

**EAST ALABAMA RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION
MEETING MINUTES
DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE & TECHNICAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE for the CENTRAL DISTRICT**

February 17, 2011

East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission – Anniston

Policy Committee Members in Attendance:

Mayor Steve Baswell, Town of Ohatchee
Mr. Bill Curtis, EARPDC
Mayor Anna Berry, City of Heflin
Mayor Charles Merkel, Town of Oak Grove
Ms. Donna Matthews, City of Lineville
Mayor Gene Robinson, City of Anniston
Judge Ryan Robertson, Cleburne County
Mayor Brian York, City of Talladega

Technical Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

Mr. William D. McDaniel, ALDOT 4th Division
Mr. DeJarvis Leonard, ALDOT
Mr. Shannon Robbins, Cleburne County
Mr. Jeremy Butler, Clay County

Other Attendees:

Mr. Jack Plunk, Calhoun Area MPO
Ms. Stacey Browning, EARPDC

Mayor Brian York, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 1:05 p.m.

Under “Old Business,” Mayor York asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the previous meeting on November 18, 2010. Ms. Browning mentioned that there was an error on the first page of the minutes, and that she would correct it. Mayor Merkel made a motion to approve the corrected minutes. Mr. Leonard seconded the motion. The minutes, with the change, were approved.

There was no other old business, so Mayor York moved on to “New Business.” Ms. Stacey Browning gave a staff report on surface transportation authorization, which has been extended to March 4th. Ms. Browning provided a handout, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Mr. Leonard mentioned that funding has been continued until March 4th as well, and that after that funding may be cut off if there is not a new bill or another extension. This would only affect upcoming projects, not projects that are already underway. Ms. Browning mentioned that she had read recently that Secretary LaHood is expecting a new bill to be ready by the fall. Mr. Leonard said that something would still

have to be passed to cover March 4th until the new bill is adopted. Ms. Browning also provided a handout detailing AASHTO's priorities for transportation in the coming year. AASHTO is primarily concerned with passing a long-term surface transportation authorization bill and finding transportation funding sources. Lastly, Ms. Browning mentioned a possible earmark ban being considered in Congress. Mr. Leonard mentioned that the earmark ban should not affect them because earmarks come out of an equity bonus fund that they already get. Mr. Curtis mentioned that he did not believe that a ban would not be enacted, but the proposed ban is simply a statement made by Republicans that they would not support earmarks. The new resolution or extension would not contain earmarks, nor would 2012 appropriations.

Ms. Browning then discussed the HUD Sustainability Grant recently awarded to the EARPDC. She told the attendees that the RPO will be where livability is discussed. She mentioned that at the last meeting, the details about the amount of the grant had been unclear. EARPDC was awarded \$555,000 to develop the CLEAR Plan 2030. She mentioned that HUD, EPA, and the DOT had formed the Partnership for Livability and developed the 6 livability principles that take into account housing, transportation, and economic development. She mentioned that the RPO members will be kept up to date on the process, and that they hoped to use the RPO as a resource for transportation especially. There will also be an implementation plan developed. After the CLEAR Plan is developed, the region will have preferred status for HUD grants, setting the region to receive funding in the future for implementation.

Mayor York moved on to ALDOT Update on Road Projects. Mr. William McDaniel provided a handout, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Mr. McDaniel mentioned first that part of Iron Mountain Road is now open. There are still a few projects on the open part that need to be done, such as striping and permanent guardrails. He mentioned that the Friendship Road resurfacing project in Oxford should be finished soon. The bridge replacement listed under Friendship Road is in the punchlist stage. The Roberts Drive improvements in Anniston were completed recently, as was the Roy Webb Road resurfacing. In Clay County, there are two Lineville projects that are about to be let. The City should be advertising for bidders soon. One of these is a Safe Routes to School project. Mr. Leonard asked Mr. McDaniel to discuss the SRTS letting process, as it has changed recently. Mr. McDaniel mentioned that ALDOT used to be able to let project locally, but there was a change that meant these projects could only be let by the State until a manual is developed for sponsors to let the projects. However, Lineville and Auburn have both been able to let projects locally because they were tied to an enhancement project. Mr. Leonard mentioned that any SRTS projects not let before March of this year have been moved to March of 2012 in order that the projects may be constructed during the summer while students are out.

There was some discussion about rescissions and the gas tax. Mr. Robbins asked about a thermoplastic shortage, mentioning that Cleburne County had had some problems because of it. Mr. McDaniel mentioned that he thought the shortage was over now.

Mr. McDaniel mentioned two Ashland projects that are under design. The City should advertise for bidders in about two or three months. He mentioned that ALDOT had received the project manual for Phase II of Heflin's streetscape project this week. In Cleburne County, the CR 36/CR 23 widening and resurfacing projects were complete recently, as was the CR 13 resurfacing project. The industrial access project north of the Bowater plant in Talladega County is under construction. In Lincoln, Phase I of a sidewalk project is almost complete. Phase II of that project will be overseen by the county. In Talladega, Phase II has started on various city street improvement projects.

Mr. Leonard moved on to US/State projects. He mentioned that part of the Anniston Eastern Bypass is open, and seems to be doing well. Another part of the bypass is under construction. He mentioned that the I-20 project in Calhoun County is under construction, and eventually there will be a traffic change. The AL 21 access management project is set to be let in May. The project on I-20 from Snow Creek to east of exit 188 should be finished about the same time as the large I-20 project.

In Talladega County, the AL 77 resurfacing project needs some curb and gutter work. The US 280 project through Oak Grove is awaiting final striping. The Talladega bypass is under construction. They are anticipating that project moving quickly. AL 21 is a project that will be coming up. They have been putting this project off, to await another larger project. This is a funding issue. They are breaking it up into two phases. They will eventually replace a bridge on this project. Mr. Leonard mentioned that the AL 148 project in Clay County is being worked on; he is not sure if it will let this year or not. In Cleburne County, the I-20 rehab is under construction. APAC is the prime contractor on this and the other I-20 rehab project. There should be activity on the second I-20 project soon. On I-20 from AL 9 to the Georgia line, the design is underway. They will be reinforcing concrete and adding lanes. This is an \$81 million project.

Mayor Merkel asked a question about an exit off of Coldwater going toward Munford. Mr. Leonard said that this is the Priebe Mill project, which is a special appropriations project. There have been two public involvement meetings concerning this project. Mr. McDaniel mentioned that the county has not yet made a recommendation as to where the road will connect to 21. Hopewell Road will also be redone, and they are hoping to just have one intersection. This will provide access to Cheaha one way, and Munford the other way. Mr. Leonard mentioned that there is not really enough money for construction to go forward. Mayor Merkel mentioned that he thought this extra access will be good for the county. Mr. McDaniel mentioned that it would also be good for Munford.

Mayor York moved on to Update on County Road Projects from County Engineers. After determining that there were no updates, he moved on to Other New Business, and then on to Open Discussion and Announcements. He mentioned the next meeting date as May 19, 2011 at 1:00 pm. Ms. Browning made an announcement that this would be her last RPO meeting, as she is leaving the EARPDC. After this, the meeting was adjourned.

Surface Transportation Authorization extended to March 4th

On December 22nd, 2011, Congress approved a bill to extend until March 4th appropriations for the U.S. Department of Transportation and other government agencies as well as the authorization for federal highway and transit programs.

After clearing the Senate earlier in the day, the House of Representatives voted to pass the continuing resolution (HR 3082) extending government funding and surface transportation authorization to March 4. President Barack Obama signed the measure into law December 22nd. Government funding had expired December 21st, while temporary authorization for highway and transit programs had been scheduled to lapse December 31st.

The measure maintains Fiscal Year 2010 funding for most government programs through March 4th. Congress did not complete any of the dozen appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2011, which began October 1st. When the House previously voted on the continuing resolution December 8th, it included language to extend appropriations and surface transportation authorization through the end of the fiscal year (September 30th). That timetable was shortened by the Senate, however, after there were not enough votes to move forward on a full-year omnibus appropriations package.

This stopgap measure is the sixth short-term extension of the 2005 surface transportation authorization law known as "SAFETEA-LU," which originally expired September 30, 2009.

AASHTO Presents Top 10 Transportation Issues for the New Year

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials has compiled a list of the top 10 distinct and pressing transportation issues that loom at the local, state, and federal levels as 2011 begins. Congressional enactment of a long-term surface transportation reauthorization measure tops the list.

"We are urging Congress to write a balanced bill this year that meets the needs of preservation and new capacity, meets the needs of rural and urban America, and meets the needs for highways as well as transit," said John Horsley, AASHTO's executive director. "If we get a bill passed with these elements, we have a shot of meeting the country's needs."

He said it is important to remember that for every dollar that Americans do not spend today to preserve highways, it will cost the nation \$7 in rehabilitation costs five years from now.

"President Obama wants exports to lead our national economic recovery," Horsley said. "But you can't move goods competitively to markets without a solid aviation, water, and rail system. If we let those systems decline further, we won't be able to sustain that export-led growth. Bottom line: it's vital to the national economic recovery to have a world-class transportation system."

Here's a look at the top 10 transportation topics that AASHTO believes will be part of the national conversation in 2011:

- 1. Enacting a Long-Term Transportation Bill That Will Keep America Moving:** In 2010, there was a lot of talk about the need for a new long-term transportation bill. But in the end, Congress opted for a short-term extension until March 4 of the existing law. Rep. John Mica, R-Florida and the new chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, has said he would like a new bill ready for consideration in the spring. Short-term extensions can create difficulties for state departments of transportation that must juggle major, multi-year public-works projects such as reconstructing bridges or interchanges. In addition, these projects require that states have secure, long-term financing before any contracts can be signed. A multitude of associations, states, counties, cities, businesses, and highway users will continue to work to ensure that a balanced, long-term, and multi-year surface transportation reauthorization bill is adopted in 2011.
- 2. Paying for the Transportation System We Need:** Although the need to pass a long-term bill is a significant priority for the country, the question often comes back to how we pay for it at the federal, state, and local levels. Many states are facing severe cutbacks in funding used to match the federal contribution, compounding the overall problem. Work is expected to continue in this Congress to adopt a series of sustainable funding sources for transportation infrastructure; identify state and federal responsibilities for the funding of transportation; and create innovative financing options such as infrastructure banks, public/private partnerships, or subsidized bonding programs.

3. **Ensuring Safer Roads:** Deaths from traffic collisions dropped significantly in 2010. As the economy turns around and the number of miles Americans drive continues to increase, keeping our roads safe will be an ongoing challenge. In 2010, much of the emphasis from the U.S Department of Transportation and state DOTs focused on distracted driving. These efforts will continue. But in 2011, transportation agencies will have a chance to join with a national roadway safety effort -- Toward Zero Deaths -- intended to eliminate roadway fatalities completely. Toward Zero Deaths will be unveiled in 2011. It will take a comprehensive approach that combines aspects of new technology, roadway design, law enforcement, and cultural change to achieve this goal.
4. **Moving on High-Speed Rail Grants:** State DOTs are working closely with railroads, Amtrak, and the Federal Railroad Administration to deliver on \$8 billion in investment in high-speed and intercity passenger rail included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 as well as another \$2.5 billion allocated to state programs in 2010 by federal appropriations. States and their contractors are gearing up to begin work on an unprecedented level of investment in our nation's passenger rail system. Whether it is establishing a right of way for a new high-speed rail line, improving or expanding an existing intercity passenger rail line, or developing standards for rail cars that will boost American manufacturing, states are building passenger rail aimed at generating more convenient options for travelers.
5. **Bringing Modernization and New Technologies to Our Transportation Network:** 2011 could mark the beginning of the era of smart cars, smart roads, and smart construction. More smart cars on the road will help increase safety for all of us. And with new "whiz-bang" technologies using specialized materials, updated techniques, and innovation, road builders and the transportation construction industry will be able to speed up construction, reduce costs, and increase safety. The sixth edition of AASHTO's publication "A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets" -- popularly known as the "green book" and the bible of transportation engineering -- will be published early this summer. In addition, the next generation of air-traffic controls -- based on global-positioning satellite technology instead of radar -- will smooth air travel.
6. **Moving Freight to Keep Our Communities More Competitive in the Global Economy:** Grain grown in Nebraska moves by truck to a nearby railhead in Kansas, where it is loaded and sent to a barge floating down the Mississippi River. Once at the Port of New Orleans, it is sent to countries around the globe, part of an integrated system that depends on a well-functioning transportation system. Problems such as too-narrow country roads; congested freeways; old, worn-out levees; and ports with limited access pose significant challenges to our economic future. With the widening of the Panama Canal by 2014, ports along the eastern seaboard and in the Gulf of Mexico are gearing up to serve larger ships. That, in turn, will cut container shipment time from Asia to the eastern United States, while placing new burdens on the existing and aging transportation system. 2011 could also be the year in which the United States adopts a national multimodal freight plan.
7. **Increasingly Assertive Environmental Regulations:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is proposing more stringent rules to control stormwater from

transportation sources. Other regulations addressing air quality and other transportation-related issues are also expected in the year ahead, adding new challenges and financial pressures on construction, maintenance, and preservation. State DOTs are looking closely at their existing programs and many are instituting promising practices to address these new challenges.

8. **Social Media Continues to Rock the Transportation World:** The Nebraska Department of Roads created a YouTube video that features some of its recent transportation construction projects set to original guitar licks. Washington State DOT has more than 12,000 Twitter followers. Fifteen states and 24 metropolitan areas along the Interstate 95 Corridor participate in the website www.i95travelinfo.net, offering travel speed and congestion information to travelers. Social media has hit the state DOTs in a big way. "Know Before You Go," transparency, and information are the hallmarks of the new outreach, and drivers are clamoring for more. Ahead: more targeted use of social media, with better communication and information being the end result.
9. **New Support Systems to Bolster Renewable and Reliable Energy Sources:** With the advent of electric vehicles, charging stations will begin to pop up where vehicles park to allow the driver to connect to the U.S. electricity grid. AASHTO is working with the Pew Center on Global Climate Change on a project to integrate plug-in electric vehicles with that grid. Elsewhere in the transportation sector, opportunities to support energy and climate goals include vehicle technology, alternative fuels, transportation system operation, driver behavior, and reducing travel demand.
10. **Wrapping Up Recovery Act Projects -- What's Next?:** The Federal Highway Administration has reimbursed state and local governments almost \$17 billion for thousands of projects completed under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Seventeen states have spent at least 80% of their recovery act allocations. That leaves two questions: With no additional federal funding coming to states for transportation projects, what's ahead for small (and large) transportation construction businesses and their workers in 2011? And how will state DOTs respond to their backlog of aging road, bridge, and transit projects? (Examples of state projects and more data regarding recovery act implementation are available from AASHTO at recovery.transportation.org.)

CRS: Earmark Ban Could Change How Highway & Transit Dollars Are Allocated

Earmark bans proposed in both chambers of Congress will not necessarily strip lawmakers' ability to influence how federal transportation dollars are used, and could boost attention given to the formulas used to distribute funds to state transportation departments and transit authorities, the Congressional Research Service said in a report released last week.

An earmark moratorium would primarily affect discretionary programs and could increase congressional scrutiny of how those funds are instead allocated by U.S. Department of Transportation officials, according to the CRS report, "Transportation Spending Under an Earmark Ban."

House Republicans, who took control of the chamber when the 112th Congress convened Jan. 5, have voted to disallow earmarks. Such a ban has not been adopted in the Senate, but Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin, D-Illinois, said last week that earmarks are unlikely in that chamber this session due to Republicans' opposition. At the end of the last Congress in December, the Senate did not act on a draft Fiscal Year 2011 spending bill with almost \$1 billion for more than 990 transportation earmarks. Congress instead passed an earmark-free bill continuing Fiscal Year 2010 spending levels until March 4th of this year.

Most transportation earmarks are for projects created by reauthorization legislation. Surface transportation authorization expired September 30, 2009, and has been continued six times on a short-term basis. The latest extension is set to expire March 4th. About 80% of transportation earmarks are written into authorization bills, BNA reported, while the remaining 20% are contained in annual appropriations measures.

"One alternative to earmarks would be more detailed legislative language to govern the allocation of funds," CRS states in the report.

Absent those guidelines, however, lawmakers still hold some powerful tools with which they can direct spending, according to the report. For example, there are forms of "soft" earmarks that appear to be allowed under the ban. While lawmakers could not write a bill providing funds for a specific project under an earmark ban, legislation can direct an agency to give priority to projects either from a certain area or on a certain highway.

Congress also could modify the formulas used to govern the majority of transportation spending to favor particular states, localities, or projects. About 80% of federal highway money and 70% of transit spending is disbursed to states via formulas written by Congress, CRS notes.

But the Equity Bonus program, written into the last surface transportation reauthorization known as "SAFETEA-LU" in 2005, "makes the impact of a ban on earmarks difficult to gauge," CRS states.

The program was designed to more evenly spread funds among all states, ensuring a minimum rate of return for each state's contribution to the Highway Trust Fund's Highway Account. If the

program is reauthorized, each state's share of funding might not be changed despite an earmark ban.

The 15-page CRS report is available at bit.ly/CRSearmarks. More information on the Equity Bonus program is available from the Federal Highway Administration at bit.ly/FHWAbonus.

Alabama Department of Transportation, Fourth Division
Status of County/City projects
East Alabama RPO (Central District) Meeting
February 17, 2011

Calhoun:

- **Old AL 202 widening (Industrial Park Entrance to US 78 past Bridgewater Industries)-punchlist items (City of Oxford)**
- **Iron Mountain Road improvements in old Ft. McClellan (Eastern Bypass to Pappy Dunn Blvd.)-under construction (Calhoun County, City of Anniston)-open to traffic, striping/rail items left**
- **Resurfacing section of Chief Ladiga Trail (City of Jacksonville)-(STIMULUS)-under construction**
- **Friendship Road resurfacing (AL 21 to Bolling Springs Road)-under construction**
- **Prickett Trail Bridge replacement-under construction (STIMULUS)**
- **CR 81 (Eulaton Road) bridge replacement-punchlist items (STIMULUS)**
- **Chief Ladiga Trail resurfacing (City of Piedmont)-awaiting FHWA authorization**
- **City of Jacksonville (various City streets resurfacing)-awarded to McCartney Const.**
- **Roberts Drive improvements (City of Anniston IA project)-COMPLETE**
- **Roy Webb Road (CR 19) resurfacing from Foster West Road to US 278 -COMPLETE**
- **Saks Road/Lenlock Lane intersection improvements-under design**
- **McIntosh Road improvements-under design**

Clay:

- **Lineville Streetscape, Phase III (City of Lineville)-ready for letting**
- **Safe Routes to Schools sidewalks along AL 9 (City of Lineville)-ready for letting (to be let in combination with TE sidewalks project)**
- **CR 7 resurfacing project-punchlist items (STIMULUS)**
- **CR 35 resurfacing-COMPLETE (STIMULUS)**

- **Ashland Streetscape-under design (Nelson & Co.)**
- **Ashland Square Sidewalk-under design (GM&C)**

Cleburne:

- **Heflin Streetscape, Phase II (City of Heflin)-under design**
- **CR 36 /CR 23 widening/resurfacing-COMLETE**
- **CR 13 resurfacing-COMLETE**

Talladega:

- **Industrial access into Childress Industrial Park from AL 235, (City of Childersburg)-under construction**
- **Lincoln Sidewalks (City of Lincoln)-under construction (STIMULUS)**
- **City street connector from existing RR crossing @ Lomar Drive to near Honda Drive (City of Lincoln)-Phase I under construction (to Campground Road), Phase II awaiting final documents (from Campground Road to Honda Drive)**
- **Improvements to various city streets (City of Talladega)-under construction**
- **Extension of Priebe Mill Road from Jenifer Road to AL 21-2nd Public Involvement Meeting held last month**
- **CR 2 resurfacing from CR 8 to US 280 in Childersburg-awarded to APAC**
- **East Highland School sidewalks (City of Sylacauga)-under construction**
- **Childersburg Revitalization (Including signals)-under design**

Alabama Department of Transportation, Fourth Division
Status of projects on US/State Routes
East Alabama RPO (Central District) Meeting
February 17, 2011

Calhoun:

- ***Anniston Eastern Bypass (base/pave) from 700 ft. N of Choccolocco to 1500 ft. S of Lake Yahoo-under construction (Open to traffic January, 2011)***
- ***Anniston Eastern Bypass from 1500 ft. S of Lake Yahoo to US 431 (grade/drain)-under construction (work continues on bridge over AL 21, culvert construction, and grading on Summerall Road connector)***
- ***I-20 widening/Intersection Improvements at AL 21 and bridge replacement (mp 182-185)-McCartney Const. is prime contractor, Solutia currently working at Snow Creek Rehab on outside shoulders on both roadways, and construction on bridge over AL 21 has begun***
- ***AL 21 Access Management from Plaza Lane to US 78- Encroachment due to work on bridge over AL 21***
- ***I-20 from MP 186 to MP 193-design underway***

Talladega:

- ***AL 77 from Choccolocco Creek to Calhoun County line-under construction (Awaiting curb and gutter work on westbound onramp)***
- ***US 280 resurfacing from Oak Grove to Coosa County line-awaiting final striping and punch list items (Waiting on supplemental for stripe removal on turn lanes near Pinecrest school)***
- ***AL 77 from AL 275 to AL 34 near Talladega-Accepted for maintenance on 11-19-2010***
- ***Talladega Bypass (base/pave)-Dunn Const. Is prime contractor. Work began at waste site near Nimitz Street. Waste site has been cleaned up. North of waste site crushed agg. has been placed and prime coat applied, south of waste site stabilizing layer has been placed.***
- ***AL 21 resurfacing from Sylacauga to Winterboro-scheduled for FY 2011 letting Same***

Clay:

- ***AL 148 resurfacing from Talladega line to CR 7-under design***

Cleburne:

- ***I-20 rehab from AL 46 to AL 9-APAC is prime contractor. EBR has been planed and upper binder placed. Planing has begun on WBR.***
- ***I-20 rehab from AL 9 to Calhoun line-APAC is prime contractor (let this month) Construction signs are in place.***
- ***I-20 from AL 9 to Georgia line-design underway***
- ***US 431 resurfacing from AL 9 to Calhoun line-letting scheduled for FY 2011***