

RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024, AT 1:30 PM; *DRAFT*

ENTITY	MEMBER	ATTENDING	PROXY
AVOCA	MAYOR ROBERT WHITEHORN		
BELLA VISTA	MAYOR JOHN FLYNN TAYLOR ROBERTSON	X X	
BENTON COUNTY	JUDGE BARRY MOEHRING (CHAIR) JOSH BEAM JAY FRASIER/DEAN KLINGMON	X	
BENTONVILLE	MAYOR STEPHANIE ORMAN SHELLI KERR	X X	
CAVE SPRINGS	MAYOR RANDALL NOBLETT		
CENTERTON	MAYOR BILL EDWARDS (SEC'Y) LORENE BURNS		
DECATUR	MAYOR BOB THARP		
ELKINS	MAYOR TROY REED		
ELM SPRINGS	MAYOR HAROLD DOUTHIT		
FARMINGTON	MAYOR ERNIE PENN (VICE CHAIR)	X	Melissa McCarville
FAYETTEVILLE	MAYOR LIONELD JORDAN CHRIS BROWN JONATHAN CURTH	X X	
GARFIELD	MAYOR GARY L BLACKBURN		
GATEWAY	MAYOR CHERYL TILLMAN		
GENTRY	MAYOR KEVIN JOHNSTON		
GOSHEN	MAYOR RUSSELL STROUD		
GRAVETTE	MAYOR KURT MADDOX	X	Ami Murray
GREENLAND	MAYOR JIM RENFROW		
HIGHFILL	CASSIE ELLIOT	X	
HINDSVILLE	MAYOR STEPHANIE CASEY		
HUNTSVILLE	MAYOR TRAVIS DOTSON		Brandi Holt
JOHNSON	MAYOR CHRIS KEENEY (TREASURER)	X	
LINCOLN	MAYOR DOUG HUTCHENS		
LITTLE FLOCK	MAYOR JEFF VAN SICKLER	X	
LOWELL	MAYOR CHRIS MOORE	X	
PEA RIDGE	MAYOR NATHAN SEE	X	
PRAIRIE GROVE	MAYOR DAVID FAULK		
ROGERS	LANCE JOBE JOHN McCURDY QUNITON HARRIS	X	
SILOAM SPRINGS	MAYOR JUDY NATION ALLAN GILBERT	X	Ben Rhoads
SPRINGDALE	MAYOR DOUG SPROUSE PATSY CHRISTIE JIM ULMER	X	Ben Peters
SPRINGTOWN	MAYOR TERRI GLENN		
SULPHUR SPRINGS	MAYOR SHANE WEBER		
TONTITOWN	MAYOR ANGELA RUSSELL	X	Mark Latham
WASHINGTON CO.	JUDGE PATRICK DEAKINS BRIAN LESTER SAM ATA	X	Bridgett Russell
WEST FORK	MAYOR HEITH CAUDLE		
WINSLOW	ANN MALKIE		
ARDOT PLANNING + DISTRICTS	BRAD McCALEB JASON HUGHEY (DISTRICT 4)	X	X Sunny Farmahan
BEAVER H2O DISTRICT	LANE CRIDER	X	
McDONALD COUNTY	COMMISSIONER BRIAN HALL		
MoDOT	MARVIN MORRIS (Ezekiel Hall)		
NAT. AIRPORT AUTH.	AARON BURKES	X	
PINEVILLE, MO	MAYOR GREG SWEETEN		
RAZORBACK TRANSIT	GARY K. SMITH (ADAM WADDELL)	X	
U OF A	SCOTT TURLEY (JAY HUNEYCUTT)	X	
OZARK REG. TRANSIT	JOEL GARDNER (NON-VOTING)	X	
ARDOT TRANSIT	GREG NATION (NON-VOTING)		
HWY COMMISSION	PHILLIP TALDO (NON-VOTING)		

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

OTHERS: David Keck (Cave Springs); Dan Weese (Bentonville); Phillip Patterson (ARML); Doug Thompson (NWADG-Press); Leif Kindberg & Morgan Keeling (IRWP); Becky Roark (BWA); Rob Smith (NWA Council); Kyle Weaver (Sen. Womack Office); Truett Smith (FHWA).

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 hybrid, in-person and virtual NWARPC/Policy Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Judge Barry Moehring 1:31 p.m.

(2) ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

In-person attendees introduced themselves and Tim Conklin named the virtual attendees. Luke Aitken recorded member names and tallied votes. A quorum was reached.

(3) APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 28, 2024 & OCTOBER 23, 2024, MEETING MINUTES RPC/POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Chair Judge Barry Moehring stated that the August 28, 2024 & October 23, 2024 Policy Committee meeting minutes were presented for approval. Moehring asked for any comments or corrections on either meeting minutes and hearing none from the committee, requested a motion to approve both sets of minutes.

MOTION: Mark Latham made a motion to approve the August 28, 2024, and October 23, 2024, RPC/Policy Committee Meeting Minutes as presented. Seconded by Sunny Farmahan. Motion carried unanimously.

(4) DIRECTOR REPORT & CLEARINGHOUSE REPORT

Chair Judge Barry Moehring introduced the item, and Director Tim Conklin shared that the committee would hold its annual Officer Elections today for Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. He thanked Judge Moehring for his service to the commission as Chair of the Policy Committee. Conklin stated that the commission has completed its annual healthcare insurance policy renewal at a slight rate increase of 0.09% for the year. Conklin said the commission is committed to pursuing available sources of federal funding and mentioned two federal grant programs: Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) & Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA), for which the group will be asked to authorize applications today. He stated these programs are both for 100% federal funding with no local match required.

Conklin said the Regional Mobility Authority (RMA) Meeting will be held directly after adjournment of this meeting. He said the RMA will consider transferring funds originally awarded for the Highway 112 Sidepath within Fayetteville to the City of Fayetteville, allowing the segment to proceed using the ARDOT TAP funds.

Conklin outlined recent federal funding requests, featured in the latest Federal-Aid Clearinghouse Report, including two federal aid grant applications by the Cities of Rogers and Fayetteville, and said this report is shared for informational purposes only and no action is needed by the Board. Conklin asked if there were any questions and there were none.

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(5) 2025 SPECIAL CENSUS FOR BENTON COUNTY IMPACTS DISCUSSION

Chair Judge Barry Moehring introduced the item and provided background on this discussion topic which stemmed from conversations about the county's population being undercounted in the 2020 Census. He said conversations have been held between Himself, representing Benton County, Mayor Nathan See of Pea Ridge, and Kyle Weaver from Congressman Steve Womack's office to entertain the possibility of conducting a Special Census before 2030. Chairman Moehring emphasized that this discussion is purely informational in nature and no action on this will be necessary by the committee.

Director Tim Conklin explained the process of requesting a cost estimate from the Census Bureau and the potential timeline, which could take around 9-10 months. He mentioned that a special census would primarily impact city and county revenues based on state formulas tied to population counts but likely have limited impact on federal funding allocations. He said the discussion aims to explore whether the potential increase in state and local revenues would justify the cost of conducting a special census, given the belief that the 2020 Census may have undercounted the region's population. Conklin discussed the potential impacts of a countywide special census on revenue distribution in Benton County. He explained that a countywide census would change the calculation for all cities in Benton County, with some potentially receiving more money and others less. He also clarified that a citywide special census would not impact the county's own sales tax revenue split. Conklin suggested that the cost of a special census should be weighed against potential benefits, and their timeline, and that the decision to proceed should be made by the cities' leaders themselves. He also noted that the relevant county judge would need to explicitly request a countywide special census to proceed with that process, although cities are ultimately the entities that pay for conducting a special census.

Director Conklin discussed the difficulties in obtaining accurate population counts with attendees, emphasizing that census staffing and survey response is especially challenging in non-census years. Conklin noted the potential financial implications of such a census include high costs of local implementation for cities and the possibility of little to no impacts being made on increasing state, regional, and local federal revenues, because of any additional/newly counted populations. There was also discussion regarding the possibility of reallocating federal funds from other jurisdictions in the county as a result of a special census, which could have essentially the opposite effect of its intention especially if the region was not undercounted as some have come to expect. Conklin and Kyle Weaver from Congressman Womack's office both emphasized that a special census would likely not increase local federal funding to cities which do not currently receive federal formula funding. Weaver emphasized that a special census would likely have more potential to increase local funding from state agencies as opposed to federally. The conversation ended with the decision to share the presentation with relevant stakeholders, including the RPC's members, Association of Arkansas Counties, and relevant Arkansas state legislators for the NWA region, to raise awareness about the challenges and costs associated with conducting a special census in response to claims of a 2022 Census undercount.

(6) AUTHORIZATION TO APPLY FOR FEDERAL DISCRETIONARY GRANTS

Chair Judge Barry Moehring introduced the item and Director Tim Conklin explained there are two federal grant opportunities for the Board to consider today: Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) & Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) Programs.

- A. RESOLUTION #2024-16 – Authorizing the Filing of a Grant Application with the U.S. Department of Transportation for a FFY 2024-2026 Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program Discretionary Grant and**

Accepting the Walton Family Foundation Grant to Assist in the Preparation of the Application

Conklin shared that the Commission has received approval for ARDOT staff to use ARDOT on-call consultants to write this grant application on behalf of NWARPC, BWA, and IRWP. Conklin shared project objectives of the PROTECT program, which is a 100% federal share stormwater grant designed to promote innovative infrastructure design to prevent flooding and extreme weather damage to regional transportation assets. Conklin said that the Walton Family Foundation has invited the Commission to apply for \$25,000 in one-time grant funding to finance the grant writing via an ARDOT consultant, due to the tight turnaround of this application, due before the end of February 2025. Conklin asked if there were any questions.

Chairman Moehring asked whether there were any questions and hearing none, requested a motion to approve Resolution #2024-16 Authorizing the Filing of a Grant Application with the U.S. Department of Transportation for a FFY 2024-2026 Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program Discretionary Grant and Accepting the Walton Family Foundation Grant to Assist in the Preparation of the Application.

MOTION: Mark Latham made a motion to approve Resolution #2024-16 Authorizing the Filing of a Grant Application with the U.S. Department of Transportation for a FFY 2024-2026 Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program Discretionary Grant and Accepting the Walton Family Foundation Grant to Assist in the Preparation of the Application. Seconded by Mayor Nathan See. Motion carried unanimously.

B. RESOLUTION #2024-17 – Authorizing the Filing of a Grant Application with the U.S. Department of Transportation for a FY 2024 Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) Program Grant

Director Tim Conklin said he was contacted by the Build America Bureau with interest in involving NWARPC in efforts to use revenue forecasting, financial analysis and unique funding mechanisms to reduce project costs and accelerate the pace of infrastructure construction in our region. He said the grant would fund a study of our current infrastructure funding sources and make recommendations at all levels of government to better deliver more transportation infrastructure projects on time and on budget. Conklin thanked Rob Smith and the NWA Council for continuing to engage in conversation around infrastructure funding in NWA and bringing this program to our attention. Kyle Weaver from Congressman Womack's office stated that Spring 2025 is targeted for the RIA programs' awards announcement.

Chairman Moehring asked whether there were any questions and hearing none, requested a motion to approve Resolution #2024-17 Authorizing the Filing of a Grant Application with the U.S. Department of Transportation for a FY 2024 Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) Program Grant.

MOTION: Mayor Nathan See made a motion to approve Resolution #2024-17 Authorizing the Filing of a Grant Application with the U.S. Department of Transportation for a FY 2024 Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) Program Grant. Seconded by Sunny Farmahan. Motion carried unanimously.

(7) FHWA FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION MAP COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE APPROVAL

Chair Moehring introduced the item and Tim Conklin said staff are working with ARDOT to update the region's functional classification map, which outlines roadways in the region and classifies them in

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accordance with type and level of service provided (local, principal arterial, major collector etc.). Conklin stated this comprehensive update is done following the decennial census, and those updated road classifications determine a roadway's eligibility for federal aid funds. Conklin said this year's update needs to be approved and recommended for forwarding to ARDOT by the Committee.

There was discussion about needing more time to review for changes. Conklin said it is possible to bring this item back again at the January 2025 meetings before the final version sent onto officials at ARDOT and FHWA. He asked everyone to review the interactive map linked in the presentation to be sent out in a follow up email and ensure their jurisdiction's planned and proposed major roads are included on the interactive map.

Conklin also highlighted the Commission's upcoming call for STBGP-A, TAP, and CRP eligible projects in January, emphasizing that projects must be classified as a major collector or above and shown on this map to be eligible for those funding programs. He said if changes are made to the map between now and 2025, those will be shared with TAC for their consideration.

A. RESOLUTION #2024-18 – Supporting the Proposed Benton and Washington County Functional Classification Map

Chairman Moehring asked whether there were any questions and hearing none, requested a motion to approve Resolution #2024-18 Supporting the Proposed Benton and Washington County Functional Classification Map.

MOTION: Mayor Stephanie Orman made a motion to approve Resolution #2024-18 Supporting the Proposed Benton and Washington County Functional Classification Map. Seconded by Ben Peters, Motion carried unanimously.

(8) NWARPC FFY 2026 FUNDING PROGRAMS

Nicole Gibbs shared the timeline for the FFY 2026 NWARPC Funding Programs and the call for projects along with the estimated funding apportionments. Gibbs said we are asking for the Board to authorize the federal fiscal year FFY 2026 NWARPC Funding Programs Call for Projects to be issued on January 5, 2025. She emphasized the importance of member jurisdictions having a signed resolution from their city council for a complete funding application. She presented the following timeline:

FFY 2026 NWARPC Funding Programs Timeline:

Call for Projects (Applications open)	Sunday, January 5, 2025
Application Deadline (Resolution Required)	Thursday, April 3, 2025
Project Sponsor Presentation to TAC Committee	Thursday, April 17, 2025
Selection Committee Site Visits/Scoring/Rec	April/May 2025 (TBD)
Selection Committee Recommendation to TAC	Thursday, May 15, 2025
TAC Recommendation to RPC/Policy	Wednesday, May 28, 2025

Gibbs also reminded applicants if they are seeking additional funds for an existing federal aid project, to ensure they are applying for FFY 2026 funds within the parameters of their original resolution. She presented the estimated funding available as follows:

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FFY 2026 NWARPC *Estimated* Federal Funding

(based on FFY 2024 Apportionment + 100% Obligation Authority)

Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP-A)	\$ 11,728,473
Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	\$ 1,302,362
Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)	<u>\$ 1,402,666</u>
Total	\$ 14,433,501

Chairman Moehring asked whether there were any questions and hearing none, requested a motion authorizing giving notice for a Call for Projects for FFY 2026 NWARPC Funding Programs, including Surface Transportation (STBGP-A), Transportation Alternatives (TAP) and Carbon Reduction (CRP).

MOTION: Mayor Nathan See made a motion to authorize giving notice for a Call for Projects for FFY 2026 NWARPC Funding Programs, including Surface Transportation (STBGP-A), Transportation Alternatives (TAP) and Carbon Reduction (CRP). Seconded by Cassie Elliot. Motion carried unanimously.

(9) PROJECT AND OTHER UPDATES

A. NWARPC Funding Programs (STBGP-A/TAP/CRP)

Nicole Gibbs stated that member jurisdictions with federal aid projects should be routinely reporting their progress to ARDOT and NWARPC for quarterly reporting purposes. Gibbs said that staff and ARDOT are working toward a September 2025 timeline for all FFY 2025 Obligations of funding and that funding recipients should also be prepared for that Obligation deadline coming up.

B. 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update (MTP)

Tim Reavis provided an overview of current staff efforts to kick off the *Forward2050 Plan* (2050 MTP) and its components. He stated that the MTP is required to be updated every five years, and that the project's steering committee landed on *Forward2050* for the plan title. Reavis said NWARPC is under contract with consultant WSP to assist staff in developing two key components of the MTP: an update to the Travel Demand Model (TDM) and a new Transit Alternatives Study (TAS). Reavis said the first stakeholder meeting, convening a diverse group of interests in the region, will be held on December 11, 2025 in tandem with a stakeholder meeting for the TAS update with Consultant WSP.

C. Other Ongoing Project Updates

Luke Aitken summarized the Phase 2 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) project deliverables, which will include the development of tailored Community Safety Action Plans for Bentonville, Centerton, Rogers, Springdale, and Fayetteville, two safety demo projects, two systemic safety webinars, and the main resource, a Regional Complete Streets Design Guide (CSDG). He said that the staff is currently working with Toole Design to proofread draft chapters of the NWA Complete Streets Design Guide. Aitken stated that staff expects a final draft of the CSDG to be ready to share with the group in January 2025.

Tim Reavis updated the group on the Walton Family Foundation's Grant for Bus Stop Enhancements, which has been amended to include funding for installation and purchase of bus shelters, benches, bike racks and other enhancements in addition to funding planning and engineering design work related to bus stop enhancements. This program is offering up to \$100k of funding at a 1:1 match with local jurisdictions or transit agencies.

Due to the meeting going over its scheduled time, other project updates were cut short.

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D. Other Grant Opportunity Updates

Tim Conklin provided an overview of grant programs offered by the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) from the Key Notices of Funding Opportunity Webpage at the following link: (<https://www.transportation.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/key-notices-funding-opportunity>) including the USDOT PROTECT grants and the USDOT RAISE grants programs.

(10) COMMITTEE AND GROUP UPDATES

A. Active Transportation Committee (ACT)

Luke Aitken recapped the topics covered at the September ACT meeting and encouraged anyone interested to come join the group's first meeting virtually in the new year (to be held February of 2025, date TBD). He said a new 2025 meeting schedule and calendar invites for ACT will be sent out soon.

B. NWA Open Space Coalition

Luke Aitken recapped the November OSC meeting, at Luther Geroge Park in Downtown Springdale, encouraging anyone interested in Open Space Coalition or the NWA Open Space Plan to come out to the group's next meeting in February of 2025. He said a new 2025 meeting schedule and calendar invites for OSC will be sent out soon.

C. MS4 Stormwater Compliance Group

Nicole Gibbs said the compliance group's next meeting will be in-person on December 18, 2024, at 10:30 AM held here at the Regional Planning Commission's office.

D. NWA GIS User Group

Nicole Gibbs said the next NWA GIS User Group meeting is scheduled for December 10, 2024 at 10:30AM, virtually.

(11) PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Judge Barry Moehring asked whether there were any public comments for consideration, and MJ McKinney, a Fayetteville resident and past Census Worker commented on the difficulties faced in 2020 when hiring Census Workers. McKinney said residents are reluctant to speak with census workers in general. She said usually, door knocking is a last resort for Census Workers but because of the intimate nature of the work, Census staff are highly vetted and trained which takes time, money and local coordination.

Chair Judge Barry Moehring asked whether there were any additional comments, and none were heard.

(12) OTHER BUSINESS

A. NWARPC Policy Committee Officer Election CY 2025

Nicole Gibbs thanked the NWARPC officers, including Judge Barry Moehring, Mayor Ernie Penn, Mayor Chris Keeney, and Mayor Bill Edwards, for serving the last two years and said a nomination committee was formed at the last meeting to recommend a new slate of officers for CY 2025. She thanked members of the nomination committee for their assistance and said we will need a motion from the Board.

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Committee Chair, Melissa McCarville presented the positions for nomination, shown as follows:

Recommended CY 2025 NWARPC Slate of Officers:

- Chair – Mayor Doug Sprouse
- Vice Chair – Mayor Bill Edwards
- Treasurer – Judge Barry Moehring
- Secretary – Mayor Chris Keeny

MOTION: Mayor Nathan See made a motion to approve the recommended slate of officers for calendar year (CY) 2025. Seconded by Melissa McCarville. Motion carried unanimously.

Director Tim Conklin congratulated the new officers on their appointment and thanked Judge Moehring again for serving as Chair the past two years.

B. Future Meeting Dates:

Chair Judge Barry Moehring provided an overview of the upcoming meeting dates as shown below:

- **TAC Meeting** – Thursday, December 19, 2024 @ 10:30 AM
- **TAC Meeting** – Thursday, January 16, 2024 @ 10:30 AM
- **RPC/Policy Committee Meeting** – Wednesday, January 22, 2025 @ 1:30 PM

Chair Judge Barry Moehring asked whether there was any other business and there was none.

(13) ADJOURN

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 PM.

PASSED AND APPROVED ON THIS _____ DAY OF _____ 2025.

Mayor Doug Sprouse, Chair, NWARPC

ATTEST: _____