

**EAST ALABAMA RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
MEETING MINUTES  
DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE - CENTRAL DISTRICT  
*June 21, 2007 - 1:00 p.m.*  
*East Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission - Anniston***

*Members in Attendance:*

Commissioner Robert W. Downing, Calhoun Co. Comm. (represented by Mr. Charles Markert)  
Honorable Anna Berry, City of Heflin  
Honorable Lew Watson, City of Lincoln  
Honorable Roy Adamson, City of Lineville (represented by Ms. Donna Mathews)  
Honorable Clem Lewis, Town of Oak Grove  
Honorable Joseph K. Roberson, Town of Ohatchee  
Honorable Charles Fagan, City of Piedmont  
Honorable Sam H. Wright, City of Sylacauga  
Mr. DeJarvis Leonard, ALDOT Division 4  
Mr. Bill Curtis, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

*Other Attendees:*

Mr. Steve Williams, ALDOT - Montgomery  
William D. McDaniel, ALDOT Division 4  
Mr. Shannon T. Jones, ALDOT Division 4, District 2  
Mr. H. Michael Tims, ALDOT Division 4, District 5  
Mr. Eric M. English, ALDOT Delta District  
Mr. Jack Plunk, Calhoun Area Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Mr. Michael Hosch, Calhoun County  
Ms. Terri Daulton, City of Heflin  
Ms. Dawn Landholm, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Mayor Lew Watson, Chairman, called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 p.m. He then welcomed everyone to this first business meeting of the East Alabama Rural Planning Organization's District Policy Committee for the Central District. Mayor Watson noted that several people at this meeting had not attended the kickoff meeting in March and asked attendees to introduce themselves. After introductions, he asked Ms. Dawn Landholm to give a brief overview of the purpose of the RPO. Ms. Landholm explained that the ISTEA legislation authorized states to create Rural Planning Organizations. Metropolitan Planning Organizations had been in place for some time, but rural areas had no formal means of participating in transportation planning. The Alabama Department of Transportation initiated the RPO process almost three years ago, with a two-year pilot project conducted by the West Alabama Regional Commission in the

Tuscaloosa area. ALDOT then contracted with the other eleven regions to conduct the process statewide beginning on October 1, 2006.

The RPO is a consultation process, or a formal means for local jurisdictions to provide input on the State's transportation plans and programs. The RPO cannot direct how the State uses transportation funds, like a Metropolitan Planning Organization, but it does give the region a unified voice that shows general consensus on what transportation projects are the most important for regional well-being. The RPO also will prepare and submit a report on safety projects that are needed throughout the region. Ms. Landholm asked Mr. DeJarvis Leonard to comment on safety projects. Mr. Leonard explained that smaller safety projects, such as improving the sight distance at an intersection, can be brought directly to the District Engineers. However, larger projects, such as adding lanes, should be introduced through and approved by the RPO Committee, by resolution, before being forwarded to ALDOT.

Ms. Landholm concluded by adding that local jurisdictions also can use the RPO as a forum to receive input on their locally-funded transportation projects or as a resource to find out how other jurisdictions have approached specific projects or problems.

Under "Old Business," Mayor Watson asked if there were any corrections to the minutes from the March 7 and March 15, 2007 meetings. Mayor Joseph Roberson made a motion that the minutes be adopted as presented. Mayor Sam Wright seconded the motion, which was approved by a unanimous vote of the Committee.

In "Other Old Business," Ms. Dawn Landholm directed Committee members' attention to the Committee membership lists, copies of which are attached to these minutes. Several jurisdictions have yet to appoint Technical Advisory Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee members. Ms. Landholm stressed the importance of making these appointments as soon as possible, as both Committees need to hold kickoff meetings before September 30<sup>th</sup>, which is the end of the fiscal year. She will mail appointment forms to District Policy Committee members who are not in attendance.

Under "New Business," Mayor Watson asked for reports of officers, staff, and/or committees. Mayor Anna Berry, Vice-Chair, stated that she had no report, but she did wish to emphasize that the RPO is a good opportunity for area officials to work together to improve our region. Ms. Landholm stated that she would present her report after Mr. DeJarvis Leonard updates the Committee on current State projects.

Mayor Watson asked if other persons have business with and/or reports for the Committee. Mr. DeJarvis Leonard directed Committee members' attention to a press release announcing public meetings on the Statewide Transportation Plan. The meeting for this area will be held on July 10, 2007, from 10:00 a.m. until noon at the Anniston City Meeting Center. The Statewide Transportation Plan presents a long-range view of major transportation improvements that may need to be made throughout the state. He encouraged Committee members to attend this meeting and to express their views to staff of Carter-Burgess, the consulting firm conducting this project. There will be three rounds of meetings throughout the Statewide Plan process. Elected officials and the public also

can view materials and submit comments via ALDOT's website. The website address is on the press release, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Leonard stated that ALDOT also is in the process of updating the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, or STIP. While the Statewide Transportation Plan is a 30-year overview of generalized projects that may need to be undertaken, the STIP is a five year work program containing specific projects that will be constructed. This document will be made available to Committee members for review and comment.

Ms. Landholm directed Committee members' attention to the Statewide Transportation Plan data table, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. This table contains the draft population projections generated by Carter-Burgess. The consultants had presented the data to the RPO staff for review and comment. They will use the 2005 and 2035 figures in their computerized traffic modeling program to help determine where the State may need to make future transportation improvements. Ms. Landholm is providing the draft data to the Committee members to help them prepare for the July 10<sup>th</sup> meeting and also will mail to all Committee members announcements of the July 10<sup>th</sup> meeting and a map to the Anniston City Meeting Center.

The projections are made for Traffic Analysis Zones, or TAZs, which have the same boundaries as the census tracts. The census tract maps are posted on the wall, for those not familiar with their county's census tracts to use as a reference when reviewing the data. Committee members also can view the maps on the Census Bureau's website, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). Anyone having difficulty finding the maps online is welcome to call Ms. Landholm, and she will "walk" them through the website; alternately, she can mail a paper copy of the map.

Ms. Landholm gave a brief overview of the table. She explained that Calhoun County's data is broken into Urban, Transitional, and Rural. Calhoun County's RPO members only need to address data for the Transitional and Rural areas. Mr. Jack Plunk, with the Calhoun Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, provided input on the urban area.

The 1990 and 2000 census data, and the 1990 to 2000 growth rates, provide a brief overview of recent growth trends to help local officials and staff in their assessment of the 2005 to 2035 projections. The column containing the rate of change from 2005 to 2035 shows that the same growth rate was applied to all TAZs throughout each county. The consultants realize that growth does not occur evenly throughout the counties and would like people who are familiar with the local area's past trends and future plans to suggest where to increase and decrease growth rates. Ms. Landholm has provided input based on her knowledge of the region, but she also would like to receive comments from the RPO members and local government staff, as they have more extensive knowledge of their communities and also should make recommendations. She will incorporate those comments into her finalized report to Carter-Burgess.

There were no motions or resolutions.

Under “Other New Business,” Mayor Roberson stated that he would like to recommend a safety project for RPO consideration. Since the Honda plant opened in Lincoln, traffic on Highway 77 has grown considerably—especially truck traffic. While the entire stretch of highway between Gadsden and Lincoln needs to be widened, he is particularly concerned about the causeways. They are fairly narrow, and people have become accustomed to parking on the causeways to fish. He sees this situation rapidly developing into a safety hazard. Mr. Leonard stated that ALDOT also has identified widening Highway 77 as an issue to study.

Mayor Berry stated that the City of Heflin is undertaking a downtown revitalization effort. At the same time, traffic through Heflin has increased as people attempt to avoid the construction on Interstate 20. Highway 78 has four lanes in Heflin. In the downtown area, there is also on-street parking. People back out of the parking spaces into driving lanes, and motorists in the driving lanes tend to drive rather fast since the road has four lanes. In addition, it is difficult for both to see each other because of the angle of the spaces. The City feels that reducing the road to three lanes will help prevent accidents and slow motorists down.

Ms. Landholm stated that she will prepare resolutions for the proposed safety projects for the next District Policy Committee meeting.

Under “Special Programs,” Ms. Landholm informed the Committee that Mr. William “Dee” McDaniel, with ALDOT Division 4, will give a special presentation about the Transportation Enhancement grant program. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes. The presentation covered grant requirements and examples of eligible projects. These minutes will summarize some of the key points Mr. McDaniel emphasized.

- Transportation Enhancement grants require a 20% local match. The grant covers 80% of project costs, but funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis only. The project sponsor is responsible for making regular payments to the contractor who is building project prior to receiving reimbursement.
- The grant does not cover the cost of developing plans, specs (which must meet ALDOT’s requirements), and cost estimates or any other items that are not eligible for reimbursement.
- The project must be let within two years of contract execution. If the project is not let, the grant will be revoked.
- The project sponsor needs to inspect the project site daily to ensure compliance with ALDOT standards and specifications. ALDOT only makes periodic inspections.

- All changes to the project that need to be made as new issues arise during construction first must be approved by ALDOT.
- All cities, towns, county commissions, colleges and universities, and other interested governmental agencies receive letters and applications in the mail at the beginning of the Transportation Enhancement application cycle. The applications have detailed instructions that explain all of the requirements.
- Contact names are on the second to last slide, and contact telephone numbers are available through the ALDOT website or the State's online directory.

Mayor Watson asked if anyone wished to be heard on matters not included in the agenda. No meeting attendees offered additional comments.

Under "Open Discussion and Announcements," Ms. Landholm announced that the next meeting of the East Alabama Rural Planning Organization's District Policy Committee meeting for the Central District is scheduled to be held on Thursday, September 20, 2007. She suggested that the meeting continue to be held at the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, since it is fairly centrally located and has a large meeting room. No alternative meeting locations were offered at that time.

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