

**ETDD North Rural Planning Organization
Joint Executive Board & Technical Committee Meeting Minutes
TDOT Region 1 Headquarters Auditorium
May 30, 2024, 1:00 p.m.
Knoxville, TN**

MINUTES

Voting Members Present

Executive Board: Mayor Mike Byrd, Senator Ken Yager (by proxy Monica Rymer), County Executive Brian Langley, Mayor Joe Brooks, Representative Kelly Keisling, Mayor Jack Lynch (by proxy Randy Brown), Mayor Jason Bailey (by proxy Marilyn Toppins), Mayor Phil Vespie (by proxy Mark Keck), Mayor Terry Frank (by proxy Rick Yakubic) and Mayor Ben Waller (by proxy Harold Edwards).

Technical Committee: Ron Pittman (by proxy Joe Brooks), Joe Miller, David Cox (by proxy Marilyn Toppins), Randy Brown, Mayor Joe Brooks, David Lietzke, Mike Patterson, E.L. Morton, Marilyn Toppins, Charles McAnally and Stacy Harbin (by proxy Harold Edwards).

TDOT and Support Agencies Present

Dexter Justis (TDOT), Sharees Fife (TDOT), Lisa Dunn (TDOT), Stacy Weaver (TDOT), Bryan Bartnik (TDOT), Michelle Christian (TDOT), Michael McClanahan (TDOT), Laura Smith (ETDD), Ekem Amonoo-Lartson (ETDD), and Brook Dickerson (ETDD).

Others Present

Leigha Brown (Morgan Co. Hwy. Dept.), Monica Rymer (Morgan Co.) and Mark Keck (City of Wartburg).

Welcome / Call to Order

The meeting began at approximately 1:00 p.m. Executive Board Chairman Joe Brooks called the joint meeting of the Executive Board and Technical Committee to order.

Determination of Quorum / Roll Call

Quorums were present for both the Technical Committee and Executive Board. The roll call was waived, and introductions made.

Executive Board Elections

Executive Board Chairman Joe Brooks announced that it was time for the Executive Board elections. Morgan County Executive Brian Langley made a motion to Joe Brooks to continue as Chairman and Terry Frank as Vice Chair. The motion seconded by Marilyn Toppins and members of the Executive Committee approved the officers.

Technical Board Vice Chair, Marilyn Toppins announced that it was also time for the annual Technical Committee elections and called for a motion for elections. Joe Miller moved that existing officers serve another term. The motion was seconded by Randy Brown and approved unanimously.

Approval of November 16, 2023, Technical Committee Meeting Minutes

Vice Chair Marilyn Toppins asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 16, 2023, Technical Committee Meeting. Joe Miller made a motion to approve the minutes, it was seconded by Mayor Joe Brooks and members of the Technical Committee approved the minutes.

Approval of November 16, 2023, Executive Board Meeting Minutes

Executive Board Chairman Joe Brooks asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 16, 2023, Executive Board Meeting. Grainger County Mayor Mike Byrd made a motion to approve the minutes, it was seconded by Morgan County Executive Brian Langley and members of the Executive Board approved the minutes.

Bylaw Discussion Creating Single Board Technical Staff & Executive Board

Laura Smith summarized that across the state several RPOs are combining their Executive Boards and Technical Committees into one Board. A common example is that the combined board has a chairman that is an Executive Board member and a Vice Chair that is a Technical Committee member. The next year, the Vice Chair moves into the Chairman's position and a new Vice Chair is elected from the Executive Board. Reasons for combining the boards across the state include difficulties with getting quorums, identical issues that are voted on by both the Executive Board and Technical Committee, and that there had never been an issue that was presented to one board and not the other.

Concerns raised were even though other RPO Committees in Tennessee were combining their boards, should East Tennessee? And would there be solid representation from both current standing committees on any combined board roster? Discussion concluded with a proposal that Laura and Ekem work with Troy Ebert of TDOT to produce a proposal for the November 2024 RPO Meeting.

Chairman Joe Brooks called for a motion to approve the study group exploring combining these two Committees. Joe Morgan made the motion, Morgan County Executive Brian Langley seconded it, and Committee members approved the motion.

Urbanized Area Adoption

Michelle Christian, with TDOT reported that the data from the 2020 Census was now available and is being reviewed by TDOT. There were some major changes including that now housing data is collected. The results of these federally mandated changes show that the Census needed to adjust the measurement process for small Urbanized Areas (populations less than 50,000). The newly defined NRPO designated communities are: LaFollette, Middlesboro and Tazewell/New Tazewell.

As a result, TDOT is performing a smoothing process to smooth out areas along roads and thoroughfares to include less dense housing areas, and allows sparser areas to be included in

the community Functional Classifications assigned by the Census. The Functional Classifications are Interstate, Other Freeway, Principal, Arterial, Major Collector, Minor Collector and Local.

Questions were asked about how individual communities can express concerns with proposed changes. Michelle said these can be addressed through RPO coordination and changed.

Michelle then requested an RPO Board motion accepting the new Census boundaries, the TDOT smoothing process and the Functional Classification updates. Chairman Joe Brooks called for the motion. Marilyn Toppins made the motion, it was seconded by Rep. Keisling, and committee members approved these changes.

TDOT Project Updates

Dexter Justis with TDOT explained their 10 Year Plan. It plans projects from start to finish, includes some of the old 3-year plan projects and adds new ones. It makes sure the ninety-three projects in the plan can be funded. They used TDOT's Project Prioritization and made sure that urban versus rural projects were evaluated differently so they would score similarly. He reminded everyone that it is a long-range plan and may change, especially in the second five years. He also stressed that TDOT's 3 Year Plan that is published each year, will happen.

Committee members voiced multiple comments and questions. Concerns about what happened to former projects submitted to TDOT but not included in the final plan like US 11W and SR 61. Observations that the focus is on urban versus rural projects. And would TDOT look at bicycling route needs if asked to do so? Dexter assured the group that TDOT reviews all projects and requests submitted to TDOT and reevaluates priorities annually.

Norris Freeway Plan

Michael McClanahan with TDOT explained that Norris Freeway is categorized as a National Scenic Byway. It contains scenic panoramas, is a TVA connected route and lots of fishing, water recreation and natural beauty. Mr. McClanahan showed a presentation on the byway to attendees.

State Aid Funding

Lisa Dunn with TDOT gave the group an update on the Transportation Modernization Act Funding. About half of the funds have already been spent, and the rest will be soon. There is an interactive State Aid Dashboard, with a QR code, which is updated every Sunday. This tool reflects all the funding allocations and can be downloaded into Excel. She urged all Road Supervisors to check their info on this website and contact her if they see any discrepancies.

Coordinator's Report

Ekem Amonoo-Lartson of ETDD provided the RPO Coordinators' report. He noted that the local official's meetings would continue, and a Transportation Plan for Monroe County will be completed this year and three more are scheduled for next year. Assistance is also provided for transportation grant applications,

Work Program

Laura Smith presented ETDD's RPO Work Program for FY2025 – FY2026 with included budget to the committees. She summarized the five specific tasks in the contract. They include Rural Planning and Program Management, Community Outreach & Engagement, Transportation Grants Coordination, Rural Planning Administration and RPO Focus which includes the County Wide Transportation Plans. She then asked for a board motion to approve this RPO Work Program.

Chairman Joe Brooks asked for a motion to approve ETDD's Work Plan for FY2025 – FY2026. Morgan County Executive Brian Langley made the motion, Grainger County Mayor Mike Byrd seconded, and Committee members approved the motion.

TDOT/FHWA Updates

Ms. Christian reported on TDOT grants with reminder of grant funding database on TDOT's website.

Questions/Discussion/Other Business

None.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:30 p.m.