

East Alabama Rural Planning Organization  
District Policy Committee/Technical Advisory Committee – Central District  
Meeting Minutes of the Regular Meeting  
January 16, 2014 – 1:00 p.m.  
East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission  
1130 Quintard Avenue, Anniston, Alabama

Committee Members in Attendance:

Donna Mathews, City of Lineville  
DeJarvis Leonard, ALDoT  
Bill Curtis, EARPDC

Other Attendees

Robin Caler, EARPDC  
Ryan Kallem, EARPDC  
Jack Plunk, Calhoun County MPO

Robin Caler called the meeting to order and distributed the handouts necessary for the meeting. She then asked that all sign the sign-in sheet. A copy of the minutes from the previous meeting was distributed and those in attendance reviewed them. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Donna Mathews and seconded by Jack Plunk.

The next item on the agenda was Old Business. There being no old business, the meeting then progressed on to the next item on the agenda, New Business, with a report on *Providing Successful Transportation Options for Seniors in Rural Communities*. The information was gathered from *Rural Voices*, a housing periodical that covers all aspects of housing and incorporates all elements of livability. She reported on a transit program called Silver Riders and gave a brief history of its traditional funding and information how, with shrinking traditional funding, the Silver Rider program was now being funded in non-traditional methods. The program is operated by a non-profit organization and holds fund raisers to supplement operating capital. The diversity of the fund raisers allows for a variety of avenues to be tapped for funding sources – for example, one of the fund raisers is a wine and cheese tasting event that includes live and silent auction items donated from area and out of area businesses, generates more than \$30,000 in revenue each year. The extra generation of funds allows the program to diversify its services from meals-on-wheels, to medical appointment transport, to shopping excursions. While some entities providing these services are scaling back, the Silver Rider program is providing a continuum of services for the elderly and collaborating with other entities to expand services. One of the reasons for the success of this program is a massive media campaign. Interestingly, while the Silver Rider program is well used and known about, the public transit system here in Calhoun County and throughout the region is not. One of the findings that came out of the CLEAR Plan 2030 Transportation LRT meetings is that there is not much common knowledge about the existing public transit systems. The general thoughts are that while the busses have high visibility throughout the region in the separate systems that operate, it is thought that the service is for special populations – elderly, handicapped and not for the general public. One of the projects identified for the CLEAR Plan 2030 is to better publicize the public transit systems for public use.

Mr. Leonard asked if there were any non-senior transit systems in the rural areas of the counties. Mr. Plunk replied that there is the door to door service outside the metropolitan planning area of Calhoun County. That fact was complimented with information from Robin Caler that there are only two counties in the region that do not have some type of public transit – Chambers and Randolph. A brief discussion occurred regarding various county programs and fare structures, and

the lack of interconnectedness of the existing individual systems; for example, a Cleburne County resident cannot take public transit to Anniston.

The next item on the agenda was an update on State road projects given by Mr. Leonard. He stated that ATRIP was the bulk of the projects underway. He stated that most of the RPO's jurisdictions would be working with Mr. McDaniel. Mr. Leonard then gave a brief description and status of the I-20 project and the Anniston Eastern Bypass. Mr. Plunk asked about the status of widening Highway 21 North to Piedmont. That question led to a discussion of funding. There are projects and plans ready, but it's a matter of funding. To get all the projects and plans that are approved and in place, a new revenue stream would have to be developed. Mr. Leonard stated that the right-of-ways have been purchased for that project and the plans are complete; it's just a matter of funding.

Ms. Matthews asked a question about Highway 49 North, whether or not it was complete. She said the City was getting a lot of questions about when it was going to be complete. Mr. Leonard stated that there was no more work scheduled for that, and it was complete. Ms. Matthews confirmed the City had been told it was complete and she was asking to confirm her sources. Mr. Leonard said that in order to make their dollars go farther, they were only doing surface treatments on low volume roads, which is the case in Highway 49. Mr. Leonard stated that Highway 281 near Cheaha would be paved, not just surface treated.

Mr. Leonard asked if there were any more questions and there being none, the meeting progressed to the next item on the agenda: Report on County roads. There were no County Engineers present to give an update on county road projects.

The next item on the agenda was Other New Business. There being none, the next item was discussed: CLEAR Plan 2030 update. This update was given by Robin Caler. She stated that an Implementation Plan was being worked on by a group of consultants – the Walker Collaborative, and some of the partners were Alabama based, and the transportation component of the Plan is was being composed by a firm that the MPO works closely with. So while the lead consultant is not based in Alabama, several of the group's members are and they are familiar with the region. They would be combining results from the survey, their existing familiarity with the region and information obtained from the LRT to create an Implementation Plan for the region. Information on the status of the CLEAR Plan Magazine was also presented. The magazine is an educational tool that should provide residents with a clear understanding of what *livability* is and the Implementation Plan is a technical document that provides suggestions on making the region more livable.

The next item on the agenda was Open Discussion and announcements. Robin Caler introduced Ryan Kallem and stated that he would be a facilitator to the RPO. The next meeting date was set for May 15, 2014 at 1:00 pm to be held at the EARPDC office.

There being no further business to conduct or discuss, Ms. Matthews motioned for the adjournment of the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Plunk.

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**East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission**  
**1130 Quintard Avenue, Suite 300, Anniston, AL**

## **AGENDA**

- A. Call to Order
- B. Old Business
  - 1. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting
  - 2. Other Old Business
- C. New Business
  - 1. Report of Officers, Staff, and/or Committees
    - a. Staff report
    - b. Other reports
  - 2. ALDOT Update on Road Projects
    - a. ALDOT - Montgomery
    - b. ALDOT - Division 4
    - c. ALDOT - District Staff
  - 3. Update on County Road Projects from County Engineers
  - 4. Other New Business
- D. Livability Resource Team
  - 1. CLEAR Plan 2030 update
- E. Open Discussion and Announcements
  - 1. Next meeting date: May 15, 2014
- F. Adjourn

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Sign-In Sheet

Name	Representing	Phone Number	Email Address
Donna Matthews	City of Lincolnville	256-396-2581	dmatthews@centurytel.net
John S. [unclear]	EAC/MD	256-237-6741	
Donna [unclear]	ALDOT	256 234 8401	leonard@aldot.state.al.us
Ryan Kallen	EAC		
Robin Coler	EAC		

↓ Johnice Chapman (right) and Ruth Ann Culk ride the Silver Rider



# Providing Successful Transportation Options for Seniors in Rural Communities

The Southern Nevada Transit Coalition's Silver Rider Program has taken on the task of mitigating transportation challenges for seniors in rural Nevada

by Debbie Dauenhauer

Residents of rural communities experience more and different transportation challenges than those in urban areas. These challenges can be especially pronounced for seniors in rural areas including a lack of affordable transportation options, inability to operate a vehicle, and distances the seniors must travel to reach vital services. The Southern Nevada Transit Coalition, operating under its branding name "Silver Rider," is a nonprofit organization which has, as one of its core missions, taken on the task of mitigating these transportation challenges in the southern Nevada area. Since its inception in June 2002, Silver Rider has provided public transportation to both seniors and the general population in three rural southern Nevada communities. Since that time, transportation service to other rural communities has been added. Silver Rider now provides community-based transportation in 11 communities covering Clark County, Nevada outside of the urban Las Vegas valley. The organization provides more than 400,000 rural rides annually, making it the largest provider of rural transportation in the state. Silver Rider provides fixed route, paratransit, and demand response services.

Silver Rider's senior transportation program is one of the organization's most rewarding and important programs. While some communities served by Silver Rider have access to local services and shopping, many do not, nor do they have access to necessary medical services. These communities have a unique set of transportation challenges for residents because of the great distances from vital services.

Seniors require affordable access to medical facilities more than any other demographic segment of America. This includes access to doctors, hospitals and chemotherapy or dialysis treatments, as well as access to



↑ Riders pose with driver David Hooks (second from left)



**Transportation and affordable housing are both vital, life-sustaining elements for seniors.**

pharmacies, dental, and eye-care professionals. Seniors who are no longer able to drive themselves also require transportation to grocery stores and local food banks. Silver Rider is able to provide transportation to all of these important destinations.

Silver Rider provides residents with rides to a variety of nearby cities that have needed services. Many times, these trips are to Las Vegas for medical services. Silver Rider also provides transportation to other states for needed services that may be closer to a resident's home, especially for those who live near the Utah or Arizona border area. For smaller communities, seniors are offered a monthly trip to attend fresh produce distributions at the Laughlin food bank. The shared-ride concept that Silver Rider uses for these programs makes all of these trips possible on a limited operating budget.

Transportation and affordable housing are both vital, life-sustaining elements for seniors. The most successful senior programs that Silver Rider operates typically originate from larger group housing complexes. Group shopping outings, group trips to designated senior commodity distributions at local food banks, and shared-ride trips for many seniors all visiting an urban area on the same day for medical and other appointments are examples of the types of services offered by Silver Rider that have the highest ridership and impact on the seniors.

Seniors in rural communities who no longer have the ability to regularly take transportation to access life's daily necessities face significant challenges. Silver Rider, under its non-profit status, is able to take on the responsibilities of the Meals on Wheels programs for home-bound seniors in rural Nevada. In these areas where the number of social service organizations is very limited, providing this service under the transit operation means the difference between those communities having or not having the Meals on Wheels services at all. Proper collaboration for these programs with the residential complexes of the areas is essential for the success of the program.

Without affordable housing opportunities, seniors have limited options with respect to choosing where to live. The lack of housing options and availability can sometimes require seniors to relocate

to other communities that have affordable housing alternatives. This necessary relocation entails seniors being uprooted to a community or urban area that they would otherwise not choose. This forced relocation can also frequently require seniors to live with their adult children. Both of these factors promote isolation at a rapid pace as the relocation often means that seniors leave behind their lifelong friends and familiar surroundings.

While much of the funding that Silver Rider receives for its programs comes from federal, state, or local government coffers, the funding for the senior transit and demand response programs must be supplemented with local community support. For example, if the senior program in Laughlin, NV, were to use only the funds provided by government agencies for the program, only 20 service hours per week would be available for the senior residents. To address this issue, Silver Rider conducts two annual fund raisers each year with the support of the entire community. One fund raiser, a wine and cheese tasting event that includes live and silent auction items donated from area and out-of-area businesses, generates more than \$30,000 in revenue each year. The funds derived from these events are matched with federal dollars, and thus have twice as much impact. With these events, Silver Rider is able to provide more than 100 service hours per week instead of the 20 hours that would be provided without the local matching funds. This ensures all the residents of the area that rely on the transit system for medical, shopping, and other activities are able to do so every day instead of on a part-time basis. This consistent service level is especially important to the chemotherapy and dialysis patients who use the program.

Another important facet of a successful rural transit operation is its relationship with the local media. The media can be critical in making certain residents know of the programs that are available and aware of the fund raisers. The good news is that Silver Rider has found that the media in its local rural markets is very accessible and usually quite receptive to printing and airing as much information as a local agency provides to them. Also, any advertising that is needed may be purchased at a much lower cost than in urban areas, and that advertising does not get lost in a sea of messages.

Overall, Silver Rider is proud of the service levels it is able to offer to the rural residents of southern Nevada. These service levels are only able to be offered with the support of the community, the affordable housing options to residents of those communities, and a non-profit transit operation that is dedicated to its core mission of providing consistent, reliable, and affordable transportation instead of a mission of making a profit. The advertising logo used by Silver Rider says it all: "We take you where you want to go."

*Debbie Dauenhauer is the Executive Director of the Southern Nevada Transit Coalition. For more information, visit [www.sntc.net](http://www.sntc.net).*