

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

*March 8, 2007 - 1:00 p.m.
Gadsden Senior Activity Center - Gadsden*

Members in Attendance:

Honorable Melvyn W. Salter, Cherokee County Commission
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:

Mr. Curtis Vincent, ALDOT Division 1
Mr. Tim Graves, Etowah County Commission
Mr. Meinrad Tabengwa, Gadsden-Etowah Metropolitan Planning Organization
Ms. Dawn Landholm, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission
Ms. Janet McCoy, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Mr. Bill Curtis welcomed everyone to this inaugural meeting of the East Alabama Rural Planning Organization's District Policy Committee for the Northern District. The Rural Planning Organization, also called an RPO, is a new endeavor that is funded by the Alabama Department of Transportation. The Federal government has mandated that States initiate some process that will engage rural officials in the transportation planning process, which is a privilege the urban areas have enjoyed for about three decades through the Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Other States have implemented an RPO process for their rural areas, and Alabama has followed suit, engaging the Regions in the process.

Mr. Curtis then asked attendees to introduce themselves.

After the introductions, Ms. Dawn Landholm presented a brief overview of the RPO's background, structure, and functions. A synopsis of her presentation is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Curtis added that, while the RPO will not be able to direct the State in allocating transportation funds in the rural areas, members may be able to alert ALDOT's Division Engineer to safety projects that require immediate attention. Identifying and prioritizing safety projects has been one of the key functions of the West Alabama RPO, which was the pilot for Alabama's RPO process. He asked Mr. Johnny Harris if he

wished to address the Committee. Mr. Harris stated that he had nothing to present to the Committee at this time.

The next item of business was election of officers. Ms. Landholm stated that there are two offices—Chair and Vice-Chair. Mr. Curtis added that, per the bylaws, officers must be an elected official. Nominations were opened for Chairman. Mayor Autry Works nominated Commissioner Perry Gwin for Chairman. Judge Melvyn Salter seconded the nomination. No other nominations were made, so the nomination process was closed. Commissioner Gwin was elected Chairman by a unanimous vote of the Committee. Nominations then were opened for Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Gwin nominated Judge Salter for Vice-Chairman. Mayor Works seconded the nomination. No other nominations were made, so the nomination process was closed. Judge Salter was elected Vice-Chairman by a unanimous vote of the Committee.

Attendance was not sufficient to conduct the next two items of business: selection of one mayor from each county to serve on the Regional Policy Committee; and establishing a quarterly meeting schedule. Mayor Works suggested that East Alabama Commission staff conduct conference calls with each county's mayors for selection of a mayor to represent the county on the Regional Policy Committee. Staff agreed. Judge Salter stated that he would contact Cherokee County mayors to encourage them to attend future District Policy Committee meetings and to alert them of the upcoming conference call. Judge Salter also asked if the meeting locations could alternate between Etowah and Cherokee Counties. All present felt that alternating the meeting location was a good idea.

Mr. Curtis noted that a Regional Policy Committee organizational meeting had been planned for March 21st at 10:00 a.m. at the East Alabama Regional Commission office in Anniston.

Under "comments/questions," Mr. Tim Graves asked how the RPO will affect the county's use of its transportation funds. Mr. Curtis stated that the RPO will only review and comment upon State transportation funding documents. Those documents only address State and Federal roadways, not County or Municipal roads. As stated previously, the RPO has no authority to allocate transportation funds. Ms. Landholm added that the County Engineers and Municipal Street Supervisors are welcome to utilize the RPO as a forum for input on their spending plans or to help meet any public participation requirements they have, if they wish to do so. They can give a presentation to whichever committees they wish. They just need to ask to be included on the agenda for those committees' meetings.

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