

**NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2024, AT 10:30 AM; *DRAFT***

ENTITY	MEMBER	PRESENT	PROXY
AVOCA	ROBERT WHITEHORN		
BELLA VISTA	DOUG TAPP TAYLOR ROBERTSON CHRIS BRACKETT	X X X	
BENTON COUNTY	JUDGE BARRY MOEHRING JOSH BEAM JAY FRASIER	X	
BENTONVILLE	DENNIS BIRGE DAN WEESE	X	
CAVE SPRINGS	MAYOR RANDALL NOBLETT	X	David Keck
CENTERTON	MAYOR BILL EDWARDS LORENE BURNS	X	
DECATUR	MAYOR BOB THARP		
ELKINS	MAYOR TROY REED		
ELM SPRINGS	MATT CASEY	X	
FARMINGTON	MELISSA McCARVILLE	X	
FAYETTEVILLE	JONATHAN CURTH CHRIS BROWN PAUL LIBERTINI	X X X	
GENTRY	MAYOR KEVIN JOHNSTON		
GRAVETTE	KURT MADDOX	X	Ami Murray
GREENLAND	MAYOR JIM RENFROW		
HIGHFILL	JEREMY JOHNSON		
JOHNSON	MAYOR CHRIS KEENEY		
LITTLE FLOCK	MAYOR JEFF VAN SICKLER	X	Nicole Gibbs
LOWELL	KAREN DAVIS	X	
PEA RIDGE	MAYOR NATHAN SEE	X	Jasmin Johnson
PINEVILLE	MAYOR GREG SWEETEN		
PRAIRIE GROVE	MAYOR DAVID FAULK		
ROGERS	JOHN MCCURDY QUINTON HARRIS LANCE JOBE	X X	
SILOAM SPRINGS	BEN RHOADS ( <b>VICE CHAIR</b> ) KEVIN MOORE	X	Maegan Thomas
SPRINGDALE	PATSY CHRISTIE ( <b>CHAIR</b> ) RYAN CARR	X X	
TONTITOWN	MAYOR ANGELA RUSSELL	X	Zak Johnson
WASHINGTON CO.	BRIAN LESTER SAM ATA JEFF CROWDER	X	Bridget Russell
WEST FORK	MAYOR HEITH CAUDLE		
WINSLOW	ANN MALKIE		
NWARPC	TIM CONKLIN	X	
BEAVER H2O DISTRICT	CODY HUDSON		
OZARK REG. TRANSIT	JOEL GARDNER		
RAZORBACK TRANSIT	ADAM WADDELL (GARY K. SMITH)	X	
U OF A	SCOTT TURLEY (JAY HUNEYCU TT)	X	Jay Huneycutt
McDONALD COUNTY	COMM. BRYAN HALL		
MoDOT	FRANK MILLER (MARVIN MORRIS)	X	
NWA NATIONAL AIRPORT	AARON BURKES	X	
ARDOT PLANNING AND DISTRICT 9	ANTHONY HUNTER SUNNY FARMAHAN ROBERT MOORE	X  X	Jason James

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**NWARPC STAFF:** Tim Conklin; Nicole Gibbs; Tim Reavis; Cristina Scarlat, Luke Aitken

**OTHERS:** Jarod Brightwell (Bentonville); Mark Latham (Tontitown); Andy Brewer (Olsson); Anna Stamps (CEI); Greg Weeks (Jacobs); Mayor Chris Moore (Lowell); Ben Peters (Springdale); Dustin Phy (Pea Ridge); Landon Miller & Mike Stengel (Michael Baker Intl.); Aaron Boehmler (Burns & McDonald); Kent Laughlin (Rogers); Truett Smith (FHWA); Kevin Beaumont (McClelland Consulting Engineers); and Doug Thompson (NWADG)

***NOTE: THIS MEETING WAS HELD IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY; VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION CONTINUES TO BE OFFERED AS NWARPC REMAINS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION***

**(1) CALL TO ORDER**

The in-person and virtual NWARPC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting was called to order by Chair Patsy Christie at 10:30 a.m.

**(2) ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS**

In-person attendees named themselves, with Tim Conklin naming the virtual attendees. Nicole Gibbs recorded member names and tallied votes. A quorum was reached.

**(3) APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 21, 2023, 2024 TAC MEETING MINUTES**

Patsy Christie asked the Committee whether there were any additions or corrections to the meeting minutes and hearing none, requested a motion to approve the March 21, 2024, TAC Meeting Minutes.

**MOTION: Dennis Birge made a motion to approve the March 21, 2024, TAC Meeting Minutes, seconded by Ryan Carr. The motion passed unanimously.**

**(4) FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR (FFY) 2025 NWARPC FUNDING PROGRAMS (STBGP-A, TAP, CRP) – Project Sponsor Presentations.**

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Tim Conklin explained the reasoning for the discussion being that NWA was designated in 2013 as Transportation Management Area, which allowed sub allocated federal funding to be distributed to the region. He said the NWARPC adopted a policy of funding regionally significant projects, primarily to support local and arterial roads, he also stated the program has awarded over \$160 Million to the region through the NWARPC to date.

Conklin said that while some funding from this program has been used to match state funds to improve state highways, the focus should remain on those local projects that improve our regional mobility network. Chair Patsy Christie emphasized that ARDOT should be primarily funding improvements to our state highway network and should be an active partner in any projects along state highways.

Nicole Gibbs provided background on the 24 applications for 19 different projects which were submitted by various member organizations for the FFY2025 STBGP-A/TAP/CRP program. She said there were 11 applications submitted for STBGP-A funding, totaling \$13.5 Million in requests, five new projects and six existing projects. There were six Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) applications submitted, totaling \$1.9 Million in requests, and seven Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) applications submitted, totaling \$2.5 Million in requests. Nicole stated that the total project funding requests were ~\$16.5 million, with 5 projects submitting projects for multiple funding programs.

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Bridget Russell from Washington County presented a funding proposal of \$200K for the Wheeler Road Bridge Improvements. She stated that this project was funded the same amount last year, and that the requested funds would be used to fund design and environmental work for widening and improving the safety of the Wheeler Road Bridge, which serves as an important alternative east to west connector during traffic congestion or emergencies.

Zak Johnson from the City of Tontitown presented a funding proposal of \$501K of STBGP-A funds for the US412/Klenc Road Signalization. He stated that this project was funded for \$360K in FFY 2021, and that the requested funds would be put toward construction work to add a traffic signal at the Klenc Road and US 412 Intersection which serves as the only route to the regional Waste Management landfill. Zak stated that the project's costs have inflated since it was originally proposed in 2020, which necessitated the need for a larger funding request this year.

Ryan Carr from the City of Springdale presented a funding proposal of \$2.8 Million of STBGP-A funds for the Apple Blossom Ave Improvement Project. This road is a key connector to the JB Hunt corporate campus, and the company plans to quadruple in size over the next two decades, which Carr states will increase transportation demand on Apple Blossom Ave. He stated that the City of Springdale, the City of Lowell, and JB Hunt Transportation have all agreed to contribute funds to this project, and that the funds from STBGP-A would be used for project design and environmental study.

Lance Jobe from the City of Rogers presented a funding proposal of \$37K for the HWY 265 & W Pleasant Grove Road Roundabout. He stated this project was previously awarded \$168K in funding in FFY 2022 and that this new request would continue to fund the project design and environmental studies necessary to move forward. Jobe also presented a funding proposal of \$50K for the HWY 265 & HWY 94/New Hope Rd roundabout, which received \$200K in FFY 2022. He said that the project designs thus far have shown the project costs for both projects have increased from the original estimates, exceeding the 2022 award amounts, which necessitates these requests.

Kent Laughlin from the City of Rogers presented a funding proposal of \$110K of TAP or CRP funds for a Sidewalk Gap Infill project along the HWY 94/US 71B/8<sup>th</sup> St corridor. He said the project is now under construction and will create critical connections with safe bike and pedestrian routes to multiple employment centers, schools, and community businesses. Rogers also plans to apply for ARDOT TAP funding for the project. He said the project has accrued additional costs due to changes in the scope related to a requirement for repaving driveways along the corridor. Laughlin also presented two other sidewalk gap infill project proposals, requesting \$700K in TAP funds or \$750K in CRP funds for construction of sidewalk along HWY 62/Hudson Road. This project was awarded \$300K in FFY 2023 and will connect many destinations along the Hudson Road corridor. He said Rogers is also requesting \$328K in CRP funds for the design and environmental study of a sidewalk infill project along the New Hope to Pleasant Grove Road section of the US 71B corridor. This is a new project that will also connect various communities to amenities and services such as the Railyard Park and multiple public schools.

Kevin Beaumont of McClelland Consulting Engineers, representing the city of Pea Ridge, presented a funding proposal of \$147K of TAP funds or \$165K of CRP funds for the construction of a Sidewalk Gap Infill project along the HWY 94/Pickens Road corridor. He stated that the small project would create a safer route to school by filling in a key sidewalk gap heading to the Pea Ridge school's campus, as there is currently not a complete sidewalk leading to the community's three schools.

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Kevin Beaumont of McClelland Consulting Engineers, representing the city of Lowell, presented a funding proposal of \$208K of TAP funds or \$390K of CRP funds for the construction of or right of way/utility costs associated with the Honeysuckle Street Sidewalk extension project. This project was previously awarded \$500K in FFY 2023, and includes the installation of Rapid Flashing Beacon Crosswalks and additional sidewalk on the north and south of Honeysuckle St. These new sidewalks will safely connect residents to nearby parks and places of worship.

Beaumont also presented a funding proposal of \$3.4 Million in STBGP-A funds for construction of a Razorback Greenway tunnel underneath HWY 264 in Lowell. This project was awarded \$404K in FFY 2024 for design and environmental studies and seeks to increase cyclist and pedestrian safety at this crossing which is heavily used by large trucks traveling to a truck stop just east of the intersection. There is discussion among Beaumont, Chair Patsy Christie, and Tim Conklin regarding project readiness, with Christie inquiring about how much additional right of way is required and Conklin inquiring about the overall project timeline. Beaumont stated that only a small portion of right of way is required to complete acquisition, and that he anticipates the project design to be finalized by the end of 2024.

Lastly Beaumont presented a funding proposal of \$504K in STBGP-A funds for the design of an expansion of HWY 264 from two to three lanes, from Bellview Road to N Goad Springs Road. Beaumont stated that the project is identified on the Lowell Master Streets Plan, and that the state police headquarters is located along the corridor, which conducts driving tests. Beaumont stated the state police have issues turning left from their building to access I-49, due to traffic congestion along HWY 264. There is discussion among Beaumont, Chair Patsy Christie, and Tim Conklin regarding project readiness, with Christie inquiring about the Karst recharge area's impact on the project, and Conklin inquiring about current ARDOT agreements or discussions around partnering with the City of Lowell to fund the project.

Chris Brown from the City of Fayetteville presented a funding proposal of \$650K in STBGP-A funds for the design of I-49 interchange improvements at Stephen Carr Memorial Dr. Brown stated that this interchange will be affected by a new interchange at Weddington Rd opening in the Fall, and that this is one of the last interstate interchanges needing improvements in Fayetteville.

Brown then presented a funding proposal of \$1.9 Million in STBGP-A funds for the construction of Millsap Road, College Ave, and N Hemlock St improvements. This project was awarded 1.6 million in STBGP-A funds by the commission to date. The improvements will include intersection improvements at College and Millsap and re-route Hemlock Street in order to tie it into a new mini roundabout on Sain St.

Brown also presented a funding proposal of \$500K in CRP funds for the construction of trail lighting along the new Ruppel Rd trail. He stated that lighting along the multiuse trail will make it more useful and safer for nearby residents commuting to nearby services and using the facility during the early morning and evening hours. Lastly, Brown presented a proposal to fund the construction of the Drake St trail connections project with \$500K in TAP funds. This project was awarded \$500K in FY 2024 by the commission and will connect almost two thousand new residents with access to the Drake Trail Connector, Cycle Track, and Razorback Greenway within ½ mile.

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Mayor Bill Edwards of the City of Centerton presented a funding proposal of \$227K in TAP and CRP funds for the construction of a city-wide sidewalk infill project. This project would fill in 13 identified sidewalk gaps to include 3 total miles of new sidewalk, which would connect residents to public services, such as schools and parks, and retail destinations near residential centers. The primary goal of the project is to connect existing infrastructure to create a continuous network of pedestrian facilities throughout Centerton.

Dennis Birge of the City of Bentonville presented a funding proposal of \$462K in STBGP-A funds for the acquisition of rights of way and relocation of utilities related to the Greenhouse Rd improvements project. This would include road widening, roundabout, the addition of sidewalks and side paths, multiple rapid flashing beacon crosswalks, and a below grade trail tunnel for cyclists. He stated that the project has received \$4.4 million of funding through the commission to date, and that the project should provide more safety for citizens, especially students at nearby schools, in both Bentonville and Centerton. Birge also presented a funding proposal of \$3 million in STBGP-A funds for the acquisition of rights of way and relocation of utilities related to the I-49 and NE J St Interchange. This new project is a partnership between the City of Bentonville and ARDOT, which will support ongoing expansions to the Crystal Bridges Museum, and the Walmart Home Office Campus, which Birge stated are both regionally significant developments that will drive traffic to North Bentonville.

Nicole Gibbs showed a list of possible Selection Committee members for the FFY 2025 STBGP-A/TAP/CRP Award cycle and asked attendees from each member jurisdiction that applied for funding, if they would like to serve on the committee. She stated that a doodle poll would be sent out to determine a date and time for the Selection Committee to meet and conduct site visits to the projects requesting funding, and that site visits and scoring would take place on the same day if possible. She said that the committee is on track to make a recommendation to TAC on May 16 which will proceed to RPC the following week on May 22 for a final decision.

**(5) FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2025 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP)**

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Tim Conklin explained the UPWP shows the day-to-day work tasks of NWARPC staff to complete projects and plans listed within the program. He said this amendment had a proposed public comment period held from April 8, 2024, to April 22, 2024, and the amendment will go to the RPC/Policy Committee on April 24, 2024 for final approval. He summarized the work tasks included in this year's UPWP, including comprehensive planning; community assistance; State DOT assistance; maintenance of regional GIS and maps; long range transportation planning; active transportation planning; and travel demand modeling. Conklin shared that the largest project for the next two years will be an update to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) to 2050, which will include three growth scenarios. He said NWARPC staff will have an increased focus on environment and resilience planning this coming year with regional ground-level ozone levels on the rise.

Patsy Christie asked whether there were any other questions or comments and hearing none, requested a motion to recommend sending the Draft Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to a two-week public comment period.

**MOTION: Mayor Chris Moore made a motion to recommend the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to the RPC/Policy Committee, seconded by Dennis Birge. The motion passed unanimously.**

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Chair Patsy Christie asked whether there were any questions or comments and there were none.

**(6) PROJECT AND OTHER UPDATES**

**A. FFY 2024 STBGP-A/TAP/CRP**

Tim Conklin introduced the item, shared the 2024 obligation plan, and noted the importance of jurisdictions staying on top of their projects receiving federal funding from FFY 2024. He said that some projects need to provide additional documentation of progress to ARDOT soon, to avoid any complications with funds reimbursement, and that ARDOT or NWARPC staff may reach out to cities over the next month for clarification.

**B. NWA Safety Action Plan, Phase 2 Update (USDOT-SS4A)**

Tim Conklin explained the FY24 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) application is now open, with the final deadline being May 16, 2024, for Implementation Grants:

- **May 16, 2024, 5 p.m. (EDT):** Sole deadline for Implementation Grants; Deadline #2 for Planning and Demonstration Grants.
- **August 29, 2024, 5 p.m. (EDT):** Deadline #3 for Planning and Demonstration Grants; NOFO closes.

Conklin said the Phase 2 Planning work will include the following:

- **Regional Complete Streets Design Guide**
- **5 Individual Community Safety Action Plans**
- **2 Systemic Safety Webinars**
- **2 Safety Demonstration Projects**
- **Communications and Outreach Tools**

Conklin encouraged communities to reach out if they have particular interest in doing any safety demonstration projects with the help of SS4A funding and Toole Design.

**C. Energy & Environment Innovation (EEI) Plan (EPA-CPRG)**

Nicole Gibbs provided a summary of recent efforts to form a Statewide Coalition and apply for the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Implementation Grant. She highlighted aspects of the program's structure that incentivizes coalition-building and said NWARPC has partnered with Metroplan (Little Rock MPO) and the City of Fort Smith to submit a Tri-Region Coalition application, representing over 50% of the state's total population, with the goal of making the most impact possible across low income and disadvantaged communities in Arkansas. Metroplan was the lead applicant and successfully submitted the complete Tri-Region Coalition application to the EPA on March 29, 2024. Gibbs said the next phase of CPRG work will be creating the NWARPC Comprehensive Action Plan for adoption by the RPC, which will build upon the priority measures outlined in the Priority Action Plan which was adopted earlier this year.

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**D. Enhancing Equitable Transit Connections Project Update (FTA-AoPP)**

Tim Reavis reported that FTA awarded NWARPC \$180,000 for engineering activities to be applied to area bus stop improvements, including shelters, benches, sidewalk gaps, bike parking etc. He provided an update on this grant program and stated that procurement is underway, with a Request for Proposals (RFP) having been sent out to interested firms, due back at the end of the month. He said the selection committee will review the proposals next month to determine which firm should be selected. He said that the Walton Family Foundation is offering a 1:1 match to supplement this work, up to \$200,000. He encouraged interested communities to participate and apply for this funding while it is available.

Reavis also provided an update on the Razorback Transit Bus Stop Enhancements Plan, stating that the Selection Committee has met and is currently scoring the proposals received for this work. Reavis stated that three firms have shown interest thus far. He said this grant seeks to create a comprehensive inventory of existing bus stops, evaluate the feasibility of improvements, and then draft a plan with recommendations to implement chosen improvements for the Razorback Transit system.

**E. Other Grant Opportunity Updates**

Nicole Gibbs provided information on the ongoing NWA Strategic Communications Plan, which seeks to advance the regional conversation around mobility to respond to our area's rapid growth. She explained that enhanced communication capacity will be crucial for our 2050 MTP development. She said the firms that responded to our RFP will be interviewed this week and a firm will be chosen by the selection committee next week. Deliverables from this project will include a public messaging guide, strategic communications plan, and scientific public opinion survey.

Tim Conklin provided an update on the Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFO) that have been announced by US Department of Transportation (USDOT) from the Key Notices of Funding Opportunity Webpage (<https://www.transportation.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/key-notices-funding-opportunity>). He also highlighted the new Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) which provides \$45 million in funding for safe and connected active transportation networks and spines such as greenways. Luke Aitken.

Conklin also provided an update on the recently opened ARDOT TAP Grant Program application as well as the Highway 112 improvement project. He said NWARPC submitted a RAISE grant application this year to USDOT on February 28, 2024, for \$25 million to fund the preferred bicycle accommodation of a 12' side path along the entirety of the Hwy 112 project. He said staff will also be applying for SS4A & ATIIP funds for the project this summer. He also mentioned that staff will be applying for an MPDG grant in May for US 612, with support from the NWA Council on the required Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA).

**(7) COMMITTEE AND GROUP UPDATES**

**A. Active Transportation Committee**

Luke Aitken said the ACT Committee will meet this afternoon to discuss new grant opportunities and recent project developments in the region, they last met March 21<sup>st</sup>.

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**(8) PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Patsy Christie said no public comments were submitted prior to the meeting and asked if anyone present wished to make a public comment. No comments were heard.

**(9) OTHER BUSINESS**

**A. Future Meeting Dates:**

Chair Patsy Christie announced the following upcoming meeting dates –

- **RPC/Policy Committee Meeting** – Wednesday, April 24, 2024 @ 1:30 PM
- **TAC Meeting** – Thursday, May 16, 2024 @ 10:30 AM
- **RPC/Policy Committee Meeting** – Wednesday, April 24, 2024 @ 1:30 PM
- **Regional Mobility Authority (RMA) Meeting** – Wednesday, April 24, 2024 @ 2:30 PM
- **NWA Open Space Coalition** - Wednesday, May 8, 2024 @ 10:30 AM – WOKA in Siloam Springs

**B. ARDOT Location and Design Public Hearing (Phase III) Hwy 102 from Hwy 279 South to Hwy 102B (Centerton) – Thursday, June 6, 2024 @4:00 PM, Centerton Municipal Building, 210 Municipal Dr.**

Tim Conklin updated the group on yesterday’s ARDOT groundbreaking of the US 612 Bypass – NWA National Airport Access Road, which was held at XNA with the State Highway Commission, State Senators, and Mayors from the region present. This new 7-mile portion of controlled freeway will provide better airport access to Washington County and bypass traffic at Hwy 412.

Chair Patsy Christie asked whether there was any other business for the committee, and hearing none, adjourned the meeting.

**(10) ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 AM.