

**NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 2024, AT 10:30 AM; APPROVED OCTOBER 17, 2024**

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		
BENTONVILLE	DENNIS BIRGE DAN WEESE	X	
CAVE SPRINGS	MAYOR RANDALL NOBLETT		
CENTERTON	MAYOR BILL EDWARDS LORENE BURNS	X X	Lorene Burns
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	
GENTRY	MAYOR KEVIN JOHNSTON		
GRAVETTE	KURT MADDOX		
GREENLAND	MAYOR JIM RENFROW		
HIGHFILL	JEREMY JOHNSON		
JOHNSON	MAYOR CHRIS KEENEY		
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	X	
ROGERS	JOHN MCCURDY QUINTON HARRIS LANCE JOBE	X	
SILOAM SPRINGS	BEN RHOADS (VICE CHAIR) KEVIN MOORE	X	
SPRINGDALE	PATSY CHRISTIE (CHAIR) RYAN CARR	X X	
TONTITOWN	MAYOR ANGELA RUSSELL	X	Brad Spurlock
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 HUNEYCUTT)		
McDONALD COUNTY	COMM. BRYAN HALL		
MoDOT	FRANK MILLER (ZEKE HALL)	X	
NWA NATIONAL AIRPORT	AARON BURKES	X	
ARDOT PLANNING AND DISTRICT 9	ANTHONY HUNTER SUNNY FARMAHAN ROBERT MOORE	X X	

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

OTHERS: Tom Adler (Bentonville); Aaron Pile (Lowell); Brandi Holt (Huntsville); Markus Rainwater (ARDOT); Katie Teague, Jane Maginot, and Kristen Crawley (UACES); Aaron Boehmler (Burns & McDonnell); Landon Miller (Michael Baker Intl.); Anna Stamps, Anna Negret, and Mark Moore (CEI)

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 10:33 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 JULY 18, 2024 TAC MEETING MINUTES

Chair Patsy Christie presented the item and hearing no comments, requested a motion to approve the TAC meeting minutes from July 18, 2024.

MOTION: Paul Libertini made a motion to approve the July 18, 2024 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Chris Brackett. Motion passed unanimously.

(4) NARTS FFY 2025-2028 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) – Recommendation to the RPC/Policy Committee

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Tim Conklin provided background on the proposed Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) before summarizing notable regional projects featured in the four-year program. He said the most notable projects within this TIP include: Highway 612 Springdale Bypass, I-49 J Street Interchange, and Highway 112 improvement projects. He said ARDOT has shown the 612 Bypass as being funded in 2025 in the past but the TIP now shows the project as funded in 2028. He said he was told by ARDOT staff the project can still be funded whenever it is ready to be bid. Conklin also reminded attendees of the Highway 112 Regional Vision, championed and adopted by the commission, which outlines a higher caliber design for the highway desired by corridor communities. He said the design shown in the regional vision includes roundabouts, access management, sidewalks and a shared use path, all features that improve traffic flow while maintaining a high level of safety for all road users. Lastly, Conklin mentioned that Lowell Mayor, Chris Moore, requested that Highway 264 improvements from Bellview to Goad Springs Rd, be added to the 2025-2028 TIP. He stated that the STBGP-A Selection Committee chose to award \$506k to the Hwy 264 project contingent ARDOT agreeing to partner with the city to carry out and fund future phases of the project and to program the project in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). He said the project in question has not yet been included in the STIP.

Chair Patsy Christie asked if there were any questions or comments on the item and hearing none requested a motion recommending the NARTS FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to the RPC/Policy Committee for approval.

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MOTION: Paul Libertini made a motion to recommend the NARTS FFY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to the RPC/Policy Committee for approval. The motion was seconded by Melissa McCarville. Motion passed with one vote opposing the motion.

(5) NARTS MS4 STORMWATER COMPLIANCE PERMIT UPDATE – Presentation by Katie Teague, Washington County Extension

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Tim Conklin provided a summary of the past work done by the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture’s Cooperative Extension Service (UACES). Conklin then introduced Katie Teague, County Extension Agent for Washington County. Teague stated a new Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System permit is required for participating municipalities starting on August 1, 2024. She then presented a slideshow which summarized the MS4 program and its controlling legislation, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). Teague also summarized how stormwater permits are reviewed by the state, noting that each of the 20 MS4 programs permitted in the region have worked together in partnership with the extension and the RPC to meet the relevant stormwater permitting requirements for almost 20 years.

Chair Patsy Christie and Tim Conklin thanked Teague for their ongoing efforts in the region, stating Northwest Arkansas could not be in the position it is in today without the help of her and her team at the Cooperative Extension.

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

(6) PROJECT AND OTHER UPDATES

A. NWARPC FUNDING PROGRAMS (STBGP-A/TAP/CRP) – Project Development & Obligation Plan

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Nicole Gibbs shared the current FFY 2024 obligation plan scenario and noted the importance of jurisdictions progressing their federal aid projects. She said ARDOT staff are working through development of all new project agreements for recently awarded projects.

Tim Conklin 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 soon for clarification on project timelines, specifically if a project is eligible for earlier funding obligation than previously anticipated. Conklin mentioned that it is always a good idea to reference the ARDOT Local Public Agency (LPA) Manual before taking major steps to ensure that your project funding can be reimbursed in the future. Gibbs shared the images below and asked members to share any updates to the projects shown with NWARPC staff. She explained the dark orange represents projects that have already been obligated, and light orange indicates projects anticipated to obligate this federal fiscal year.

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FFY 2024 Obligation Plan Scenario (v3)

YEAR	JOB	JURISDICTION	PROJECT	PHASE	STBGP-A	TAP	CRP	FFY 2023 Obligated	FFY 2024 Obligated	ANTICIPATED TO OBLIGATE - 2024			TOTAL ANTIC. OBL. 2024
										STBGP-A	TAP	CRP	
2024 AWARDED PROJECTS													
2024	090433	Lowell	Hwy 264/Bellview/Spring Creek Rd Inters. Impvts. **	Construction	\$ 891,850								\$ -
2024	040717	Springdale	Don Lyson Parkway Ext.	Construction	\$ 3,000,000			\$ 3,000,000					\$ -
2024	090628	Bentonville-Centerton	Greenhouse Road Improvements	ROW/Utilities	\$ 3,333,396					\$ 3,333,396			\$ 3,333,396
2024	040943	Fayetteville	Millsap, College, N Hemlock	ROW/Utilities	\$ 1,300,000					\$ 1,300,000			\$ 1,300,000
2024	090601	Lowell	US-71B/Hwy264 Intersection Improvements **	ROW/Utilities/Const	\$ 250,000					\$ 250,000			\$ 250,000
2024	090528	Benton County	Dragon Wheel Rd Bridge Replacement	Utility/Const	\$ 640,000			\$ 640,000					\$ -
2024	090436	Berla Vista	Mersey Way Bridge and Road Imps - Razorback Greenway Ext.	All Phases	\$ 120,394			\$ 120,394					\$ -
2024	090708	Gravette	Hwy 59872 Intersection Improvements **	Construction	\$ 1,000,000								\$ -
2024	090722	Lowell	Hwy 264 Razorback Greenway Tunnel	ROW/Utilities	\$ 404,400				\$ 4,000				\$ -
2024	040957	Tontitown	N Barrington Rd and US 412 Inters Impvts	Design/Enviro	\$ 360,000				\$ 4,000	\$ 356,000			\$ 356,000
2024	040958	Washington County	Wheeler Rd. Bridge Replacement-Clabber Creek Str. & Apprs.	Design/Enviro	\$ 200,000				\$ 200,000				\$ -
2024	040955	Fayetteville	Drake Street Trail Connection	Construction		\$ 500,000					\$ 496,000		\$ 496,000
2024	090716	Bentonville	SW Bentonville Trail from Morning Star Trail to Vendor Blvd	Construction		\$ 400,000				\$ 4,000			\$ -
2024	090433	Rogers	Hudson Rd Sidewalks PH1 (existing ARDOT TAP)	Construction		\$ 300,000		\$ 300,000					\$ -
2024	090564	Rogers	Hwy 94/US71B Sidewalks -PH1 (existing ARDOT TAP project)	Construction		\$ 220,949		\$ 220,949		\$ 511,604			\$ -
2024	040956	Fayetteville	Safe Routes to School Planning Grant	Planning		\$ 100,000			\$ 4,000			\$ 96,000	\$ 96,000
2024	090721	Rogers	Hwy62/Hwy 94/Hwy12 (Hudson Rd) Sidewalks Impvts	Design/Enviro		\$ 260,000			\$ 4,000		\$ 256,000		\$ 256,000
2024	090718	Pea Ridge	Lee Town Road Multi-Use Trail	ROW/Utilities		\$ 386,180			\$ 4,000				\$ -
2024	090719	Pea Ridge	N Davis Street Sidewalk Ext	Construction		\$ 332,872					\$ 328,872		\$ 328,872
										\$ 5,239,396	\$ 496,000	\$ 680,872	\$ 6,416,268
EXISTING/ONGOING PROJECTS (UNOBLIGATED)													
2023	040917	Farmington	Creekside Park Trail	Construction		\$ 500,000					\$ 500,000		\$ 500,000
2023	090238	Centerton	Hwy 102 Sidewalk **	Construction	\$ 600,000								\$ -
2023	040943	Fayetteville	Millsap, College, N Hemlock	Enviro/ROW	\$ 320,000			\$ 103,014		\$ 216,986			\$ 216,986
2023	090675	Rogers	W Pleasant Grove Rd & Hwy 265 Roundabout	Design/Env	\$ 168,000				\$ 4,000	\$ 164,000			\$ 164,000
2023	090674	Rogers	Hwy 265 and Hwy 94 New Hope Rd Roundabout	Design/Env	\$ 200,000				\$ 4,000	\$ 196,000			\$ 196,000
2023	090601	Lowell	US-71B/Hwy264 Intersection Improvements **	Construction	\$ 240,000					\$ 240,000			\$ 240,000
2023	090433	Lowell	Hwy 264/Bellview/Spring Creek Rd Inters. Impvts. **	Construction	\$ 560,000								\$ -
2023	090709	Lowell	Monroe Extension from Oak St to Hwy 265	Utilities/Eng/Const	\$ 439,258				\$ 4,000	\$ 435,258			\$ 435,258
2023	090679	Decatur	Rooster St to Hill Ave Sidewalk Improvements (ARDOT TAP-22)	Construction		\$ 183,000							\$ -
2023	090715	Centerton	Fish Hatchery Rd Trail Project	Design		\$ 25,000							\$ -
2022	090678	Cave Springs	W Wallis Rd & Sands Rd Sidewalk Extension (ARDOT TAP)	Construction		\$ 10,784							\$ -
2022	090706	Centerton	McKissic Trail Phase 2	Construction	\$ 500,000				\$ 4,000		\$ 496,000		\$ 496,000
2022	040946	Fayetteville	Lighting and Video Detection Impvts.	Construction	\$ 400,000				\$ 4,000		\$ 396,000		\$ 396,000
2022	040947	Johnson	Razorback Greenway Lighting	Construction	\$ 339,300				\$ 339,300				\$ -
2022	090707	Lowell	Traffic Signal Improvements	Construction	\$ 131,764								\$ -
2022	040948	Springdale	Watkins Ave. - S Pleasant St Trail Feasibility Plan and Design	Plan/Design	\$ 100,000				\$ 100,000				\$ -
2021	040852	Springdale	Watkins Ave. Bike-Ped Bridge over I-49	Construction		\$ 125,000							\$ -
NOTE: \$1M carry over limitation per ARDOT policy; in the past, ARDOT partner projects (PP)** did not count toward carry over limitation										\$ 1,252,244	\$ 500,000	\$ 892,000	\$ 2,644,244
										**partner project total not counting toward CO limitation			

FFY 2024 Obligation Plan Scenario (v3)

YEAR	JOB	JURISDICTION	PROJECT	PHASE	STBGP-A	TAP	CRP	FFY 2023 Obligated	FFY 2024 Obligated	ANTICIPATED TO OBLIGATE - 2024			TOTAL ANTIC. OBL. 2024
										STBGP-A	TAP	CRP	
2024 AWARDED PROJECTS										\$ 5,239,396	\$ 496,000	\$ 680,872	\$ 6,416,268
EXISTING/ONGOING PROJECTS (UNOBLIGATED)										\$ 1,252,244	\$ 500,000	\$ 892,000	\$ 2,644,244
2025 REQUESTED PROJECTS (EXISTING)*													
2025	090676	Bentonville	I-49 / J Street Interchange - Tiger Blvd to I-49	ROW/Utilities	\$ 2,500,000					\$ 2,500,000			\$ 2,500,000
2025	90628	Bentonville-Centerton	Greenhouse Road	ROW/Utilities	\$ 461,928					\$ 461,928			\$ 461,928
2025		Centerton	City Wide Sidewalk Infill (2)	Construction		\$ 94,955	\$ 227,000						\$ -
2025		Centerton	City Wide Sidewalk Infill (1)	Construction									\$ -
2025		Fayetteville	Stephen Carr Memorial Dr / I-49 Interchange Impvts.	Design & Enviro	\$ 650,000								\$ -
2025	040943	Fayetteville	Millsap Rd / College Ave Intersection Impvts.	Construction	\$ 1,900,000					\$ 1,900,000			\$ 1,900,000
2025		Fayetteville	Ruppel Trail Lighting	Construction		\$ 315,193							\$ -
2025	040955	Fayetteville	Drake St. Trail Connections	Construction		\$ 500,000					\$ 500,000		\$ 500,000
2025	90680	Lowell	Honeysuckle Street Sidewalk (ARDOT TAP)	ROW/Utility/Const			\$ 389,591				\$ 389,591		\$ 389,591
2025	090722	Lowell	Hwy. 264 Razorback Greenway Tunnel & Trail Realignment	Construction	\$ 2,481,309								\$ -
2025		Lowell	Hwy. 264 Widening - Goald to Bellview Rd.	Design	\$ 504,000								\$ -
2025		Pea Ridge	Hwy. 94 (Pickens Rd) Sidewalk Connection (Res. not signed)	ROW/Utilities/Const			\$ 164,193						\$ -
2025	090631	Rogers	Hwy. 62 (Hudson Rd) Sidewalk Impvts. (P2)	Construction		\$ 700,000					\$ 700,000		\$ 700,000
2025	090631	Rogers	Hwy. 62 (Hudson Rd) Sidewalk Impvts. (P2)	Construction			\$ 81,355				\$ 81,355		\$ 81,355
2025	090675	Rogers	Hwy 265 & W. Pleasant Grove Rd Roundabout	Design & Enviro	\$ 36,984					\$ 36,984			\$ 36,984
2025	090674	Rogers	Hwy 265 and Hwy 94/New Hope Rd Roundabout	Design & Enviro	\$ 50,536					\$ 50,536			\$ 50,536
2025	090564	Rogers	Hwy. 94 Pedestrian Impvts. (P1)	Construction		\$ 109,769					\$ 109,769		\$ 109,769
2025		Rogers	US-71B Pedestrian Impvts. (P3)	Design & Environ			\$ 328,000						\$ -
2025		Springdale-Lowell	Apple Blossom Ave Impvts.	Design & Environ	\$ 2,800,000								\$ -
2025	40854	Tontitown	US412 and Klenc Road Traffic Signal Installation	Construction	\$ 501,436				\$ 722,313				\$ -
2025	040958	Washington County	Wheeler Rd. Bridge Replacement-Clabber Creek Str. & Apprs.	Design & Environ	\$ 200,000				\$ 200,000				\$ -
										\$ 4,949,448	\$ 1,309,769	\$ 470,946	\$ 6,730,163
NET POTENTIAL OBL. 2024										\$ 11,441,088	\$ 2,305,769	\$ 2,043,818	\$ 15,790,675
										\$ 3,051,850			

NOTES:
- \$1M carry over limitation per ARDOT policy; in the past, ARDOT partner projects (PP)** did not count toward carry over limitation
**partner project total not counting toward CO limitation



B. 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

Chair Patsy Christie introduced the item and Tim Reavis provided the committee with an overview of recent progress made on the update to the MTP, carried out every five years. Reavis said that NWARPC is now under contract with consultant WSP which will assist in developing two key

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components of the MTP: an update to the Travel Demand Model (TDM) and conducting a Transit Alternatives Study (TAS). Reavis outlined the purpose and functions of the Travel Demand Model and mentioned that this update will include three different land use scenarios, showing the function of our regional transportation network in each scenario of future growth. He said that the project has been kicked off, and that the consultant is now gathering data and meeting with project stakeholders. He said these model updates will be done using 2050 population projections, and the models will show how population growth can be allocated across the cities of NWA. The TDM & TAS updates will be incorporated into the 2050 MTP which is required to be adopted by the policy committee by March 2026.

Reavis also mentioned that the RPC members will have a 1-year subscription to access the Replica online data platform. He said this is a tool which WSP and the RPC staff will use to develop the MTP, and he hopes that our members will find it useful to supplement their own planning efforts in 2025.

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

Tim Reavis shared that there are two active bus stop related projects being carried out by NWARPC. The first is the Enhancing Equitable Transit Connections Project. This project came about when the Federal Transit Administration (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 now complete, and that NWARPC has selected consultant Olsson to carry out the engineering work. He said that the Walton Family Foundation is offering a one-to-one local government match to supplement this work, up to \$200,000. He encouraged interested communities to participate and apply for this funding for transit stops 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 chosen consultant Toole Design for this work. He said NWARPC has signed a contract with the firm and Toole staff will be working to inventory Razorback stops and carry out this project through February 2025. Reavis stated that 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 stop improvements for the Razorback Transit system.

Reavis concluded by mentioning the ongoing consultant selection process for the Razorback Greenway Corridor Plan. He said NWARPC was invited to apply for a Walton Family Foundation Design Excellence Planning Grant for the project. He said staff and the selection committee is reviewing the language of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the program and is conducting interviews of five firm. He said a short list of three firms will be selected to submit project proposals.

D. NWA Vision Zero Safety Action Plan, Phase 2 Update (USDOT-SS4A)

Luke Aitken explained the commission is currently working with consultant Toole design to carry out phase 2 of the Safety Action Plan, to include:

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

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Aitken stated that progress is being made with Toole Design, with the second Complete Streets Design Guide workshop meeting held recently, and the next, third and final workshop meeting coming up in early October. He recapped takeaways from the second working session which focused on Context Sensitive Street Design. He stated that a safety demonstration project will also be held with Toole design in early October in Bentonville with the Bentonville Fire Department and other regional emergency services staff and said invites will be sent out for that demonstration in September. He also mentioned that the FY2024 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) application is still open, with the final planning and demonstration grant deadline being August 29, 2024.

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

Tim Conklin said progress is being made by staff and planning partners toward beginning the implementation work, utilizing the \$36.25 million in awarded funds from the EPA CPRG program. Conklin started by congratulating and thanking staff and project partners across the state (our own staff, ADEE staff, WCRC and Fayetteville Sustainability staff, and City of Fort Smith staff and Metroplan staff) and explained how much cross-agency collaboration was required to make this award possible. He said this grant award is unprecedented for the region and state, and he is excited to see the funding bring 18 different projects to life across NWA.

Conklin provided a timeline of the work leading up to the application for the \$99.9 million CPRG Implementation Grant award. He said this funding will help implement a variety of projects in the state of Arkansas and the NWA region, and that the work in NWA will focus on implementing our NWARPC Open Space Plan and NWARPC Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan. Conklin said the coalition of three metro regions in the state – NWA, Ft. Smith, and Little Rock – all working together, made the application much more competitive at the national level. Conklin outlined the 18 projects funded by the NWA portion of the Implementation Grant and the “NWA Green Network” focus, which preserves and restores the region’s natural cores and corridors and links them to the regions safe and connected Active Transportation network. He concluded his remarks stating that these 18 key projects will help connect communities to natural spaces, jobs, education, and essential services while incentivizing a mode shift toward cycling to reduce environmental impacts of transportation.

Nicole Gibbs explained that Phase 2 of the planning work is underway with the development of the NWA Comprehensive Action Plan (CAP). She said the consultant, Olsson, is working with NWARPC staff to create a more comprehensive deliverable for the CPRG Planning Grant, building upon the measures outlined in the Priority Action Plan (PAP), by using funding suballocated to NWARPC by Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment (ADEE). She said the PAP identifies top priority measures for the region, which the CAP will expand upon, outlining actionable steps, toward regional implementation of the new and existing priority actions. She said the plan will support future planning and funding opportunities for the NWA MSA, related to environmental quality and emissions reduction. Gibbs stated the deadline for the CAP supplement to ADEE is February 28, 2025 and that staff will be doing extensive public outreach from now through October. The final CAP will be considered for adoption by the RPC/Policy Committee in Spring 2025. She emphasized that both documents will serve as components of the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update.

F. NWA Mobility - Strategic Communications Plan

Nicole Gibbs introduced the item and stated that NWARPC contracted with the consulting firm mhp.si, chosen by the selection committee. The plan’s purpose is to advance the regional conversation around mobility to respond to the rapid growth of the NWA region. In addition to the 12-month strategic communications plan, deliverables will include a messaging guide and scientific

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public opinion survey. She said this plan will help to build awareness of the planning work being done in the region and support the work of regional municipalities to promote responsible growth by highlighting our focus and expertise around transportation planning. She mentioned that focus groups have already been conducted, providing the first level of insights from this project, showing overall themes of the public's impressions around transportation planning taking place in the NWA region. She said the scientific public opinion survey is underway, with results expected to be presented to staff by October. She stated that NWARPC staff's ongoing work to update the Public Participation Plan will also be informed by the best practices recommended in this communications plan.

G. Other Grant Opportunity Updates

Tim Conklin provided information on the ongoing grant opportunities being pushed out by USDOT. He showed the new Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) 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 Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Program, which aims to support demonstration projects that enhance transportation safety and efficiency through smart technology and information systems. Conklin stated that Ozark Regional Transit will be applying for \$1.5 Million of federal funding from this program for the NWA Dynamic Signal Priority Project, which will allow ORT and NWA communities to evaluate Transit Signal Priority.

Conklin also provided an update on the recently opened Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program and encouraged communities to apply by September 30, 2024 and highlighted the open Community Change Grants program through the EPA, and the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program offered by USDOT.

Conklin also provided an update on the grants being pursued for Highway 112, including ARDOT TAP, ATIIP, SS4A, and RAISE programs, to fund the preferred bicycle accommodation of a 12-foot sidepath along the entirety of the Highway 112 project. He also mentioned that the staff has applied for a \$160 million MPDG grant for US 612, with support from the NWA Council on the required Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA). These applications total \$250 million in USDOT grant funding which has been applied for this year by staff.

Tim Conklin congratulated the City of Siloam Springs on their \$11.6 million RAISE Grant award to improve E Main St as a Complete Street, and also congratulated ARDOT on their \$25 million RAISE Grant award from the USDOT, funding an extension of I-49 south from Alma, Arkansas.

(7) COMMITTEE AND GROUP UPDATES

A. Active Transportation Committee

Luke Aitken said the ACT Committee will meet on September 19, 2024 to discuss new grant opportunities, subcommittee reformation for the NWA regional bike and pedestrian plan update, and recent bike and pedestrian project developments in the region, they last met on July 18, 2024.

B. NWA Open Space Coalition

Aitken said the group's July meeting was held on July 10, 2024 in Greenland, to visit the site of a future city park along the White River. Aitken said the meeting had a great turnout, generated positive momentum for this project, and raised awareness of other regional efforts to preserve the White River. He said the next meeting will be held September 11, 2024 at Lake Bella Vista in Bentonville.

**NARTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
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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, August 28, 2024 @ 1:30 PM
- **TAC Meeting** – Thursday, September 19, 2024 @ 10:30 AM
- **ACT Meeting** – Thursday, September 19, 2024 @ 1:30 PM - *VIRTUAL*

B. [Southern Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials \(SASHTO\) Conference](#) – August 17-20, 2024, Rogers, AR

C. [American Planning Association \(APA\) Quad State Conference](#) – October 7-9, 2024, Fayetteville, AR

D. [ULI Northwest Arkansas Place Summit 2024](#) – November 20-21, 2024, Bentonville, AR

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 11:33 AM.