

East Alabama Rural Planning Organization (EARPO)
Meeting Minutes
District Policy and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting – Central District
Thursday, January 17, 2019 - 11:00 a.m.
East Alabama Planning and Development Commission

Members in Attendance:

Libby Messick, EARPDC
Jerry Parris, Calhoun Area MPO Chairman
Steve Baswell, Mayor of Ohatchee
Bill Baker, Mayor of Piedmont
Garry Banks, ALDOT District 4
Shane Christian, EARPDC

Other Attendees:

Toby Bennington, City of Anniston
Rod Wilburn, JRWA
John Gardner, JRWA

Ms. Messick called the meeting to order at 11:24 and welcomed everyone to the first FY19 meeting of the East Alabama Rural Planning Organization's District Policy and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting for the Southern District.

Ms. Messick asked attendees to briefly introduce themselves.

After introductions, Ms. Messick explained she had put together a brief agenda which was available for attendees at the meeting.

Minutes from the previous meeting were not available in the EARPO transfer to Ms. Messick. She explained the RPO would be starting fresh and attempt to revamp the RPO with new ideas.

Ms. Messick then called for any reports or updates from ongoing projects from ALDOT or County. Mr. Banks reported for current ALDOT projects they are finishing up with punch list items on I-20; they had just completed a project on Hwy 9 around Lineville with around 8 miles of resurfacing; a project on 431 between Wedowee and Roanoke is near completion; I-20 cable rail from Oxford to 205 on the Alabama exit 46 in Cleburne County are finishing up some punch list items. For upcoming projects, Mr. Banks reported ALDOT has a resurfacing project on 431 between Hollis and I-20 that will be let this month; resurfacing in Wedowee on 431; and hopefully a project on Hwy 9.

There were no motions or resolutions that needed to be discussed.

The next item of business was special programs which Ms. Messick explained was a round-table discussion item such as what are the district's interests with the RPO, what type of projects are there needs or interests for, and what can the RPO can do for the districts. Both

Mayor Baswell and Mayor Baker expressed an interest and need for road repaving and resurfacing in their respective municipalities. They explained that ALDOT takes really good care of the roads that are their responsibility, but the city and county roads need repair and repaving is a large expense. Ms. Messick said she would investigate programs and/or grants that may help. Mayor Baker stated that ALDOT has installed some safety rails on their highways and they are very grateful for the work they have done on their highway systems.

Ms. Messick explained the other handouts in the agenda packet for the meeting. Ms. Messick included a list of goals in an Action Plan in the previous RPO Coordinator's files. She requested the attendees look over the goals in the action plan and make any suggestions to remove or change anything that may not fit the RPO. She further explained that the goals would be a work in process where items could be added and removed as the RPO meets throughout the year. Ms. Messick included a list of upcoming meetings for 3rd and 4th quarter, the latest monthly MPO/RPO newsletter, as well as the latest update of the bylaws. The last revision to the bylaws was in 2010. Ms. Messick asked for a review of the bylaws for the next meeting to ensure they are as up-to-date as possible.

Ms. Messick opened the floor for any questions or comments thus far. Rod Wilburn of JRWA asked Mayor Baker about Chief Ladiga Trail (CLT) traffic in Piedmont. Mayor Baker responded that they are still seeing lots of traffic coming through on the trail. Mr. Wilburn asked about any up keep that might be needed on the trail. Mayor Baker explained that the city of Piedmont and their parks and recreation department has been responsible for any clean up, repairs, and maintenance to the trail thus far for not only the Piedmont area but the Cleburne County side as well.

Mr. Wilburn asked if anyone was familiar with the East Alabama Riding Club. Ms. Messick stated she believed that club may be from the Lee County/Auburn area as there was a large cycling community in that area. Mr. Wilburn asked about the tourism in Piedmont. Mayor Baker stated a new restaurant and historic homes have been renovated and opened to rent out rooms to cyclists coming on the trail.

Mr. Wilburn also mentioned that there is a possibility for additional legislation to occur for increased fuel taxes which may help set aside funding for RPO jurisdictions and their transportation facilities.

Mayor Baker asked if there was been a project to four-lane Hwy 77 over the Coosa River in Southside on the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for Gadsden and that Hwy 77 was a connector between the Gadsden area and I-20/I-59. Mr. Bennington said that project was in the LRTP previously, but was unsure if it was currently in the plan; however, the price tag for the environmental portion of the project alone would probably cause the project to not take off. Mr. Wilburn stated that large projects such as this may be on the state-wide plan even if they are in a rural area and that plan may be coming up for an update soon. Ms. Messick explained that the State-wide plan is coming up for update soon and ALDOT will be taking its public involvement through the RPOs instead of the MPOs as they have in the past. This will ensure the rural communities will have a first look and opportunity to comment on the state plan.

Ms. Messick stated that one of the items discussed at the Northern District RPO meeting was how to get more participation. One of the ideas discussed at the other meeting was to go to

each municipality town/city meetings to make introductions and invite the mayors to the meetings personally since she is new to the RPO and there has probably been a changing of the guard so to speak since the time the RPO meetings were more on a set schedule. All agreed that it was a good idea. Mayor Baker invited Ms. Messick to the Piedmont city work sessions and would give her some time at the session with forewarning.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

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