

RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2025, AT 1:30 PM; APPROVED MARCH 26, 2025

ENTITY	MEMBER	ATTENDING	PROXY
AVOCA	MAYOR ROBERT WHITEHORN		
BELLA VISTA	MAYOR JOHN FLYNN TAYLOR ROBERTSON	X X	
BENTON COUNTY	JUDGE BARRY MOEHRING (CHAIR) JOSH BEAM JAY FRASIER/DEAN KLINGMON		
BENTONVILLE	MAYOR STEPHANIE ORMAN SHELLI KERR	X X	
CAVE SPRINGS	MAYOR RANDALL NOBLETT		
CENTERTON	MAYOR BILL EDWARDS (SEC'Y) LORENE BURNS		
DECATUR	MAYOR BOB THARP		
ELKINS	MAYOR TROY REED		
ELM SPRINGS	MAYOR HAROLD DOUTHIT		
FARMINGTON	MAYOR ERNIE PENN (VICE CHAIR)	X	Melissa McCarville
FAYETTEVILLE	MAYOR LIONELD JORDAN CHRIS BROWN JONATHAN CURTH	X X	
GARFIELD	MAYOR GARY L BLACKBURN	X	Stephanie Shaw
GATEWAY	MAYOR CHERYL TILLMAN		
GENTRY	MAYOR KEVIN JOHNSTON		
GOSHEN	MAYOR RUSSELL STROUD		
GRAVETTE	MAYOR KURT MADDOX	X	Ami Murray
GREENLAND	MAYOR JIM RENFROW		
HIGHFILL	CASSIE ELLIOT	X	Tim Conklin
HINDSVILLE	MAYOR STEPHANIE CASEY		
HUNTSVILLE	MAYOR TRAVIS DOTSON	X	Brandi Holt
JOHNSON	MAYOR CHRIS KEENEY (TREASURER)	X	
LINCOLN	MAYOR DOUG HUTCHENS		
LITTLE FLOCK	MAYOR JEFF VAN SICKLER	X	
LOWELL	MAYOR CHRIS MOORE		
PEA RIDGE	MAYOR NATHAN SEE		
PRAIRIE GROVE	MAYOR DAVID FAULK		
ROGERS	LANCE JOBE JOHN McCURDY QUNITON HARRIS	X X	
SILAM SPRINGS	MAYOR JUDY NATION ALLAN GILBERT	X	Ben Rhoads
SPRINGDALE	MAYOR DOUG SPROUSE PATSY CHRISTIE JIM ULMER	X X	
SPRINGTOWN	MAYOR TERRI GLENN		
SULPHUR SPRINGS	MAYOR SHANE WEBER		
TONTITOWN	MAYOR ANGELA RUSSELL	X	Mark Latham
WASHINGTON CO.	JUDGE PATRICK DEAKINS BRIAN LESTER SAM ATA	X	Bridgett Russell
WEST FORK	MAYOR HEITH CAUDLE		
WINSLOW	ANN MALKIE		
ARDOT PLANNING + DISTRICTS	BRAD McCALEB JASON HUGHEY (DISTRICT 4)	X	Sunny Farmahan
BEAVER H2O DISTRICT	LANE CRIDER	X	
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	SCOTT TURLEY (JAY HUNEYCUTT)	X	
OZARK REG. TRANSIT	JOEL GARDNER (NON-VOTING)	X	
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, and Luke Aitken

OTHERS: Nathan Boone (Toole Design); Dan Weese (City of Bentonville); Greg Simmons (Freese & Nichols); Doug Thompson (NWADG-Press); Truett Smith (FHWA).

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 Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse at 1:30 p.m.

(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 THE AUGUST 28, 2024 & OCTOBER 23, 2024, MEETING MINUTES RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse stated that January 22, 2025, Policy Committee meeting minutes were presented for approval. Sprouse asked for any comments or corrections on the minutes and hearing none from the committee requested a motion to approve the item.

MOTION: Lane Crider made a motion to approve the January 22, 2025, RPC/Policy Committee Meeting Minutes as presented. Seconded by Jim Ulmer. Motion carried unanimously.

(4) DIRECTOR REPORT & CLEARINGHOUSE REPORT

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse introduced the item, and Director Tim Conklin presented his report to the group. He stated that the commission is committed to pursuing available sources of federal funding but mentioned that work on one federal grant program has been paused. Conklin explained that staff's work on applying for the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) grant program has been paused and the disbursement of funding from the Walton Family Foundation to fund the grant writing process has also been put on hold due to the program's NOFO and information being removed from all USDOT's official web pages. He stated that staff will continue to monitor our federal partners' webpages and communication channels to stay up to date on any policy or funding changes at the federal level.

Conklin said the commission expects to have their FFY 2024 Financial Audit completed by the end of March, at which point staff will upload the audit to the federal audits clearinghouse and send a copy to all commission members for their records. He then mentioned that the commission's staff is continuing their work on the Razorback Greenway Corridor Master Plan, with the guidance of consultant Field Ops. He said staff are planning a trip in late April to the Atlanta Beltline, coordinated by the consultant team, with leaders from all seven cities the greenway passes through. Conklin went on to mention that the 33rd Congress for New Urbanism will take place in Providence, RI on June 11-14, 2025 and stated that the 34th Congress for New Urbanism will be held right here in Northwest Arkansas in the summer of 2026, encouraging members to attend this year's congress and gain context for setting the stage for the 2026 event coming to our region.

Conklin stated that several bills have been filed at the AR State Legislature which could change cities and counties powers in the state related to regulation through land use and zoning authorities. He

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said that a few examples of powers that could be taken from cities via changes in legislation included the elimination of Extra Territorial Jurisdiction's as a planning tool to allow cities to regulate development outside of their city limits, the elimination of short term rental regulations as a tool allowing cities to address compatibility or compliance issues with short term rental units, and the elimination of local land use and zoning restrictions on the construction of Accessory Dwelling Units. Conklin shared a table, shown below of FY 2024 & 2025 Federal Discretionary Grants Awarded to the NWA Region, comparing those awards with versus without executed award agreements in place.

FY 2024 & 2025 IDENTIFIED FEDERAL DISCRETIONARY AWARDS TO NWA (WITHOUT EXECUTED AGREEMENTS)					
Year	Program	Recipient	Project Name	Project Description	Award Amount
FY 2024	USDOT - RAISE 24	City of Siloam Springs	Bridging Heritage: Main Street Revitalization	This project will fund the planning, engineering design, and construction of Complete Streets improvements along E Main Street between Maxwell Street and Lincoln Street. The project includes the replacement of the Sager Creek Bridge, pavement resurfacing, bicycle lanes, ADA sidewalks, lighting, street trees, traffic management solutions, stormwater drainage, and utilities.	\$ 11,556,363
FY 2024	USDOT - SS4A Implementation	City of Springdale	Dean's Trail Phase IIIB	The trail segment (Phase IIIB) is the last section to complete Dean's Trail.	\$ 5,187,280
FY 2024	USDOT - CFI Program	Ozark Regional Transit	Expanding Access to Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging in Northwest Arkansas	EV charging infrastructure at up to 17 sites within the cities of Bentonville, Fayetteville, Rogers, and Springdale	\$ 14,924,800
FY 2025	USDOT - RAISE 25 Round 1	Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission	Highway 112: Complete Streets Connecting Communities	This project will construct complete streets improvements along approximately 17.5-miles of Arkansas State Highway 112 starting in the north at Arkansas Highway 12. The project will widen the roadway from 2-lanes to 4-lanes, construct approximately 27 roundabouts in lieu of stop-controlled intersections, access management solutions, add a raised center median, add a sidewalk along one side of the roadway, and a separated multi-use path on the other side.	\$ 25,000,000
Total (without Executed Agreement)					\$ 56,668,443

FY 2024 & 2025 IDENTIFIED FEDERAL DISCRETIONARY AWARDS TO NWA (WITH EXECUTED AGREEMENTS)					
Year	Program	Recipient	Project Name	Project Description	Award Amount
FY 2024	EPA - CPRG Implementation	Lead Applicant: Metroplan (Central Arkansas); Coalition Members: Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission & City of Fort Smith	Energy and Environment Innovation for the Natural State	Note: \$99,999,999 is the total award - NWA to receive \$36,250,000 share; currently Metroplan (lead) is able to draw down funds and subawardee agreements being executed.	\$ 36,250,000
Total (with Executed Agreement)					\$ 36,250,000
Total Identified Awarded to NWA (FY 2024 & 2025)					\$ 92,918,443

Lastly Conklin outlined recent federal funding requests, featured in the latest Federal-Aid Clearinghouse Report and said this report is shared for informational purposes only and no action is needed by the Board. Conklin asked if there were any questions from the group and there were none heard.

(5) STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (STIP) REVISION PROCEDURES APPROVAL

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse introduced the item, and Nicole Gibbs briefed the committee on the procedural revisions proposed. She said the procedure for STIP Revisions is prepared by ARDOT, in coordination with the states 8 MPO's and the FHWA/FTA. She said these procedures have to follow requirements set forth by federal law, and that they aim to guide ARDOT and MPO's within the State of Arkansas on how exactly to make modifications to their established transportation improvement programs. These procedures ensure compliance with State and Federal regulations and add a layer of transparency for the public participation process in transportation planning, as these procedures are also included in all AR MPO's Public Participation Plans (PPP) updated every five years. She said these revised procedures up for adoption today will be included in the latest update to the NWARPC's own PPP. Gibbs said the two largest changes are to the threshold levels of funding decreases/increases, that when proposed, trigger a need for the STIP to be amended.

A. RESOLUTION #2025-02 – Adopting the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Revision Procedures.

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Chair Sprouse asked for any outstanding questions from the group, and hearing none, requested a motion to approve the item.

MOTION: Sunny Farmahan made a motion to approve Resolution #2025-02 Adopting the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Revision Procedures. Seconded by Mark Latham. Motion carried.

(6) 2025 NWARPC PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP) ADOPTION

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse introduced the item, and Nicole Gibbs provided an overview of the PPP procedures and the document itself to be considered for adoption. She said we are required to update this document every five years, and a 45-day public comment period is also required. She said that a TAC subcommittee was formed to guide the update and the draft was presented to TAC on December 19, 2024. She said the public comment period was held from December 20, 2024 - February 7, 2025. Gibbs asked for any questions from the group. Lane Crider asked whether any public comments were received on this updated document. Gibbs responded that no public comments were received during the 45-day public comment period.

A. RESOLUTION #2025-03 – Approving the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC) 2025 Public Participation Plan.

Chairman Sprouse asked whether there were any more questions and hearing none, requested a motion to approve the item.

MOTION: Lane Crider made a motion to approve Resolution #2025-03 Approving the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC) 2025 Public Participation Plan. Seconded by Jim Ulmer. Motion carried.

(7) NORTHWEST ARKANSAS REGIONAL COMPLETE STREETS DESIGN GUIDE ADOPTION

Chairman Sprouse introduced the item and Nicole Gibbs said staff worked with consultant Toole Design on these Guidelines as a supplement to the Vision Zero Safety Action Plan for the region which was adopted by this board in June of 2023. She said the purpose of the guidelines is to provide policy and design framework to facilitate the planning of balanced streets in the region, which accommodate all modes of transportation with designs tailored to surrounding land use contexts. She said the guidelines will encourage enhancing safety and accessibility for all road users, collaboration, and consistency in design throughout NWA, and support the regions overarching transportation goals for the future. Gibbs stated TAC was presented with the draft document on January 16, 2025, and that a 15-day public comment period was held for the draft document from February 3, 2025 to February 17, 2025. She said staff received a lot of good comments and feedback from the public and from member jurisdiction staff on the guidelines. Gibbs shared a summary of public comments received and said that changes have been made to the document in response to those comments. Tim Conklin added that the Walton Family Foundation were key partners in this Safety Action Planning work starting in 2022 with the regional Vision Zero Safety Action Plan, which enabled the cities of Fayetteville and Springdale to apply for and receive millions of dollars in federal funding for safety improvements to roads or infrastructure in their cities. Conklin thanked the Walton Family Foundation for their support in providing the initial local match funds that enabled the commission to receive SS4A grant funding from USDOT to carry out both phases of this Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) work.

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A. RESOLUTION #2025-04 – Approving the Northwest Arkansas Regional Complete Streets Design Guide.

Chairman Sprouse asked whether there were any questions and hearing none, requested a motion to approve the item.

MOTION: Lane Crider made a motion to approve Resolution #2025-04 Approving the Northwest Arkansas Regional Complete Streets Design Guide. Seconded by Mark Latham. Motion carried.

(8) SUPPORT FOR THE ADDITION OF THE HIGHWAY 612 BYPASS & XNA CONNECTOR AS NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM (NHS) ROUTES

Chairman Sprouse introduced the item and Tim Conklin said that he was approached by ARDOT staff regarding the commission's interest in designating the Highway 612 Bypass and the Northwest Arkansas National Airport (XNA) Connector as National Highway System routes. He said ARDOT intends to apply to FHWA for this designation on both routes which are currently under construction with their total costs exceeding \$200 million combined. Conklin stated the addition of these routes to the National Highway System (NHS) would allow federal funds to be used for the future maintenance and improvement of these corridors once they are constructed.

A. RESOLUTION #2025-05 – Supporting the Designation of the Highway 612 Bypass and the Northwest Arkansas National Airport (XNA) Connector as National Highway System (NHS) Routes.

Chairman Sprouse asked whether there were any questions and hearing none, requested a motion to approve the item.

MOTION: Lane Crider made a motion to approve Resolution #2025-05 Supporting the Designation of the Highway 612 Bypass and the Northwest Arkansas National Airport (XNA) Connector as National Highway System (NHS) Routes. Seconded by Mark Latham. Motion carried.

(9) PROJECT AND OTHER UPDATES

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

Nicole Gibbs stated that member jurisdictions with federal aid projects should be routinely reporting their progress to ARDOT and NWARPC for quarterly reporting purposes. Nicole Gibbs shared the timeline for the FFY 2026 NWARPC Funding Programs and the call for projects along with the estimated funding apportionments. Gibbs said the Call for Projects was issued on January 5, 2025. She emphasized the importance of member jurisdictions having a signed resolution from their city council for a complete funding application. She presented the following timeline:

FFY 2026 NWARPC Funding Programs Timeline:

Call for Projects (Applications open)	Sunday, January 5, 2025
Application Deadline (Resolution Required)	Thursday, April 3, 2025
Project Sponsor Presentation to TAC Committee	Thursday, April 17, 2025
Selection Committee Site Visits/Scoring/Rec	April/May 2025 (TBD)
Selection Committee Recommendation to TAC	Thursday, May 15, 2025
TAC Recommendation to RPC/Policy	Wednesday, May 28, 2025

Tim Conklin also reminded applicants if they are seeking additional funds for an existing federal aid project, to ensure they are applying for FFY 2026 funds within the parameters of their original resolution. She presented the estimated funding available as follows:

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NWARPC Funding Program	FFY 2025 Apportionment	Additional Not Awarded (FFY2025)	FFY 2026 Funding Estimates
Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP-A)	\$ 11,963,043	\$ 234,570	\$ 12,197,613
Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	\$ 1,330,597	\$ 28,235	\$ 1,358,832
Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)	\$ 1,430,720	\$ 28,054	\$ 1,458,774
	\$ 14,433,501		\$ 15,015,219

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

Tim Reavis provided an overview of recent staff efforts to kick off the *Forward2050 Plan* (2050 MTP) and its components. He stated that the MTP is required to be updated every five years, and that the project's steering committee landed on *Forward2050* for the plan title. Reavis said NWARPC is under contract with consultant WSP to assist staff in developing two key components of the MTP: an update to the Travel Demand Model (TDM) and a new Transit Alternatives Study (TAS). Reavis said that a public survey that will help inform the plan, will be launched on March 1, 2025. He stated that the questions featured on that survey will be mostly identical to those posed during the 2045 MTP development and the responses will be compared with those received in the past to judge how the public's views on transportation planning change over time. He also mentioned that there will be open house style meetings held at the Fayetteville Public Library April 9, 2025 and the Bentonville Public Library April 10, 2025 to gather public input to support the plan's development.

C. Other Ongoing Project Updates

- **NWA Energy & Environment Innovation (EEI) Comprehensive Action Plan (CPRG-Planning)**

Nicole Gibbs said Phase 2 of the planning work is to develop the NWA Comprehensive Action Plan (CAP), which will include three new Greenhouse Gas reduction measures, a new regionally scoped Nature-based Solutions Environmental Mapping Tool and will outline actionable steps toward implementation of the regional priority actions. She said the plan will support future planning and funding opportunities for the NWA MSA, related to environmental quality and emissions reduction. Gibbs stated the deadline for the NWA EEI CAP supplement to ADEE is February 28, 2025. She said the final CAP will be considered for adoption by the RPC/Policy Committee in Spring of 2025. She emphasized that the document would serve as a component of the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update.

- **NWA Green Network Projects & Programs (CPRG-Implementation)**

Tim Conklin said progress is also being made by staff and planning partners toward the initiation of CPRG implementation grant funded work, utilizing \$36.25 million in awarded funds from the EPA CPRG program to NWA. He explained how much cross-agency collaboration was required to make this grant award possible and said the award's size and scope is unprecedented for the region. He said staff have spoken with Metroplan in Little Rock since they hired a grant administrator and that NWARPC will be assisting with project monitoring and inspection for CPRG funded projects in the NWA area moving forward.

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- **NWA Mobility Strategic Communications Plan**

Nicole Gibbs said consultant, mhp.si, is helping us to advance the regional conversation around mobility to respond to the rapid growth of the region. In addition to the 12-month strategic communications plan, deliverables include a messaging guide, transportation related focus groups, and a scientific public opinion survey. She noted the use of a new slide deck template provided by the consultant said this communications planning effort will help build awareness of all the work being done by the NWA Regional Planning Commission and will also highlight the work of our member jurisdictions in promoting responsible growth and planning in NWA.

- **Razorback Greenway Corridor Plan**

Tim Reavis recapped previous points made about the recent progress made with chosen Consultant Field Ops on the Razorback Greenway Corridor Master Plan. He said the consultant team will be coming to NWA to meet with himself and other staff and conduct a site visit to portions of the greenway from March 5th-7th. He said the first Advisory committee for the planning effort, with leaders from seven cities present, will be held on either April 2nd or 3rd with invites going out soon.

D. Other Grant Opportunity Updates

Tim Conklin provided an overview of grant programs offered by the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) from the Key Notices of Funding Opportunity Webpage at the following link: (<https://www.transportation.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/key-notices-funding-opportunity>)

(10) COMMITTEE AND GROUP UPDATES

A. Active Transportation Committee (ACT)

Luke Aitken recapped the topics covered at the February ACT meeting and encouraged anyone interested to come join the group's next meeting virtually on April 3rd. He said a new 2025 meeting schedule and outlook calendar invites for ACT have been sent out and asked members to reach out if they would like to participate in the groups coming meetings.

B. NWA Open Space Coalition

Luke Aitken recapped the group's February meeting, held here at the commission's office in Springdale. He encouraged anyone interested in the Open Space Coalition or the implementation of the NWA Open Space Plan to come out to the group's next meeting on April 9th. He said a new 2025 meeting schedule and the outlook calendar invites for 2025 meetings have been sent out to all current members.

C. MS4 Stormwater Compliance Group

Aitken recapped the groups last meeting held in February and said the MS4 Stormwater Compliance group's next meeting will be held virtually on April 16th at 10:30 AM.

D. NWA GIS User Group

Aitken recapped the group's last meeting held in February and said the next NWA GIS User group meeting is scheduled for April 8th at 10:30AM, virtually.

(11) PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse asked whether there were any public comments for consideration, and none were heard.

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(12) OTHER BUSINESS

A. Future Meeting Dates:

Chair Mayor Doug Sprouse provided an overview of the upcoming meeting dates as shown below:

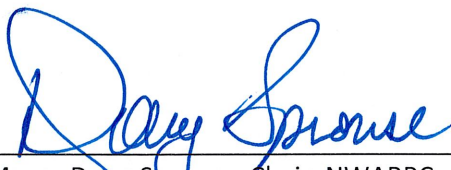
- **TAC Meeting** – Thursday, March 20, 2025 @ 10:30 AM
- **RPC/Policy Committee Meeting** – Wednesday March 26, 2024 @ 1:30 PM

Chair Mayor Sprouse asked whether there was any other business and there was none heard.

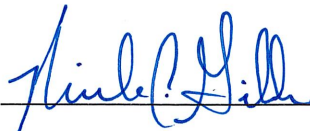
(13) ADJOURN

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:16 PM.

PASSED AND APPROVED ON THIS 26TH DAY OF MARCH 2025.



Mayor Doug Sprouse, Chair, NWARPC

ATTEST: _____