

**NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024, AT 10:30 AM; APPROVED APRIL 18, 2024**

ENTITY	MEMBER	PRESENT	PROXY
AVOCA	ROBERT WHITEHORN		
BELLA VISTA	DOUG TAPP TAYLOR ROBERTSON CHRIS BRACKETT	X X	
BENTON COUNTY	JUDGE BARRY MOEHRING JOSH BEAM JAY FRASIER	 X 	
BENTONVILLE	DENNIS BIRGE DAN WEESE		
CAVE SPRINGS	MAYOR RANDALL NOBLETT	X	
CENTERTON	MAYOR BILL EDWARDS LORENE BURNS	X 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	
GENTRY	MAYOR KEVIN JOHNSTON		
GRAVETTE	KURT MADDOX		X Ami Murray
GREENLAND	MAYOR JIM RENFROW		
HIGHFILL	JEREMY JOHNSON		
JOHNSON	MAYOR CHRIS KEENEY	X	
LITTLE FLOCK	MAYOR JEFF VAN SICKLER		X Nicole Gibbs
LOWELL	KAREN DAVIS		X Mayor Chris Moore
PEA RIDGE	MAYOR NATHAN SEE		
PINEVILLE	MAYOR GREG SWEETEN		
PRAIRIE GROVE	MAYOR DAVID FAULK		
ROGERS	JOHN MCCURDY QUINTON HARRIS LANCE JOBE	X X 	
SILOAM SPRINGS	BEN RHOADS (VICE CHAIR) KEVIN MOORE	X 	
SPRINGDALE	PATSY CHRISTIE (CHAIR) 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	X	
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 Brad Kelley
NWA NATIONAL AIRPORT	AARON BURKES	X	
ARDOT PLANNING AND DISTRICT 9	CHRIS DILLAHA SUNNY FARMAHAN STACEY BURGE	X 	

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

OTHERS: David Keck and Madison Ellis (Cave Springs); Brandi Holt (Huntsville); Nicola Hoofard (Centerton); Jennifer Turner (Rogers); Truett Smith (FHWA); 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 January 18, 2023, 2023 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 January 18, 2023, TAC Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Ryan Carr made a motion to approve the January 18, 2023, TAC Meeting Minutes, seconded by Bridget Russel. The motion passed unanimously.

(4) NARTS FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR (FFY) 2023-2026 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) AMENDMENT #6 – INCLUDING SS4A GRANTS, MoDOT PROJECTS, AND FTA-5307 CHANGES

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Nicole Gibbs explained various changes to be made with this amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). She said our Public Participation Plan requires a 2-week public comment period which is being held from March 11-25, 2024. She said the TIP is being amended to include the \$25 million SS4A Implementation Grant awarded to the City of Fayetteville; the \$300,000 SS4A Planning Grant awarded to NWARPC; additional Missouri DOT (MoDOT) projects that are now within the recently amended Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA); changes to the programmed FTA Section 5307 MPO funds to include the update to the Transportation Demand Model and a Transit Alternatives Study, as approved by the Board in January with the UPWP amendment; and changes to the FTA Section 5307 Razorback Transit funds in accordance with the amended FY2021 and 2022 Program of Projects (POP), approved by the Board in October 2023.

Chair Christie asked whether there were any questions or comments and hearing none, requested a motion to recommend the NARTS Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #6 to the RPC/Policy Committee.

MOTION: Paul Libertini made a motion to recommend to the RPC/Policy Committee the NARTS Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #6, seconded by Bill Edwards. The motion passed unanimously.

(5) FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2025 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) DEVELOPMENT - Recommendation for 2-week Public Comment Period

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Tim Conklin explained the UPWP shows the day-to-day

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work tasks of NWARPC staff to complete projects and plans listed within the program. He said this amendment will have a proposed public comment period from April 8, 2024 to April 22, 2024 and the amendment will come back to TAC on April 18, 2024 for a recommendation to the RPC/Policy Committee on April 20, 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.

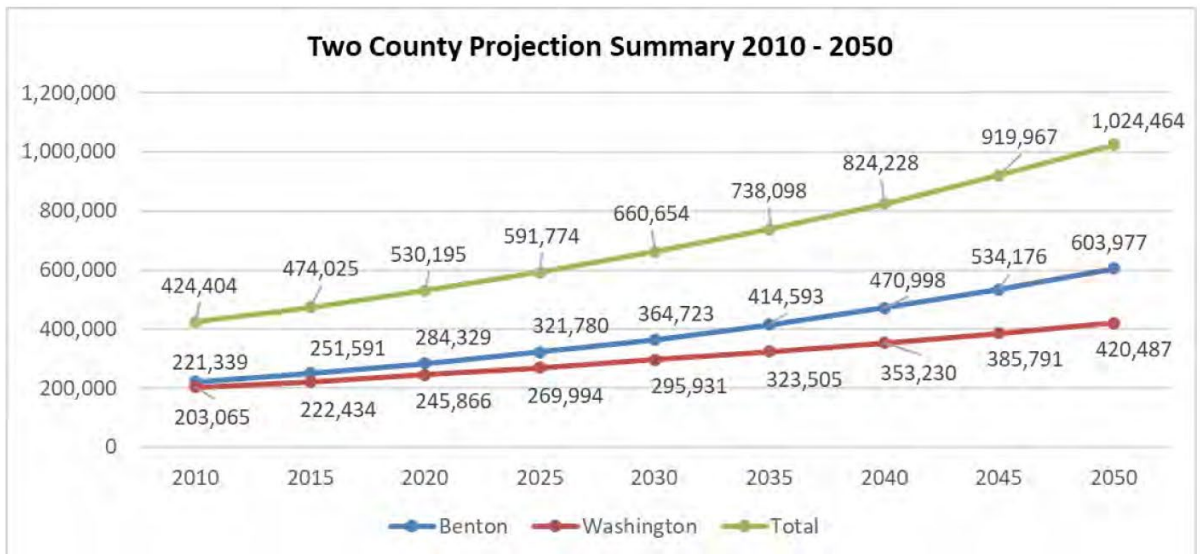
Patsy Christie asked whether there were any other questions or comments and hearing none, requested a motion to recommend sending the Draft Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to a two-week public comment period.

MOTION: Chris Brackett made a motion to recommend sending the Draft Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to a two-week public comment period, seconded by Bill Edwards. The motion passed unanimously.

(6) 2050 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN (MTP) POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Tim Conklin explained that Dr. Jessica Omoregie with the Arkansas Economic Development Institute (AEDI) has been working with NWARPC staff on these projections over the past four months. He said the region will continue to grow rapidly according to Dr. Omoregie’s projections, with 1.024 million people projected to reside in Washington and Benton Counties by 2050. He showed and summarized the following, stating that approximately 60% of total population is projected to reside in Benton County and 40% of the population is projected to reside in Washington County:

AEDI Population Projections for NWA - Cohort Component Model									
Year	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Benton	221,339	251,591	284,329	321,780	364,723	414,593	470,998	534,176	603,977
Washington	203,065	222,434	245,866	269,994	295,931	323,505	353,230	385,791	420,487
Total	424,404	474,025	530,195	591,774	660,654	738,098	824,228	919,967	1,024,464



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Conklin stated these projections are a regular part of the Commission’s work, necessary to develop the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), which is updated every five (5) years. He said the rate of growth in the region through 2050 is projected to be about 2.2% which is realistic compared to other fast-growing metro areas and aligns with the past projections and actual growth rates being recorded. He showed a comparison of past projections for the two-county region (from 2001-2020) to the actual population numbers recorded during past census counts. He said many of the population projections are very close to the actual population numbers.

Conklin introduced Dr. Jessica Omoregie to summarize the cohort component method used for the population projections. Dr. Omoregie stated that it is one of the most reliable methods demographers can use to project population anywhere from 10 to 40 years into the future. She said this method combines fertility rates, mortality rates, and migration rates to achieve an accurate projection. She noted that Benton County continues to grow at a faster rate than Washington County. She explained the model does not consider economic growth, forecasting or other outside factors or anomalies such as companies relocating to the region or growing their workforces. Tim Conklin thanked Dr. Omoregie and ADEI for their work in preparing the projections. He provided an update on the Commission’s plans to update the regional Transportation Demand Model (TDM) and Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) using these new population projects over the next 24 months.

Conklin said the slides from Dr. Omoregie will be distributed to attendees after the meeting.

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

(7) PROJECT AND OTHER UPDATES

A. FFY 2025 Funding Programs

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Nicole Gibbs provided an outline of the NWARPC STBGP-A, TAP, and CRP Funding Programs timeline for FFY 2025 as follows:

Call for Projects (Applications open)	Sunday, January 7, 2024
Application Deadline (<i>Resolution Required</i>)	Thursday, April 4, 2024 @Midnight
Project Sponsor Presentation to TAC Committee	Thursday, April 18, 2024
Selection Committee Site Visits/Scoring/Rec	April/May
Selection Committee Recommendation to TAC	Thursday, May 16, 2024
TAC Recommendation to RPC/Policy	Wednesday, May 22, 2024

Gibbs reminded attendees that adopted resolutions are required with the applications, and for existing projects requesting additional funding, to review the original resolution to ensure the new request does not exceed any amount referenced therein. She stated there is expected to be about \$15 million awarded by NWARPC in this funding cycle. She said this year, the timeline for project selection has been moved up to May instead of occurring in August to accommodate the federal funding obligation deadline at the end of September. Tim Conklin said the obligation process must be done carefully to avoid the region losing any of its apportioned federal funding.

B. FFY 2024 STBGP-A/TAP/CRP

Nicole Gibbs thanked ARDOT staff again for a quick turnaround on the FFY 2024 Award Agreements and stressed the importance of communities remaining in touch with NWARPC and ARDOT in the coming months to accommodate the obligation process for the FY 2024 funds. She

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also stressed the importance of cities following the ARDOT LPA (Local Public Agency) manual when spending federal funding and paying particular attention to the stop points, which require specific ARDOT approval.

C. 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:

- **April 4, 2024, 5 p.m. (EDT):** Deadline #1 for Planning and Demonstration 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.

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

Nicole Gibbs provided a summary of recent efforts to form a Coalition to 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 will be partnering with Metroplan, the 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. She said if awarded, this coalition would allow for a larger impact with the grant funding to be made statewide and makes the application more competitive. She said the NWA region is programming \$36.25 million for 18 individual projects proposed and developed by individual communities and partner agencies, which include the restoration and preservation of natural cores and corridors, the construction of active transportation corridors, and an e-bike incentive program targeting low-income and disadvantages communities (LIDAC). She summarized the Green Network measure proposed in the grant application.

Gibbs thanked individuals and agencies who partnered to develop the applications, in particular the City of Fayetteville Sustainability staff, the Watershed Conservation Resource Center (WCRC) staff, and Metroplan staff for all of their time and tremendous effort putting this monumental application together. She said whether or not the application is awarded, we fully expect this work to catalyze further efforts in the region because of the overwhelming support and energy this initiative garnered.

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

Tim Reavis reported that FTA awarded NWARPC \$180,000 for engineering activities to be applied

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to area bus stop improvements, including shelters, benches, sidewalk gaps, bike parking etc. He provided an update on this grant program and stated that a call for Letters of Interest (LOI) has been published, with the deadline being April 1, 2024. He said the selection committee will review the letters in the following weeks to determine which firms should be selected to move forward to the Request for Proposals (RFP) process. 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 funding.

Reavis also provided an update on the Razorback Transit Bus Stop Enhancements Plan, stating that the RFP has been issued, due back March 27, 2024. 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.

F. Other Grant Opportunity Updates

Nicole Gibbs 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>).

Tim Conklin 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. He explained that the firms that responded to a recent call for letters of interest will be sent requests for proposals in early April. He also highlighted the new Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) which provides \$45 million in funding for safe and connected active transportation networks.

Conklin also introduced a new member of NWARPC staff, Luke Aitken, Associate Planner, and said Luke came to the team after working with City of Bentonville Planning Department.

Tim Reavis provided an update on the Highway 112 project, saying 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 project.

(8) COMMITTEE AND GROUP UPDATES

A. Active Transportation Committee

Tim Conklin said the ACT Committee will meet this afternoon to discuss recent developments in the region, they last met January 18th.

(9) PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Patsy Christie said one public comment was submitted prior to the meeting and was distributed in meeting packets, regarding the suggestion for construction of a new north-south corridor (Harmon/Little Elm Rd – Tontitown, Springdale, Fayetteville, Farmington).

No other comments were made.

(10) OTHER BUSINESS

A. Future Meeting Dates:

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Chair Patsy Christie announced the following upcoming meeting dates –

- **RPC/Policy Committee Meeting** – Wednesday, March 27, 2024 @ 1:30 PM
- **TAC Meeting** – Thursday, April 18, 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

**B. ARDOT Groundbreaking – NWA National Airport Access Road and US 612 Bypass –
Wednesday, April 17, 2024 @TBD**

Tim Conklin updated the group on a recently passed ordinance by the City of Lincoln that will preserve Lincoln Lake with the help of the NWA Land Trust. Conklin also provided an update on recent Bicycle Friendly Community awards to Springdale, Bentonville, and the Benton and Washington two-county region.

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

(11) ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:29 am.