

**EAST ALABAMA RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MEETING MINUTES
DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE - SOUTHERN DISTRICT
March 9, 2007 - 10:00 a.m.
ALDOT Division 4 Office - Alexander City**

Members in Attendance:

Commissioner Charles Hardage, Chambers County Commission (represented by Mr. Don Hoyt)
Commissioner Unzell Kelley, Coosa County Commission
Commissioner Lathonia Wright, Randolph County Commission
Honorable Barbara Young, City of Alexander City (represented by Mr. Steve Morgan)
Honorable Lonnie Caldwell, City of Goodwater
Honorable Oscar Crawley, City of Lanett (represented by Mr. Jerry Thrower)
Honorable Henry (Spec) Bonner, City of Roanoke (represented by Mr. Tim Jacobs)
Honorable Arnold Leak, City of Valley (represented by Ms. Aimee Clark)
Mr. DeJarvis Leonard, ALDOT Division 4 (represented by Mr. Robert Norred)
Mr. Bill Curtis, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Other Attendees:

Mr. Don Hoyt, Chambers County Commission
Mr. Steve Morgan, City of Alexander City
Mr. Jerry Thrower, City of Lanett
Mr. Tim Jacobs, City of Roanoke
Ms. Aimee Clark, City of Valley
Mr. Bill Couch, ALDOT - Montgomery
Mr. Robert Norred, ALDOT Division 4
Mr. Daryl Howard, ALDOT Division 4, District __
Mr. Philip Grant, ALDOT Division 4, District __
Mr. Eric M. English, ALDOT Division 4, District __
Mr. Robert Camp, Jr., ALDOT Division 4, District __
Ms. Dawn Landholm, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Mayor Lonnie Caldwell, Vice-Chairman, requested that Ms. Dawn Landholm, RPO Program Coordinator, conduct the meeting. Ms. Landholm called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 p.m. She then welcomed everyone to this first business meeting of the East Alabama Rural Planning Organization's District Policy Committee for the Southern District. Ms. Landholm 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," Ms. Landholm asked if there were any corrections to the minutes from the March 9, 2007 meeting. Mr. Jerry Thrower made a motion that the minutes be adopted

as presented. Mr. Tim Jacobs 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,” Ms. Landholm asked for reports of officers, staff, and/or committees. Mayor Caldwell, Vice-Chair, stated that he had no report. Ms. Landholm stated that she would present her report after Mr. Robert Norred updates the Committee on current State projects.

Ms. Landholm asked if other persons have business with and/or reports for the Committee. Mr. Bill Couch gave the Committee members a brief overview of the purpose of the Rural Planning Organization. The RPO’s primary purpose is to be an avenue for improved communication between ALDOT and the local governments. It is ALDOT’s means of including the rural areas in a transportation consultation process, giving rural areas information about transportation initiatives planned for their areas and receiving input from representatives of the rural areas.

Mr. Couch then 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, and public hearings will be held in each ALDOT Division.

Mr. Don Hoyt asked if the local governments will be able to give input on road improvements they feel are a priority in their area. Mr. Couch responded that the RPO is a consultation process. Members can discuss needed road projects, but they are not able to determine which projects to include in the STIP.

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. Ms. Landholm is providing the draft data to the Committee members to help them prepare for the July 10th meeting and also will mail to all Committee members announcements of the July 10th 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. 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. 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.

Mr. Thrower stated that Chambers County anticipates rapid growth due to construction of the Kia plant in neighboring Troup County, Georgia. He asked how a long-range transportation plan will accommodate for the projected growth in Chambers County and in other fast-growing areas. Mr. Couch stated that, although the long-range transportation will only be updated once every five years, the computerized transportation model will be updated regularly. ALDOT will be able to determine from the model which areas may need more immediate attention.

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. No one had any safety projects to propose at that time.

Under "Special Programs," Ms. Landholm informed the Committee that Mr. Robert Norred, 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. Norred 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.

Mr. Thrower asked how local governments may obtain a copy of ALDOT's requirements for Transportation Enhancement projects. Mr. Norred stated that all information local governments need will be included in the application packets. Mr. Thrower asked whether a Transportation Enhancement project could be done in conjunction with a current DOT project. Mr. Norred stated that it could be done in addition to that project. Ms. Aimee Clark asked if Transportation Enhancement funds could be used to update an existing rail-trail. Mr. Norred stated that the funds could be used to further enhance an existing trail.

Ms. Landholm 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 East Alabama Rural Planning Organization District Policy Committee meeting for the Southern District is scheduled to be held on Thursday, September 27, 2007. She suggested that the meeting continue to be held at the ALDOT Division 4 office, 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.