

Conklin reviewed the two proposed fellowship opportunities:

- NWARPC Operational Systems & Strategic Impact Fellow
- NWARPC Regional Transportation Governance & Mobility Fellow.

He stated that the program would require a local match of approximately $10,000 per fellow per year for fiscal years 2027 and 2028. Conklin also noted that several Northwest Arkansas communities, including Bentonville, Centerton, Rogers, and Pea Ridge, are also participating in the FUSE Fellows program. Additional discussion included FUSE Corps' role in candidate recruitment, onboarding, professional development, executive coaching, and wraparound support services.

A. RESOLUTION #2026-10 – Authorization to Enter into an Agreement with FUSE Corps. for Temporary Placement of Two Executive Fellows

Chairman Sprouse asked whether there were any questions on the item, and hearing none, requested a motion to approve Resolution #2026-10 Authorizing NWARPC to Enter into Agreement with FUSE Corps. for Temporary Two-year Placement of Two Executive Fellows.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mayor Jeff Van Sickler to approve Resolution #2026-10 Authorizing NWARPC to Enter into an Agreement with FUSE Corps. for Temporary Two-year Placement of Two Executive Fellows. Seconded by Mayor John Flynn. Motion carried unanimously.

(10) FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2027 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) APPROVAL

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item and Tim Conklin presented the FY 2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Conklin explained that the UPWP outlines NWARPC work activities for the period covering July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027. He noted that the required public comment period was held from April 6 through April 20, 2026.

Conklin reviewed major UPWP work elements including:

- Program support and administration activities
- General development and comprehensive planning
- Long-range transportation planning
- Short-range transportation planning
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) development and coordination.

Additional highlighted work tasks included:

- Forward 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan implementation
- US-71B Corridor Study development
- Travel demand modeling

- Active transportation planning
- Environment and resilience planning activities
- Transit planning and performance evaluation
- Continued coordination with ARDOT and MoDOT

Conklin also reviewed the FY 2027 UPWP financial summary totaling approximately $2.79 million across federal and local funding sources.

A. RESOLUTION #2026-11 – Approving the Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Study (NARTS) Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Chairman Sprouse asked whether there were any questions on the item, and hearing none, requested a motion to approve Resolution #2026-11 approving the Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Study Fiscal Year 2027 Unified Planning Work Program.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mayor John Flynn to approve Resolution #2026-11 Approving the Northwest Arkansas Regional Transportation Study (NARTS) Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Seconded by Taylor Robertson. Motion carried unanimously.

(11) PROJECT AND OTHER UPDATES

A. NWARPC Funding Programs (STBGP-A/TAP/CRP) – FFY2027 Funding Cycle & FFY2026 Obligation Plan

Nicole Gibbs provided an update on the FFY 2027 NWARPC Funding Programs, including the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP-A), Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), and Carbon Reduction Program (CRP). Gibbs said project sponsors presented their project requests to TAC last week and further reviewed the FFY 2027 project selection timeline, including selection committee site visits and scoring scheduled for April 29, 2026, TAC recommendation in May, and final RPC/Policy Committee award decisions later that month. Gibbs also reviewed estimated FFY 2027 funding levels totaling approximately $14.5 million across the three programs, subject to federal reauthorization.

Action/Activity	Date
Call for Projects (Applications Open)	Sunday, January 4, 2026
Application Deadline (Resolution Required)	Thursday, April 2, 2026 @Midnight
Project Sponsor Presentation to TAC Committee	*Thursday, April 16, 2026*
Selection Committee Site Visits/Scoring/Rec	*April 29, 2026 (save the date)*
Selection Committee Recommendation to TAC	Thursday, May 21, 2026
RPC/Policy Committee Award Decision	Thursday, May 27, 2026

Lastly, Gibbs reminded project sponsors of upcoming FFY 2026 obligation deadlines and encouraged continued coordination with NWARPC and ARDOT staff regarding project schedules and implementation milestones.

B. Other Ongoing Project Updates:

Tim Reavis provided updates regarding implementation activities associated with the Forward 2050 and ongoing advancement of the US-71B Corridor Plan following adoption of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as the regionally preferred transit alternative.

Madison Kienzle provided updates on Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) implementation activities, the NWA Green Network, and development of the Arkansas Tri-Region E-Bike Incentive Program.

C. Other Grant Opportunities:

Tim Conklin provided updates regarding ongoing and upcoming state and federal grant opportunities, including SS4A grants, available to member jurisdictions and encouraged continued coordination with NWARPC staff regarding project development and ongoing grant application support for federal discretionary programs.

(12) COMMITTEE AND GROUP UPDATES

A. Active Transportation Committee (ACT)

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item and Luke Aitken reported that ACT meets every other month on the first Thursday with the last meeting taking place April 2, 2026, and the next virtual meeting scheduled for June 4, 2026, at 1:30pm.

B. NWA Open Space Coalition

Luke Aitken stated that the NWA Open Space Coalition meets every other month on the second Wednesday. Their last meeting took place April 8, 2026, with the next meeting scheduled for June 10, 2026, at 11:00am, location is TBD.

C. MS4 Stormwater Compliance Group

Luke Aitken shared the MS4 Stormwater Compliance Group meets every other third Wednesday. Their last meeting was April 15, 2026, with their next meeting scheduled for June 17, 2026, at 10:30am.

D. NWA GIS User Group

Luke Aitken shared that the NWA GIS Users group meet every other second Tuesday. Their last meeting took place April 14, 2026, and their next virtual meeting is scheduled for June 9, 2026, at 10:30am.

E. SMALL CITIES COMMITTEE

Madison Kienzle provided an update on the Small Cities Committee, which focuses on issues affecting communities with populations under 30,000. The next meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. with both in-person and virtual participation options.

(13) PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Mayor Sprouse said that NWARPC received 1 public comment prior to the meeting regarding the North-South Connector and that this was included in the meeting packet. Chair Mayor Sprouse asked if there were any public comments to be heard in the room. No public comments were heard.

(14) OTHER BUSINESS

A. Future Meeting Dates

Chair Mayor Sprouse outlined the future meeting dates:

- NWA Regional Mobility Authority (RMA) Meeting – Wednesday, April 22, 2026 @ 2:30 PM, *held immediately following the RPC/Policy Committee meeting.*
- TAC Meeting – Thursday, May 21, 2026 @ 10:30 AM
- RPC/Policy Committee Meeting – Wednesday, May 27, 2026 @ 1:30 PM

Tim Conklin highlighted other dates:

- CNU: May 12-16, 2026, being held in NWA, including a local government training day on Tuesday, May 12, 2026. Volunteer opportunities are available.
- 2026 Arkansas Planning Official Training Series: Since 1999, the Arkansas Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Arkansas) has partnered with the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium (APAC) to provide high-quality training for Arkansas planning officials. The 2026 course schedule, content and registration can be found here: https://ualr.edu/publicaffairs/apac/planning-official-training/

(15) ADJOURN

Chair Mayor Sprouse asked whether there was any other business. Hearing none, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made. The meeting was adjourned at 2:22 PM.

PASSED AND APPROVED ON THIS _____ DAY OF _____ 2026.

_____
Mayor Doug Sprouse, Chair, NWARPC

ATTEST: _____