

RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026, AT 1:30 PM; APPROVED MARCH 25, 2026

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	
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 X	
GARFIELD	MAYOR GARY L BLACKBURN		
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	
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		
ROGERS	LANCE JOBE JOHN McCURDY QUNITON HARRIS	X X	
SILAM 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)	X	Sunny Farmahan
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)		
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, Luke Aitken, Shimon Beazer, Madison Kienzle, and Stephanie Marpe

OTHERS: Doug Thompson (NWADG), Dan Weese & Patrick Johndrow (Bentonville), Ami Murray (Gravette), Brett Meek (XNA), Phillip Patterson (ARML), Aaron Benzing (Hawkins Weir), Jared Gulbranson (WSP), Jason Corral (Jacobs), Karen Benson (Gravette), Greg Simmons (Freese & Nichols).

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. 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 JANUARY 28, 2026, RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Mayor Sprouse asked for any revisions to the January 28, 2026, meeting minutes, and none were heard. He requested a motion for approval.

MOTION: Mayor Keeney made a motion to approve the RPC/Policy Committee Meeting Minutes from January 28, 2026. Seconded by Jonathan Curth. Motion carried unanimously.

(4) DIRECTOR REPORT & CLEARINGHOUSE REPORT

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item and Tim Conklin reported that the Minute Order for an I-49 Congestion Management Strategies Study was approved by the State Highway Commission on February 11, 2026. He also shared that he attended the MoDOT Annual Planning Partners Meeting in Jefferson City earlier in the month. Tim said he is coordinating with ARDOT to bring a utility relocation and right-of-way acquisition training session to Northwest Arkansas for member city staff and project managers to attend.

At the federal level, Conklin said NWARPC is monitoring surface transportation reauthorization efforts, including the BASICS Act (H.R. 7437), and emphasized continued coordination with national partners such as AMPO, NARC, and NACTO. He also noted that the FFY 2026 transportation appropriations bill was approved, providing \$111.5 billion for USDOT programs and supporting key regional projects, including the 612 Bypass, Highway 112 improvements, and the Farmington Bridge reconstruction.

Conklin noted that NWARPC will celebrate its 60th anniversary this year as a Council of Governments, having been formed in 1966.

(5) REGIONAL WASTEWATER STRATEGY PROJECT UPDATE

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item, and Aaron Benzing of Hawkins-Weir Engineers stated that the project team continues to coordinate with regional partners and stakeholders to evaluate governance structures and long-term infrastructure needs to support future growth across

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Northwest Arkansas and that a listening session with key stakeholders is scheduled on March 9, 2026.

(6) RAZORBACK GREENWAY CORRIDOR PLAN REGIONAL FRAMEWORK (PHASE 1) APPROVAL

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item, and Tim Reavis explained that the plan was recommended for public comment by TAC on January 15, 2026, and the public comment period is currently open from February 16, 2026 through March 2, 2026. He mentioned that the resolution includes a provision allowing the item to be revisited if significant adverse public comments are received. Reavis also provided an overview of the Corridor Plan's Regional Framework and explained how it builds upon the region's success in developing over 40 miles of regional greenway connecting multiple cities and approximately 230,000 residents. The plan identifies six key regional strategies, including recommendations such as expanding the commuter bike network, enhancing green infrastructure, and improving connectivity between destinations.

A. RESOLUTION #2026-03: A Resolution Adopting the Razorback Greenway Corridor Plan Regional Framework (Phase 1).

Chairman Sprouse asked for questions and, hearing none, requested a motion to approve Resolution #2026-03 Adopting the Razorback Greenway Corridor Plan Regional Framework (Phase 1).

MOTION: Mayor Chris Keeney made a motion to approve Resolution #2026-03 adopting the Razorback Greenway Corridor Plan Regional Framework (Phase 1) with the provision to revisit the item should significant adverse public comments be received. Seconded by Lane Crider. Motion carried unanimously.

(7) TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES STUDY (TAS) AND REGIONALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE OF BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) APPROVAL

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item and Tim Reavis explained that the TAS evaluated multiple transit modes, including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Light Rail, and Commuter Rail, within the urban corridor. The study assessed each option based on mobility, cost-effectiveness, land use, and environmental impacts.

He said based on the analysis, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was identified as the regionally preferred alternative due to its performance across the evaluation criteria, including significantly lower capital and operating costs compared to rail options. He explained the proposed BRT system would include high-amenity stations, real-time information, signal priority, and targeted queue-jump lanes, with implementation potentially phased over time.

Staff noted that the public comment period was held from January 16, 2026 through January 30, 2026, and that the study supports future project development, including the US71B Corridor Plan and potential pursuit of federal funding.

A. RESOLUTION #2026-04 – A Resolution Adopting the Transit Alternative Study (TAS) and Approving the Regionally Preferred Alternative of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

Chair Mayor Sprouse asked whether there were any questions. There was discussion among attendees around forecasted ridership numbers and how this might affect I-49 congestion. There was also discussion around land use and transit coordination and potential alignment of future land

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use planning efforts with the implementation of the Greenway Corridor Plan and Forward 2050. Hearing no other questions, Chairman Sprouse requested a motion to approve Resolution #2026-04, adopting the Transit Alternative Study (TAS) and approving the regional preferred alternative of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

MOTION: Jonathan Curth made a motion to approve Resolution #2026-04 Adopting the Transit Alternative Study (TAS) and Approving the Regionally Preferred Alternative of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Seconded by Mayor Chris Keeney. Motion carried unanimously.

(8) FORWARD 2050 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN (MTP) APPROVAL

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item, and Tim Conklin presented the Forward 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Conklin summarized the public engagement process, which included open houses, surveys, stakeholder meetings, and a public comment period from December 8, 2025, through January 23, 2026. He said Forward 2050 establishes long-range goals focused on safety, transportation choice, and regional collaboration, and outlines key investment priorities such as Bus Rapid Transit, I-49 corridor improvements, regional connectivity, and implementation of the Blue-Green Network. Conklin noted that adoption of the MTP is a required federal planning document and will guide transportation investments through 2050.

A. RESOLUTION #2026-05: A Resolution Approving the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission Forward 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

Chairman Sprouse asked for any questions on the item and hearing none, requested a motion to approve Resolution #2026-05 Approving the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission Forward 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

MOTION: Jim Ulmer made a motion to approve Resolution #2026-05 Approving the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission Forward 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Seconded by Judge Barry Moehring. Motion carried unanimously.

(9) REQUEST FOR ARDOT TO INITIATE A U.S. ROUTE 412 (FUTURE I-42) TOLL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item. Tim Conklin explained that the proposed study would evaluate tolling as a potential funding mechanism to accelerate delivery of improvements to the Congressionally designated Future I-42 along the US 412 corridor. He noted the request was brought forward by the Western Benton County Partnership, which identified the project as critical to the area's economic competitiveness.

A. RESOLUTION #2026-06 – Requesting that the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) Conduct a Toll Feasibility Study of U.S Route 412 (Future I-42).

Chairman Sprouse asked if there were any questions. One question inquired whether any toll roads currently exist in Arkansas; Tim Conklin responded that there are none. Another question asked whether the proposal was to evaluate tolling U.S. 412 as it exists today. Conklin clarified that the study would examine how to accelerate development of the future interstate, including the need for a bypass around Siloam Springs, and assess whether innovative financing mechanisms—such as tolling—could help shorten the project timeline from an estimated 30-40 years to approximately 15-20 years. There was further discussion about the need to look into project delivery tools that will help the region keep up with the growth.

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MOTION: Judge Moehring made a motion to approve Resolution #2026-06 Requesting that the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) Conduct a Toll Feasibility Study of U.S. Route 412 (Future I-42). Seconded by Jonathan Curth. Motion carried unanimously.

(10) PROJECT AND OTHER UPDATES

A. NWARPC Funding Programs (STBGP-A/TAP/CRP): FFY 2027)

Chair Sprouse introduced the item and Nicole Gibbs stated that the Commission's FFY 2027 Call for Projects was issued on January 4, 2026. Applications for the Surface Transportation Block Grant, Transportation Alternatives, and Carbon Reduction programs are due by midnight on April 2, 2026. She noted that approximately \$14.7 million in federal funding is expected to be awarded across the three programs. She also reminded members that all new applications must include a resolution approved and signed by the governing body, and she asked prospective applicants to save the date for the selection committee site visit and scoring meeting, scheduled for April 29, 2026.

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 stated that the obligation deadline for FFY 2026 awards is August/September of 2026 and asked project sponsors to be in communication with NWARPC and ARDOT LPA staff if there are any delays to project development.

B. Other Ongoing Project Updates:

Madison Kienzle provided an update on the Northwest Arkansas Green Network CPRG Implementation Grant, noting ongoing coordination with project partners. She reported that contract negotiations for the Tri-Regional E-Bike Incentive Program are complete and a contract has been executed with APTIM. She also shared that NWARPC's Energy and Environment Innovation (EEI) Plan received an engineering excellence award from the Arkansas chapter of the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC/A).

Kienzle also updated the committee on ongoing planning support efforts, including Gravette's Future Land Use Plan update, Huntsville's Comprehensive Plan, and Lincoln Planning Commission training.

Tim Reavis reported that work on the Areas of Persistent Poverty (AoPP) Bus Stop Enhancement Design and Engineering Grant is complete. The grant funded engineering design and environmental review for improvements to 10 existing bus stops in the region.

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C. Other Grant Opportunities:

Tim Conklin mentioned that February 24, 2026, was the deadline for the FY2026 USDOT BUILD Grant Applications. He also mentioned that ARDOT's TAP and RTP application cycle for 2026 has opened with applications due on Thursday, April 30, 2026.

(11) COMMITTEE AND GROUP UPDATES

A. Active Transportation Committee (ACT)

Chair Mayor Sprouse introduced the item and Luke Aitken said ACT meets every other month on the first Thursday with the last meeting taking place February 5, 2026 and the next meeting scheduled for April 2, 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 February 11, 2026, with the next meeting scheduled for April 8, 2026, at 11:00am at the Bety Hinshaw Bird Sanctuary in Tontitown.

C. MS4 Stormwater Compliance Group

Luke Aitken shared the MS4 Stormwater Compliance Group meets every other third Wednesday. Their last meeting was February 18, 2026, with their next meeting scheduled for April 15, 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 February 10, 2026, and their next meeting is scheduled for April 14, 2026, at 10:30am.

E. SMALL CITIES COMMITTEE- NEW!

Madison Kienzle reported that the new working group focuses on issues affecting smaller communities (populations of 30,000 or less) and held its first meeting on February 3, 2026. She noted that the next meeting is scheduled for April 7, 2026, and invited interested individuals to contact her via email for more information.

(12) PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Mayor Sprouse stated that no public comments were received prior to the meeting. He asked if there were any additional comments from the floor; none were offered.

(13) OTHER BUSINESS

A. Future Meeting Dates

Chair Mayor Sprouse outlined the future meeting dates:

- TAC Meeting – Thursday, March 2026 @ 10:30am
- RPC/Policy Committee Meeting – Wednesday, March 25, 2026 @ 1:30pm

Other dates noted:

- CNU: May 12-16, 2026, being held in NWA, including a local government training day on Tuesday, May 12, 2026.

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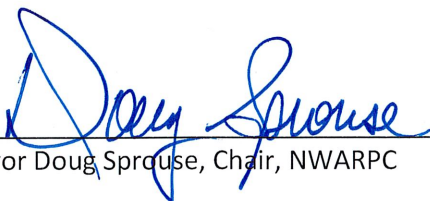
- 2026 Arkansas Municipal League Regional Meeting dates: Wednesday, March 11, 2026, Wednesday, April 8, 2026, and Thursday, May 7, 2026.

(14) 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 2:44 PM.

PASSED AND APPROVED ON THIS 25TH DAY OF MARCH 2026.



Mayor Doug Sprouse, Chair, NWARPC

ATTEST: 
