

NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2025, AT 10:30 AM; APPROVED MARCH 21, 2025

ENTITY	MEMBER	PRESENT	PROXY
AVOCA	ROBERT WHITEHORN		
BELLA VISTA	MEGAN WORKMAN TAYLOR ROBERTSON CHRIS BRACKETT	X	
BENTON COUNTY	JUDGE BARRY MOEHRING JOSH BEAM JAY FRASIER	X	
BENTONVILLE	JARROD BRIGHTWELL DAN WEESE	X X	
CAVE SPRINGS	MAYOR RANDALL NOBLETT		
CENTERTON	MAYOR BILL EDWARDS LORENE BURNS	X	Alan Craighead
DECATUR	MAYOR BOB THARP		
ELKINS	MAYOR TROY REED		
ELM SPRINGS	MATT CASEY		
FARMINGTON	MELISSA McCARVILLE		
FAYETTEVILLE	JONATHAN CURTH CHRIS BROWN PAUL LIBERTINI	X X	
GENTRY	MAYOR KEVIN JOHNSTON		
GRAVETTE	KURT MADDOX	X	Ami Murray
GREENLAND	MAYOR JIM RENFROW		
HIGHFILL	JEREMY JOHNSON		
JOHNSON	MAYOR CHRIS KEENEY		
LITTLE FLOCK	MAYOR JEFF VAN SICKLER	X	Nicole Gibbs
LOWELL	KAREN DAVIS	X	Chris Moore
PEA RIDGE	MAYOR NATHAN SEE	X	
PINEVILLE	MAYOR GREG SWEETEN		
PRAIRIE GROVE	MAYOR DAVID FAULK		
ROGERS	JOHN MCCURDY QUINTON HARRIS LANCE JOBE	X	Kent Laughlin
SILAM SPRINGS	BEN RHOADS (VICE CHAIR) KEVIN MOORE	X	
SPRINGDALE	PATSY CHRISTIE (CHAIR) RYAN CARR	X X	
TONTITOWN	MAYOR ANGELA RUSSELL		
WASHINGTON CO.	BRIAN LESTER SAM ATA JEFF CROWDER	X	Bridget Russell
WEST FORK	MAYOR HEITH CAUDLE		
WINSLOW	ANN MALKIE		
NWARPC	TIM CONKLIN	X	
BEAVER H2O DISTRICT	CODY HUDSON		
OZARK REG. TRANSIT	JOEL GARDNER	X	
RAZORBACK TRANSIT	ADAM WADDELL (GARY K. SMITH)	X	
U OF A	SCOTT TURLEY (JAY HUNEYCUIT)		
McDONALD COUNTY	COMM. BRYAN HALL		
MoDOT	FRANK MILLER (MARVIN MORRIS)	X	
NWA NATIONAL AIRPORT	AARON BURKES	X	
ARDOT PLANNING AND DISTRICT 9	ANTHONY HUNTER SUNNY FARMAHAN ROBERT MOORE	X	

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NWARPC STAFF: Tim Conklin; Nicole Gibbs; Tim Reavis; Cristina Scarlat, Luke Aitken

OTHERS: Truett Smith (FHWA); Jonothan Ely (Burns & McDonnell); Brandi Holt (Huntsville); JP Shaffer and Nathan Boone (Toole Design); Stephen Schmeller (Horner & Shifrin); Rob Smith (NWA Council).

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 in-person and virtual NWARPC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting was called to order by Chair Patsy Christie at 10:30 a.m.

(2) ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

In-person attendees named themselves, with Tim Conklin naming the virtual attendees. Luke Aitken recorded the names of members who were present and tallied votes. A quorum was reached.

(3) APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 17, 2024 & DECEMBER 19, 2024, MEETING MINUTES

Chair Patsy Christie asked if there were any comments on the TAC meeting minutes from October 17, 2024, and December 19, 2024, and hearing none, requested a motion to approve both sets of meeting minutes.

MOTION: Bridgett Russell made a motion to approve the October 17 and December 19, 2024, TAC Meeting Minutes. Seconded by Kent Laughlin. Motion carried unanimously.

NOTE – *Virtual meeting audio and video via Zoom was temporarily unavailable for Item 1 CALL TO ORDER through Item 3 APPROVAL OF MINUTES, but the issue was resolved by staff before moving onto Item 4 NWA COMPLETE STREETS GUIDELINES.*

Before moving onto Item 4, Director Tim Conklin briefly announced the award of a \$25 million grant from the USDOT Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program, for Highway 112, which will fund the construction of a 12-foot-wide, 17.5-mile shared-use paved side path. This side path will connect eight communities along its route and the grant award will also fund an independent bike and pedestrian bridge over US 612 to ensure a continuous side path route along the Highway 112 corridor. Conklin said bridge design is being discussed with ARDOT staff and that he hopes its form will be similar to other bridges along the Razorback Greenway.

(4) NWA COMPLETE STREETS DESIGN GUIDELINES – Presentation by Toole Design

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Tim Conklin called on Nathan Boone of Toole Design to present on the recently developed draft of the NWA Complete Streets Design Guidelines. Boone stated the guidelines will be a great resource for cities in the region in their work to prioritize safety, accessibility, and inclusivity in transportation planning. He said Chapter 1 discusses applying a regional approach to Complete Streets and explains the need for a Regional Complete Streets Design Guide, describing the benefits of Complete Streets and their relationship with other key planning initiatives. Chapter 2 introduces the regional street typology, how it was developed, and how it should be used by local governments and project sponsors. Boone explained that, through multiple rounds of development and refinement of the street typology, the project team and a working group of representatives from NWARPC member jurisdictions and organizations produced thirteen unique street types and six street overlays for the region. Boone stated that Chapter 3 includes detailed descriptions of over 30 different design elements and strategies for implementing different street

**NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2025, AT 10:30 AM; APPROVED MARCH 21, 2025**

types outlined in chapter 2. These design elements, Boone said, are shown in a matrix format which will serve to help local decision makers determine the best design elements to incorporate into a given street type based on the context of the surrounding land use. He said chapter 4 focuses on Complete Streets implementation, establishing roles and responsibilities for NWARPC, local governments, MODOT, ARDOT, the University of Arkansas, transit agencies, transportation management associations, private developers, and others. Boone said this chapter also includes policy guidance and sample ordinance or resolution language for local governments to create their own local Complete Streets policies.

Boone said the next steps are sending the guidelines out for a 15-day public comment period from February 3-17 and further refining the document based on feedback received. He thanked Commission members for their working group participation and Toole Design staff for their hard work and concluded his remarks by stating that Toole Design and NWARPC staff are aiming to receive formal approval and adoption of the guidelines by the RPC/Policy Committee at their February 26, 2025, meeting.

Chair Patsy Christie asked if there were any questions or comments following Nathan's presentation. Director Tim Conklin thanked Toole Design for all their work on the Commission's Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) planning projects, stating that their ability to deliver projects such as the NWA Vision Zero – Comprehensive Safety Action Plan, on time and on budget allowed multiple cities in the region to apply for and receive millions of dollars in federal funding. Christie requested a motion from the committee to recommend the draft NWA Complete Streets Design Guidelines be sent to public comment.

MOTION: Bridget Russell made a motion to recommend the draft NWA Complete Streets Design Guidelines for Public Comment. Seconded by Kent Laughlin. Motion carried unanimously.

**(5) FHWA FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION MAP COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE APPROVAL –
Recommendation to RPC/Policy Committee**

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Tim Conklin said staff are working closely with ARDOT and staff of member cities to update the region's functional classification map, which outlines roadways in the region and classifies them in accordance with type and level of service provided (local, principal arterial, major collector etc.). Conklin stated this comprehensive update is done every ten years following the decennial census, and those updated road classifications determine a roadway's eligibility for federal aid funds. Conklin said this year's update was approved and recommended for forwarding to ARDOT by the RPC/Board of Directors at their December 4, 2024 meeting, however, additional updates were requested from some member jurisdictions after that meeting and as such, the map, with those updates added, is being brought back to this group for further discussion and forwarding to the Board of Directors once again.

Conklin said if TAC votes today to recommend the map be sent forward to the Board of Directors, they will vote on approval of the final map at their January 22, 2025, meeting, after which the final version would be sent on to officials at ARDOT and FHWA for their review.

Chair Patsy Christie asked if there were any questions or comments on the map and heard none before requesting a motion to recommend to the RPC/Policy Committee supporting the proposed map revisions.

**NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2025, AT 10:30 AM; APPROVED MARCH 21, 2025**

MOTION: Kent Laughlin made a motion to recommend to the RPC/Policy Committee Supporting the Proposed Benton and Washington County Functional Classification Map Revisions. Seconded by Bridget Russell. Motion carried unanimously.

(6) NWARPC CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAM (CRP) – Pea Ridge Lee Town Rd Project Award Request for Reallocation of Funds – Recommendation to RPC/Policy Committee

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item, and Tim Conklin explained the City of Pea Ridge approached the Commission regarding the possibility of reallocating funds awarded under the Commission's Carbon Reduction Program in 2024. The City would like to reallocate the \$386,180 Lee Town Rd shared use trail Project CRP funding award to other Pea Ridge underfunded projects that were previously funded by the NWARPC. Conklin said Pea Ridge is working with ARDOT to determine the feasibility of swapping highway 72 with Lee Town Rd. He stated that the standard practice by the Commission is to place previously awarded funds which are unable to be spent, back into the funding balance for redistribution in the current funding cycle. Conklin said that the Committee could either recommend to the RPC/Policy Committee, to deny the reallocation request and return those Lee Town Rd CRP funds to the existing TAP/CRP funding balance, or to recommend the reallocation request to allow those CRP funds to be allocated to other existing projects in Pea Ridge which were previously selected for funding by the Policy Committee.

Chair Patsy Christie asked if there were any questions or comments on the item and heard none before requesting a motion to either recommend to the RPC/Policy Committee the request to reallocate the \$386,180 Lee Town Rd Project CRP funding award to other Pea Ridge underfunded projects that were previously funded by the NWARPC or to deny the request to reallocate the \$386,180 funding award for the Lee Town Rd Project and return the funds to the TAP/CRP Program Funding pool.

Chris Brown with the City of Fayetteville asked for clarification on whether the projects to be provided with extra funding were approved or selected by ARDOT or the NWARPC Selection Committee or both. Tim Conklin clarified that Pea Ridge has identified two projects previously selected for funding by NWARPC that are underfunded and could use the extra funds.

MOTION: Chris Brown made a motion to deny the request to reallocate the \$386,180 funding award for the Lee Town Rd Project and return the funds to the Program Funding pool. Seconded by Jonothan Curth. Motion carried by a vote of 14 Yes & 2 No.

(7) FFY 2026 NWARPC FUNDING PROGRAMS (STBG-A/TAP/CRP) – Call for Projects Issued

Nicole Gibbs shared that the call for projects to request FFY 2026 funding from NWARPC Programs was sent out to commission members on January 5th. These programs include the Attributable Surface Transportation Block Grants (STBG-A), Transportation Alternatives (TAP), and Carbon Reduction (CRP) Programs. She said the application deadline is Thursday April 3rd, 2025. She emphasized the importance of member jurisdictions having a signed resolution from their city council for a complete funding application. She also presented the following program timeline and expected funding availability breakdowns for the programs based on FFY 2024 Apportionments with 100% Obligation Authority:

FFY 2026 NWARPC Funding Programs Timeline:

Call for Projects (Applications open)	Sunday, January 5, 2025
Application Deadline (<i>Resolution Required</i>)	Thursday, April 3, 2025
Project Sponsor Presentation to TAC Committee	Thursday, April 17, 2025
Selection Committee Site Visits/Scoring/Rec	April/May 2025 (TBD)

**NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2025, AT 10:30 AM; APPROVED MARCH 21, 2025**

Selection Committee Recommendation to TAC
TAC Recommendation to RPC/Policy

Thursday, May 15, 2025
Wednesday, May 28, 2025

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

FFY 2026 NWARPC Estimated Federal Funding

(based on FFY 2024 Apportionment + 100% Obligation Authority)

Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP-A)	\$ 11,728,473
Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	\$ 1,302,362
Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)	<u>\$ 1,402,666</u>
Total	\$ 14,433,501

Gibbs urged members to continue pushing ongoing projects forward towards obligation. She also mentioned the need for timely delivery of quarterly progress reports to both ARDOT and NWARPC.

(8) FORWARD2050 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN (MTP) – Constrained Projects List Discussion

Tim Conklin presented an overview of regional roadway infrastructure projects listed in the current 2045 MTP. Some of the most notable projects mentioned include: Highways 59 & 72, Highway 264 in Benton County, US 412 Bypass (612) & Future I-42, XNA Airport Access Road, Washington County I-49 widening, US-71 to Missouri State line in Bella Vista, Highway 265 in Benton County, the western Benton County North-South Connector Study, and the Benton and Washington County Highway 112 widening projects. Conklin noted that fiscal constraints must be shown in the MTP project list, which means that the region's top priority projects should be included to maximize the region's ability to pursue funding for the projects needed most as the region continues to rapidly grow in population.

(9) PROJECT AND OTHER UPDATES

A. NWARPC Funding Programs (STBGP-A/TAP/CRP) – FFY 2026 Call for Projects in January

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item, and Nicole Gibbs said the Board authorized the federal fiscal year FFY 2026 NWARPC Funding Programs Call for Projects to be issued on January 5, 2025, and stated any new information relevant to this group was covered previously under agenda item #7.

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

Tim Reavis provided an overview of current 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 NWARPC is now 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). He said the TAS will study the feasibility of three high-capacity transit options for the region including Bus Rapid Transit, Light Rail, and Commuter Rail. Reavis also explained that the update to the TDM will include development of three different land use scenarios, showing the function of our regional transportation network in each scenario of future growth. He said this modeling will be done using 2050 population projections from the Arkansas Economic Development Institute (AEDI) to show how population growth can be allocated across the cities of our region. Reavis shared that the public open house events for this project will take place in April with one occurring in Benton County and one in

**NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2025, AT 10:30 AM; APPROVED MARCH 21, 2025**

Washington County, and said that more details will be shared with the group soon regarding these events. He also said a second round of public engagement events will be held in the fall of this year.

C. Other Ongoing Project Updates

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

Nicole Gibbs said Phase 2 of the planning work, to develop the NWA Comprehensive Action Plan (CAP), including three new greenhouse gas reduction measures, a new regionally scoped Nature-based Solutions Environmental Mapping Tool, and outline of actionable steps toward implementation of the regional priority actions will be complete soon and ready for review by the committee at their next meeting in February. She said the plan will support future planning and funding opportunities for the Metropolitan Statistical Area (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 said the document would serve as a component of the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update.

- **NWA Mobility Strategic Communications Plan**

Nicole Gibbs said consultants, mhp.si, are helping us to enhance our agency's communications capacities and drive the conversation around mobility in response to the region's rapid population growth. She shared that the results of the firm's scientific public opinion survey on transportation in NWA will be shared with RPC members at the January 22, 2025, Policy Committee meeting. In addition to the 12-month strategic communications plan itself, deliverables provided through this effort will include a strategic messaging guide, social media audit, social media content support and graphic design support to supplement some of the Commission's ongoing projects such as Forward 2050.

- **NWARPC Public Participation Plan - 2025 Update**

Nicole Gibbs shared that the updated version of the plan, which must be updated every 5 years in compliance with federal law, is currently available in a draft format for review and public comment through February 7, 2025. She said the plan would be headed to the RPC/Policy Committee for approval at the February meeting.

- **Enhancing Equitable Transit Connections in NWA – FTA Areas of Persistent Poverty (AoPP)
Bus Stop Enhancement Grant**

Tim Reavis provided the group with an update on the project. He stated that on January 1, 2025, staff issued a notice to proceed to chosen consultant Olsson Engineering, to begin work on the grant. The consultant will be coordinating with city staff and transit provider staff to determine which stops are eligible for enhancement under the grant.

- **Razorback Greenway Corridor Plan**

Tim Reavis provided the group with an update on the progress of this project, for which the commission was invited to apply for a Walton Family Foundation Design Excellence Planning Grant. He said the corridor plan would include two main components, a regional framework and seven individual sub area plans for cities which the greenway passes through. He said all seven cities in question have been involved in the selection process to choose a consultant firm to carry out the project, and that staff is now entering negotiations with a qualified firm and hopes to have a contract from the firm ready for signature in the next month or so.

**NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2025, AT 10:30 AM; APPROVED MARCH 21, 2025**

D. Other Grant Opportunity Updates

Tim Conklin provided information on the ongoing grant opportunities being pushed out by USDOT. He showed the new Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) that have been announced by US Department of Transportation (USDOT) from the Key Notices of Funding Opportunity Webpage (<https://www.transportation.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/key-notices-funding-opportunity>).

Conklin shared that earlier this month the Policy Committee authorized staff to apply for the FFY 2024-26 Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Grant Program, in addition to the FY 2024 Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) Grant Program. He said those applications will be submitted by the approaching deadlines with help from planning partners.

Conklin said NWARPC was invited for a Walton Family Foundation grant to support the preparation of the PROTECT Planning Grant application by an ARDOT on-call consultant by the February 24, 2025, deadline. He said the Beaver Watershed Alliance (BWA), and Illinois River Watershed Partnership (IRWP) are also partnering with NWARPC on the project. He said the PROTECT Planning Grant will seek to identify vulnerable transportation assets and implement nature-based solutions and design changes to reduce damage to or loss of the region's transportation assets through managing stormwater.

Conklin said the Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) Grant Program offers up to \$10 million in no-match grants to fund advances in regional infrastructure financing and innovation in project delivery methods including public and private partnerships. He said the Commission applied for \$1 million of 100% federal funding, with assistance from the Build America Bureau, which would fund a project consultant to deliver technical assistance and resources for the region around innovative infrastructure finance and project development. He states that the commission's application was submitted by the January 9, 2025, deadline.

(10) COMMITTEE AND GROUP UPDATES

A. Active Transportation Committee

Luke Aitken said the ACT Committee last met on September 19, 2024, to discuss newly opened grant opportunities, subcommittee re-formation for the NWA regional bike and pedestrian plan update, and recent bike and pedestrian project developments in the region. He said that a new 2025 meeting schedule has been sent out to ACT Committee members and noted that the group's next meeting will be held virtually on February 6, 2025, at 1:30PM.

B. NWA Open Space Coalition

Luke Aitken said the group's last meeting was held on November 13, 2024, at the recently re-opened Luther George Park in Downtown Springdale. The group met with city staff and toured the park's new features, including a Corten Steel bandshell. He said an updated 2025 meeting schedule has been sent out to members and noted that the group will meet next in person here at the commission and online on February 12, 2025, at 11:00AM.

(11) PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Patsy Christie asked whether staff received any public comments prior to the meeting or if members of the public were present to provide comments. Nicole Gibbs stated staff did not receive any comments prior to the meeting and no comments were heard in the room.

**NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2025, AT 10:30 AM; *APPROVED MARCH 21, 2025***

(12) OTHER BUSINESS

A. Future Meeting Dates:

- **RPC/Policy Committee Meeting** – Wednesday, January 22, 2025 @ 1:30 PM
- **TAC Meeting** – Thursday, February 20, 2025 @ 10:30 AM

B. [ARDOT Public Involvement Meetings](#) – Highways 59 & 72 Corridor Study and Western North-South Connector Study

- **Tuesday, January 28, 2025 @ 4:00-7:00 PM**, Gentry Public Library (McKee Community Room), 105 East Main Street, Gentry, AR
- **Thursday, January 30, 2025 @ 4:00-7:00 PM**, Gravette High School (Commons Area), 325 Lion Drive South, Gravette, AR

(13) ADJOURNMENT

Chair Patsy Christie asked whether there was any other business to discuss and hearing none adjourned the meeting at 11:34 AM.