

**EAST ALABAMA RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MEETING MINUTES
DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE & TECHNICAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE for the CENTRAL DISTRICT
January 21, 2010
East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission – Anniston**

Policy Committee Members in Attendance:

Commissioner Robert Downing, Calhoun County
Mayor Sam Wright, City of Sylacauga
Mayor Charles Merkel, Town of Oak Grove
Mayor Anna Berry, City of Heflin
Mayor Brian York, City of Talladega
Mr. DeJarvis Leonard, ALDOT 4th Division
Mr. Bill Curtis, EARPDC

Technical Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

Mr. William D. McDaniel, ALDOT 4th Division

Other Attendees:

Mr. Jim Heigl, City of Sylacauga
Mr. Mark Welsh, Calhoun County
Mr. Shannon Jones, ALDOT 4th Division, District 2
Mr. Jack Plunk, Calhoun Area MPO
Ms. Dawn Landholm, EARPDC
Ms. Stacey Browning, EARPDC

Mayor Brian York, Chairman, called the meeting to order at approximately 1:05 p.m.

Under “Old Business,” Mayor York asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the previous meeting on November 19, 2009. After determining that there were no changes, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mayor Merkel made a motion, and Mayor Baswell seconded. The minutes were approved.

There was no other old business, so Mayor York moved on to “New Business” and asked for an update from ALDOT on road projects. Mr. Shannon Jones began by discussing the State Route 9 resurfacing, which is almost complete. He mentioned that a project on 21 should begin soon. There is a project on the eastern bypass on which they are still installing the fence, which must be complete before the work can begin. The bypass to the lake and Iron Mountain Road should be complete sometime this summer, but the detour section near Donoho School will remain open. Businesses north of

Choccolocco will still have access. Work on Iron Mountain Road will not be complete as early as the bypass.

Mr. DeJarvis Leonard discussed a resurfacing project in Sylacauga, mentioning that it will recommence when the weather get a little better. There was a question about the Talladega bypass, which has not been let yet. He stated that Congress had rescinded \$170 million from ALDOT, and the bypass is on hold because of money issues. Small MPOs throughout the state lost a lot of funding.

Mr. Bill Curtis mentioned that this had been a balance budget measure, in which project commitments could not be matched funding-wise with the federal gas tax. All projects have been pushed back indefinitely until a funding bill passes.

There was a question about stimulus money. Mr. William McDaniel passed out an update of road projects (a copy of which is attached to these minutes), to which he attached an email he received yesterday about stimulus funding. The email says that another stimulus bill is coming soon, through which Alabama would receive about the same amount of funding as it did with the last stimulus. Until there is a permanent funding bill in place, money (such as that from the stimulus) will be handed out piecemeal. Mr. Leonard mentioned that ALDOT is almost finished with the first stimulus, as the projects were required to be let by March 1. He recommends that cities and towns anticipate the coming stimulus and get some projects ready. The new stimulus bill will want projects to be let very soon, sometime in June or July.

Mr. McDaniel discussed Transportation Enhancement projects that could receive stimulus funding. There is an underrun on the current projects, so the surplus money will go to other projects, which will now be eligible for 100% funding. With the new stimulus, all Fiscal Year 09 TE projects will be converted to 100% stimulus funding. Depending on how much money is left over, the projects eligible for 100% might go back to FY08. ALDOT is not yet accepting applications for new projects. FY09 projects must be cleared by September of this year, and funding is provided on a first come, first serve basis. There was a question about whether the new stimulus funding would affect the resurfacing of the Chief Ladiga trail in Piedmont. Mr. McDaniel responded that the project would be in the first group for funding, as the plans are 90% complete. TARP money may also be used.

Mr. Leonard mentioned that the Alabama Congress is currently deliberating whether to take money (\$1 billion) from Alabama's trust fund for the repair of bridges and roads throughout the state. Mr. Leonard said that ALDOT is simply waiting to see what happens with the possibility. Mr. McDaniel mentioned that this money would help significantly with the condition of bridges across the state.

After determining that there was no other new business, Mayor York moved on to "Special Program," which was a discussion by Ms. Stacey Browning of access management projects. Ms. Browning discussed the benefits of access management, and also addressed Elmore County's Access Management Policy, a copy of which is attached

to these minutes. She also discussed the Bruton Smith Parkway Design District in Georgia, which was a collaborative effort between the county and the city of Hampton. She mentioned the Franklin County (VA) Corridor Overlay District's access management section. The county used a broader project to deal with issues of access management. She discussed the Austell Road Access Management Plan in Atlanta, in which an engineering firm was hired to conduct a detailed study of a corridor. Ms. Browning mentioned the Peachtree Corridor Access project in Atlanta, which was not intended as a capacity project, but allowed traffic along the road to flow significantly better. A copy of Ms. Browning's presentation is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Jack Plunk discussed an access management project on 21 in Oxford, in which the corridor is undergoing some retrofits including the closing of a few driveways. An access management on the portion of 21 south of 78 will be incorporated into the next I-20 project. Mr. Leonard discussed an access management project in Sylacauga that was very successful. Mayor Sam Wright mentioned that access to the school had been improved, and a two-way stop at Pine Crest also served to improve safety. Mr. Leonard mentioned that access management can take some coordination of cities and requires the proponents to be willing to take some heat at public hearings, but the benefits are many. Mr. Curtis asked if the state was working on access management standards that could be used by local governments. Mr. Leonard answered that ALDOT was working on standards and is trying to develop an access management manual. He also mentioned that cities can do a significant amount of access management in their permitting processes. Mr. Curtis mentioned that cities have much more power than counties when it comes to regulations, so access management is especially useful for incorporated areas along major corridors, such as 280. State guidelines would help so that cities could fall back on particular standards. Mayor Merkel mentioned that he felt that convincing business owners that access management is good for business is an important aspect of getting the public behind the idea.

There was a question posed about roundabouts, and some discussion regarding where they work best. It was mentioned that crashes on roundabouts would occur at a much slower speed than at a traditional intersection.

Mayor York asked that the next meeting date be announced, and Ms. Browning mentioned that it would be held on April 15, 2010 at 1 p.m. at EARPDC. After this, the meeting was adjourned.