

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

*May 8, 2008 - 1:30 p.m.
Cherokee County Administrative Center – Centre*

Members in Attendance:

Honorable Melvyn Salter, Cherokee County
Mayor Phil Powell, City of Centre
Mayor Ed Mackey, Town of Leesberg
Mayor Autry Works, Town of Walnut Grove
Mr. Johnny L. Harris, ALDOT 1st 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

Judge Melvyn Salter, acting as Chairman, called the meeting to order at approximately 1:30 p.m.

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

Ms. Dawn Landholm reminded Committee members that, in previous meetings, she had asked for Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) member appointments. She suggested that, since few appointments have been made, the District Policy Committee (DPC) and the TAC meet together. Doing so would have many advantages:

1. the Mayors who have not been able to attend meetings could appoint a TAC member as their alternate representative;
2. TAC members who are alternate representatives would not be required to attend two meetings; and
3. DPC members would be able to ask technical questions of the TAC members without having to channel questions and answers through the program coordinator.

Some other regional commissions have taken this action, and Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) staff in Montgomery have expressed their approval of actions that will help increase participation and region-wide representation in the consultation process, as long as it meets federal requirements.

Furthermore, as with our region, some other regional commissions have been having difficulty obtaining Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) appointments and/or participation. The regions that do have citizen committees have difficulty getting citizens to participate unless there is a problem they want to discuss. ALDOT staff have allowed the regional commissions to include the public in the consultation process in the way that works best in each region. Ms. Landholm suggested that the DPC consider abandoning the formal CAC structure and periodically hold open-invitation public meetings. For example, when the draft Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is available for public review, each county could make its section of the STIP available for public review, then the RPO could conduct county-by-county meetings to obtain citizen input. These meetings would be coordinated with ALDOT's public review activities.

The proposed changes will require an amendment to the Bylaws, which Ms. Landholm will present to the Committee at the next meeting for its review and recommendation to the Regional Policy Committee.

There was no other old business.

Under "New Business", Judge Salter stated that he had no report.

Mr. Patrick Hall, under staff reports, announced that the East Alabama RPO and the Calhoun Area Metropolitan Planning Organization had organized an Access Management Workshop. The workshop will be held in two locations: on June 11th at the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce in Anniston; and on June 13th at the Betty Carol Graham Technology Center on the Central Alabama Community College campus in Alexander City.

Mr. Johnny Harris, of ALDOT's 1st Division, then updated the Committee about the status of transportation projects that are underway or programmed for Cherokee and Etowah Counties. These projects, which are listed in the State's Five Year Plan, included:

- Paving contract for Highway 411 has been signed, and construction will start this summer.

- Progress has been made on the PEMCO industrial access road in Leesburg, but the contractor needs to submit an environmental impact statement for a small stream in the construction area.
- Airport Road will be paved this summer.
- Access to Gadsden State Community College will be improved as well.

Discussion about these projects ensued.

There were no motions or resolutions or other new business.

Under “Special Programs”, Mr. Hall gave a brief presentation on “access management”, explained how the workshops to be held in June will expand upon the information being presented today, then played a short video entitled “Access Management is Good for Business”. The accompanying primer that covers the information in the video presentation which is attached to these minutes.

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

Under “Open Discussion and Announcements”, there was a brief discussion of the newly established Alabama Scenic River Trail, extending from East Alabama into the Gulf of Mexico. The Alabama Power Company and the US Army Corp of Engineers both provide easy portages around their nine dams along the River Trail. The official opening of the River Trail begins in Georgia, and crosses the state line on the Coosa River on Sunday, May 18th. On June 6th, the participating boaters are to reach Montgomery for the “grand opening” of the River Trail, and Mobile Bay by June 9th.

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, July 10, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. in Gadsden. The location will be announced.

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