

**EAST ALABAMA RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MEETING MINUTES
DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE & TECHNICAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE for the NORTHERN DISTRICT
November 12, 2009 – 1:30 p.m..
Cherokee County Administration Building – Centre**

Policy Committee Members in Attendance:

Mayor Ethel Sprouse, Town of Cedar Bluff
Mayor Tony Wilkie, Town of Centre
Commissioner Perry W. Gwin, Etowah County
Mayor Edward Mackey, Town of Leesburg
Mr. Johnny L. Harris, ALDOT 1st Division

Technical Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

Mr. Corey Chambers, Cherokee County
Mr. Robert Nail, Etowah County

Other Attendees:

Mr. Herb Sherwin, Town of Cedar Bluff
Ms. Luanne Hayes, Cherokee County
Mr. Scooter Hall, Cherokee County Park Board
Mr. Ben Thackerson, ALDOT 1st Division
Ms. Dawn Landholm, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission
Ms. Stacey Browning, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Commissioner Perry Gwin, acting as Chairman, called the meeting to order at approximately 1:35 p.m.

Under “Old Business,” Commissioner Gwin asked if there were any corrections to the minutes from the meeting in July. Mr. Johnny Harris moved that the minutes be approved as presented. Mayor Edward Mackey seconded the motion, which was approved by a unanimous vote of the committee.

Also under “Old Business,” Ms. Dawn Landholm gave an explanation of how the RPO works for the many newcomers present. She explained both the policy and technical advisory committees. She also described the consultation process, and mentioned to those present that if they want information about specific programs the RPO could put together a presentation for them.

Under “New Business,” it was determined that enough members were present to hold nominations and elections for a new Chairman and Vice Chairman. Commissioner Gwin opened the floor for nominations for Chairman of the Policy Committee. Mayor

Ethel Sprouse nominated Mayor Tony Wilkie, who accepted the nomination. Mayor Edward Mackey moved to close nominations. With no opposition, Mayor Wilkie was elected the new Chairman of the Policy Committee. Commissioner Gwin opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chairman. Mayor Sprouse nominated Mayor Mackey for the position of Vice Chairman, which he accepted. Nominations were closed, and with no opposition, Mayor Mackey was elected Vice Chairman of the Policy Committee.

Commissioner Gwin opened nominations for Chairman of the Technical Committee. Corey Chambers was nominated for Chairman, and Robert Nail for Vice Chairman. Each was elected to the respective offices.

Also under "New Business," Mr. Johnny Harris gave an update on ALDOT's current projects in the district. Mr. Harris provided a chart of current projects, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Mr. Harris mentioned that a resurfacing project in Ellisville is complete, and that a widening of SR 273 has been delayed for environmental reasons. The widening and resurfacing of SR 9 will be completed in spring of 2010. The US 411 bypass of Leesburg is complete. ALDOT is looking to conduct a corridor study on SR 25/US 411 to the Georgia line sometime around 2011. A bridge replacement on SR 68 over the railroad tracks will occur in 2010. For a bridge replacement on US179 in Etowah County, the field work is done and the environmental work will be starting soon. ALDOT will also be looking to buy right of way for this project soon.

Mayor Mackey mentioned that Leesburg has a \$475,000 project for which they have obtained a letter to proceed. This project is related to a proposed 30,000 square foot by PEMCO.

After determining that there was no further new business, Commissioner Gwin asked Ms. Landholm to move on to the "Special Program" portion. Ms. Landholm turned this portion over to Ms. Browning to discuss the National Rural Peer Learning Transportation Conference.

The "special program" was a review of information obtained by Ms. Browning and Ms. Landholm at the National Rural Peer Learning Conference in Savannah, Georgia. A copy of the handout "Lessons from the National Rural Peer Learning Conference" is attached to these minutes. Ms. Browning discussed the Livable Communities Initiative, a federal program that emphasizes access to affordable housing and transportation. She then discussed regional livability, in which the issues of sustainability and livability were applied to a region rather than a community. Regions looked at upcoming projects that would influence growth and determined how they wanted that growth to happen. Ms. Browning then discussed corridor studies, specifically the study undertaken by Northwest Alabama on US 72. A land use, access management, and mobility study was conducted, and accessibility was found to be a key to the region. Economic development was seen as vitally important, and scenarios were developed. Ms. Browning discussed transit planning and the ways in which Georgia's transit development plans emphasize finding where populations that need transit live. In the

discussion of Transportation Authorization, Ms. Browning discussed the fuel tax, funding for transit, and smart growth.

Ms. Landholm discussed the Alabama Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan, and elaborated on how human services and transit funding can be combined. She mentioned that the plan emphasizes the better use of existing transit. She also discussed how the Plan was created and how transit dependent populations were identified. There was some discussion on the transit systems in the region. Ms. Landholm discussed access management, and she mentioned that a model access management ordinance had been started and would soon be revisited. She discussed how access management became an issue to the EAC because the southern portion of the region along Highway 280 was worried about growth making the area look more like Highway 280 in Shelby County. The ordinance would provide communities with menu-like options from which they could pick and choose which ones would work for their specific needs. She also mentioned that ALDOT in Montgomery had been working on access management as well. At this point, Mr. Harris mentioned that ALDOT would like to create access management plans along major corridors in the state. Commissioner Gwin said that he believes access management will become a greater and greater issue. Ms. Landholm discussed the extension of SAFETEA-LU and transportation authorization bills. She mentioned the conflicts that are occurring in Congress concerning the authorization.

Under "Open Discussion and Announcements," Commissioner Gwin mentioned that the next RPO meeting would be on January 14, 2010 in Gadsden at 1:30 p.m. Ms. Landholm also mentioned that there would be a meeting about re-districting sometime in April or May. Mr. Corey Chambers mentioned that there were a few safety projects in Cherokee County that were being completed that day. After this, Mayor Wilkie made a motion to adjourn, and the meeting was adjourned.