

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

*October 11, 2007 - 1:30 p.m.*

*Cherokee County Administration Center - Centre*

*Members in Attendance:*

Honorable Melvyn Salter, Cherokee County Commission  
Commissioner Perry Gwin, Etowah County Commission  
Honorable Phil Powell, City of Centre  
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. Patrick Hall, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission  
Ms. Dawn Landholm, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Commissioner Perry Gwin, Chairman, called the meeting to order at approximately 1:30 p.m. He then welcomed everyone to this meeting of the East Alabama Rural Planning Organization's District Policy Committee for the Northern District. Ms. Dawn Landholm, who has been acting as the RPO's program coordinator, introduced Mr. Patrick Hall, who will be assuming the role of program coordinator. Mr. Hall began working at the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission in mid-August.

Under "Old Business", Commissioner Gwin asked if there were any corrections to the minutes from the July 19, 2007 meeting. Mayor Autry Works made a motion that the minutes be adopted as presented. Mr. Johnny Harris seconded the motion, which was approved by a unanimous vote of the Committee.

In "Other Old Business," Ms. 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, so both Committees can hold kickoff meetings. She also explained a new opportunity for the Rural Planning Organization. Heflin Mayor Anna Berry is the regional co-chair of the East Alabama Action Commission (EAAC), Governor Riley's new initiative. Several Northern District RPO members had attended the Governor's EAAC kickoff meeting at the end of August. The EAAC has four committees: Workforce Development, Education, Health, and Economic Development. Mayor Berry has requested the State's permission to add two new committees—Culture

and Tourism, and Infrastructure. Ms. Landholm has suggested to Mayor Berry that, in order to reduce duplication, the RPO's Technical and Citizens Advisory Committees be integrated into the Infrastructure Committee as a Transportation Subcommittee. The Chairs of the Technical and Citizens Advisory Committees are non-voting members of the District Policy Committee (DPC) and can report EAAC activities to the Policy Committee and bring back to their committees information from the Policy Committee. Keeping the DPC separate from the EAAC will enable local elected officials in our region—all of whom are automatically members of the RPO—to participate in other EAAC committees if they wish.

Under "New Business," Commissioner Gwin asked for reports of officers, staff, and/or committees. Judge Salter had no report. Ms. Landholm directed DPC members' attention to the draft 2008 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), a copy of which is attached to these minutes. As soon as the public review period is complete, ALDOT will issue a finalized STIP. The STIP contains a schedule of highway and transit projects for October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2011. ALDOT's website provides direction on how to submit comments during the public review period. ALDOT also is still accepting public input on the Statewide Transportation Plan, which Committee members may view on ALDOT's website.

Commissioner Gwin asked if other persons have business with and/or reports for the Committee. Mr. Johnny Harris reiterated the desire for local officials, staff and residents to review and comment upon the Statewide Transportation Plan and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

Under motions or resolutions, Ms. Landholm asked if anyone present had safety projects they would like to have included in the RPO's safety report to ALDOT. Since the final meeting of the 2007 fiscal year was postponed until October, she will include any new safety projects presented at this meeting in her FY2007 report. At the July meeting, Commissioner Gwin and County Engineer Tim Graves had previously recommended improvements to existing roads or construction of a new road off Lookout Mountain. Mr. Graves also had recommended improving accident reporting, to get better data on areas where safety may be an issue.

Mayor Works stated that U.S. Highway 278 has a dangerous curve right at the Etowah-Blount County line. Several fatal accidents have occurred there, as that curve was not constructed to accommodate vehicles traveling at highway speed. He suggested that, at a minimum, ALDOT erect signs and perhaps a guard rail to warn motorists to slow down.

Judge Salter stated that the County has applied for funds to construct an industrial access road that will give the PEMCO plant access to AL Highway 273. The present access road releases traffic onto AL Highway 68. PEMCO will be consolidating its business at the Leesburg plant, which will more than double truck traffic into and out of the site. The additional access road will help alleviate traffic on Highway 68 and improve safety with regard to turning movements.

Judge Salter made a motion that the resolution approving the safety projects be adopted with amendments to add the Highway 278 safety improvements and the PEMCO access road to the list of proposed projects. Mayor Works seconded the motion, which was approved by a unanimous vote of the Committee.

Under “Other New Business,” Ms. Landholm directed DPC members’ attention to a calendar that she had distributed. The calendar showed the Gadsden-Etowah Metropolitan Planning Organization’s meeting dates for the 2008 fiscal year. The DPC must meet once a quarter, and Mr. Harris has requested that the DPC meetings be scheduled to follow MPO meetings. The MPO meets only once during the third quarter, on May 8<sup>th</sup>. In the first quarter, the DPC must decide whether to meet on January 10<sup>th</sup> or March 13<sup>th</sup>. In the fourth quarter, the DPC must decide whether to meet on July 10<sup>th</sup> or September 11<sup>th</sup>. DPC members selected January 10<sup>th</sup> as the first quarter meeting date and July 10<sup>th</sup> as the fourth quarter meeting date. The meetings will continue to alternate between Cherokee and Etowah Counties.

Under “Special Programs,” Ms. Landholm informed the DPC members that she and Mr. Hall had attended a National Rural Transportation Peer Learning Conference in Chattanooga, Tennessee at the end of September. The conference was very informative. Mr. Hall will present information from the sessions he attended at this meeting, and Ms. Landholm will share her “lessons learned” at next quarter’s meeting.

Mr. Hall directed DPC members’ attention to the handout entitled “Intermodal Transportation: Planning for the Future,” a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Some of the key points to Mr. Hall’s presentation include:

- Shipping goods via multiple transportation modes (i.e., intermodal shipping) is expected to increase dramatically over the next 30 years.
- Increased congestion at major airports and on the nation’s highways, plus improvements at the Port of Mobile, will spur increased intermodal shipping within and through Alabama.
- Warehousing and intermodal transfer stations will become stronger economic engines, as will satellite airports to accommodate overflow from Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson Airport.
- Truck traffic across the nation and in Alabama is expected to grow tremendously by the year 2020.

Commissioner Gwin asked if anyone wished to be heard on matters not included in the agenda. No meeting attendees offered additional comments.

Mayor Powell stated that the Centre-Piedmont-Cherokee County Regional Airport has received funding to extend the runway. There was discussion that aircraft owners

from the Atlanta metro's northern and western suburban counties could utilize the airport, and in the future it could potentially serve as a general aviation reliever airport for that portion of the Atlanta metro area.

Under "Open Discussion and Announcements," Ms. Landholm announced that the next meeting of the East Alabama Rural Planning Organization's District Policy Committee meeting for the Northern District is scheduled to be held on Thursday, January 10, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. in Gadsden. The meeting notice will announce the specific location.

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