

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

*July 30, 2008 - 1:00 p.m.  
Gadsden Senior Center – Gadsden*

Members in Attendance:

Mr. Perry Gwin, Etowah County Commission  
Mayor Autry Works, Town of Walnut Grove  
Mr. Johnny L. Harris, ALDOT 1<sup>st</sup> Division  
Mr. Bill Curtis, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (represented by Ms. Dawn Landholm)

Other Attendees:

Mr. Patrick Hall, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission  
Ms. Dawn Landholm, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Mr. Perry Gwin, acting as Chairman, called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 p.m.

Under “Old Business”, Mr. Gwin asked if there were any corrections to the minutes from the previous meeting. Mayor Autry Works moved that the minutes be adopted as presented. Mr. Johnny L. Harris seconded the motion, which was passed by a unanimous vote of the committee.

There was no other old business.

Under “New Business”, Mr. Gwin stated that he had no report.

Mr. Patrick Hall and Ms. Dawn Landholm gave the staff report. They informed the Committee that they would be presenting a summary of the Access Management Workshops, which were held in June of 2008, and they would be attending this year’s National Association of Development Organizations conference on rural transportation planning in Duluth, Minnesota.

Mr. Johnny Harris, of ALDOT’s 1<sup>st</sup> Division, gave an update on ALDOT’s right-of-way planning and acquisitions in Etowah and Cherokee Counties. A bridge replacement on AL 179 at Cove Creek is slated for the first quarter of 2009. The extension of Interstate 759 is currently being planned, with the environmental impact studies being reviewed by the Federal Department of Transportation. The right-of-way for SR 77 will be acquired, and the reconstruction of that road will also begin during the 2009 fiscal year. Interstate 59 will be rehabilitated north of SR 77 to the Etowah-DeKalb County line; resurfacing of US 411 from the St Clair County line to Rainbow City will begin in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Hall asked about budget issues resulting from higher gas prices and less fuel being purchased by the driving public. Mr. Harris commented that there would be budget problems. The Federal Government has rescinded several millions of dollars from the transportation budget, which impacts the State budget. Reduced collection of gas taxes also affects money available for local matches. ALDOT has been taking measures to reduce its own costs, including the reduction of fuel costs for itself, which have soared over the past year. Mr. Harris indicated that he did not believe any of the projects in the 5 year plan would be dropped due to budget shortfalls (e.g. the extension of I-759, reconstruction of SR 77, paving of US 411). The projects most likely to be eliminated will be the smaller projects on lower volume roads.

A discussion about automobile manufacturers locating in and around the region ensued. There was general consensus that the Gadsden area would benefit more from a Volkswagon plant in Chattanooga than in Limestone County/the Huntsville area, as there is better access via I-59 to Chattanooga than to Huntsville via US 431.

Mayor Woks thanked Mr. Harris, once again, for placing warning signs at a dangerous curve on US 278 where there had been a number of fatalities in a short period of time. There has not been an accident at that location since the signs were placed.

Under “motions and resolutions”, Ms. Landholm reminded the Committee about the discussion at the May meeting regarding changes to the Bylaws. She proposed two changes to the Rural Planning Organization’s structure. First, she suggested amending the bylaws to allow the District Policy Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee to meet concurrently. There are several advantages to doing so. Concurrent meetings would allow the mayors and county commission members to appoint staff who work on roads as their alternate representative without that person having to attend two separate meetings covering the same topics. In addition, these people with technical knowledge would be available to respond to questions the elected officials may have. Finally, meeting attendance—and, therefore, local government representation—should increase.

The second issue to address is the Citizens Advisory Committee. Very few people have been appointed to this committee. Ms. Landholm proposed eliminating the Citizen Advisory Committee. That section would be removed from the Bylaws, and the Citizen Participation Plan would be revised to call for periodic public forums to allow and encourage more citizen participation.

Ms. Landholm requested a motion recommending the changes to the Regional Policy Committee, if the Committee approves of the proposed modifications. Mayor Works moved that the Bylaw and Citizen Participation Plan amendments that Ms. Landholm proposed be recommended to the Regional Policy Committee. Mr. Harris seconded the motion, which was passed by a unanimous vote of the committee.

Under “other new business”, Mr. Gwin initiated a discussion about a newly formed committee dedicated to the preservation and responsible development of properties on and around Lookout Mountain Parkway. He listed a number of people who were members of the new organization, including Mr. Harris and Ms. Landholm.

Ms. Landholm asked the Committee to establish the next fiscal year's meeting schedule. The committee agreed to continue to meet on the same day as the Gadsden/Etowah County Metropolitan Planning Organization, with the next meeting on Thursday, November 13, 2008. The remaining meetings would occur in January, May, and July.

Ms. Landholm informed Committee members of the benefits of belonging to the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission's Joint Purchasing Association. So far, the Association has awarded bids on office supplies and on fuel, tires, and other automotive products.

Under "Special Programs", Mr. Hall gave a summary and a presentation based on the Access Management Workshops held in Anniston and Alexander City in June. The workshops were successful and well attended, and Mr. Hall hoped to see more local governments actively participate in access management. With good local participation and coordination, local access management ordinances could result in the creation of a statewide access management plan. Mr. Hall then directed the Committee to a handout of his presentation, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. This presentation detailed the regulatory and design options that could be used to further the goal of managing access along highways, roads, and streets. Specifically, the use of zoning and road design were highlighted.

No meeting attendees wished to be heard on matters not included in the agenda.

Under "Open Discussion and Announcements", Ms. Landholm announced that the next meeting of the East Alabama Rural Planning Organization's District Policy Committee for the Northern District is scheduled for Thursday, November 13, 2008 at 1:30 p.m. at the Cherokee County Administrative Center in Centre.

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