

**EAST ALABAMA RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MEETING MINUTES
DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE - NORTHERN DISTRICT**

*July 19, 2007 - 1:00 p.m.
Gadsden Senior Activity Center - Gadsden*

Members in Attendance:

Commissioner Perry Gwin, Etowah County Commission
Honorable Autry Works, Town of Walnut Grove
Mr. Johnny Harris, ALDOT Division 1
Mr. Bill Curtis, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Other Attendees:

Commissioner Willie F. Brown, Etowah County Commission
Commissioner Jeff Overstreet, Etowah County Commission
Mr. Curtis Vincent, ALDOT Division 1
Mr. Lynn Wood, ALDOT Division 1
Mr. Tim Graves, Etowah County Commission
Ms. Dawn Landholm, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Commissioner Perry Gwin, 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 Northern District. Commissioner Gwin noted that some of the people at this meeting had not attended the kickoff meeting in March and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Under "Old Business", Commissioner Gwin asked if there were any corrections to the minutes from the March 8, 2007 meeting. Mayor Autry Works made a motion that the minutes be adopted as presented. Mr. Johnny Harris 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 30th, 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," Commissioner Gwin asked for reports of officers, staff, and/or committees. Ms. Dawn Landholm informed the Committee that the Alabama Department of Transportation has hired a consulting firm, Carter-Burgess, to prepare the Statewide

Transportation Plan and a computer model that analyses current and projected future traffic flows. The Statewide Transportation Plan presents a long-range view of major transportation improvements that may need to be made throughout the state. Carter-Burgess conducted a public meeting on the plan in Anniston on July 10, 2007. Several people from East Alabama and other regions attended. There will be two more rounds of meetings during the plan preparation process, and RPO members can view reports on plan progress and some of the plan's elements on ALDOT's website, which is located at www.dot.state.al.us. The website also has a mechanism for submitting comments on the plan.

Ms. Landholm then 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.

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. 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 data table. Ms. Landholm explained that Etowah County's data is broken into Urban, Transitional, and Rural. Etowah County's RPO members only need to address data for the Transitional and Rural areas. Mr. Meinrad Tabengwa, with the Gadsden-Etowah 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.

Commissioner Gwin asked if other persons have business with and/or reports for the Committee. Mr. Johnny Harris reiterated the desire for local officials, staff and residents to review and comment upon the Statewide Transportation Plan. He added 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.

Mayor Works asked how much influence local input will have on the Statewide Transportation Plan or the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. Mr. Harris stated that the State is particularly interested in local input on potential industrial access, safety, and transportation enhancement projects. Ms. Landholm stated that it is her understanding that transportation enhancement application packets have been mailed to each local government and advised local governments to look for an announcement of the workshop date. Mr. Bill Curtis reminded Committee members that the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission has staff available to help prepare industrial access road and transportation enhancement grant applications and who can administer the grant if the local government so chooses.

Mr. Tim Graves announced that Etowah County received \$66,000 in the 2007 fiscal year for safety projects. He asked about the types of projects on which the county can expend those funds. Mr. Harris stated that the fund can be used to address safety problems, such as adding a turn lane, improving the turning radius at an intersection, striping.

There were no motions or resolutions.

Under "Other New Business," Ms. Landholm asked if anyone present had safety projects they would like to have included in the RPO's safety report to ALDOT. Commissioner Gwin and Mr. Graves stated that they would like to submit either improvements to existing roads or construction of a new road off Lookout Mountain. Presently, there are only four ways for people who live atop the mountain (the mountaintop is a plateau) to access other parts of the county: Tabor Road, which runs north and south; Glen Gap Road, which is very steep, has switchbacks, and is not paved; and Keener Gap Road, which is paved but is in poor condition due to heavy traffic. This limited access to other parts of the county presents many problems. For example, school children who live on Lookout Mountain have to ride a bus for up to 1-1/2 hours. Some of them are not able to attend the school that is closest to them because there is no direct route between their homes and that school. Another example is slow emergency service delivery to Lookout Mountain homes and businesses, as emergency vehicles have to take indirect routes to the scene of an emergency on the mountain.

Mr. Graves stated that he also would like to see improvements to accident reporting, to get better data on areas where safety may be an issue. City police respond to accidents in the portion of their police jurisdiction that is outside the city limits, but—because of reporting requirements—those accidents are not included in the City's reports to the State. County staff and the RPO need access to accident data for the entire rural portion of the county, including the Cities' police jurisdiction.

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 distributed copies of a special presentation about the Transportation Enhancement grant program that Mr. William “Dee” McDaniel had prepared for the Central and Southern District Policy Committee meetings. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes. Committee members may review this presentation at their leisure.

Commissioner Gwin 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 Northern District is scheduled to be held on Thursday, September 13, 2007. Judge Melvyn Salter, co-chair, had requested that meetings alternate between Etowah and Cherokee Counties. Ms. Landholm will consult with him on a location and time for that meeting and include that information in the meeting mailing. The meeting will be held in the afternoon and be timed so that RPO Committee members who also serve on the Gadsden-Etowah MPO (which meets that morning) will have time to attend that meeting, eat lunch, and travel to Cherokee County.

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