

**SOUTHEAST TN RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION (RPO)
EXECUTIVE BOARD & TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 17, 2023

10:30 a.m. Eastern Time

TDOT Region 2 Auditorium, 7512 Volkswagen Drive, Chattanooga, TN 37416

In Attendance:

EB: John Gentry & Clint Huth

TCC: Tobe Smith, Dan Evans, Tom Trotter, Roy Thomason, Wanda Fulmer, John Bamber, Shannon Burke, Chuck Hammonds, & Linda Hixon

Others in Attendance: Rachel Gentry (TDOT), Lisa Dunn (TDOT), Stacy Morrison (TDOT), Kelly Ware (TDOH), Chad Reese (SETD), Garrett Haynes (SETD), Jonathan Rush (SETD), and Ashley Gates (SETD).

- 1) Welcome & Introduction Marc Holcomb, RPO Coordinator**
Marc Holcomb welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 2) Executive Board / Call to Order / Roll Call..... Clint Huth, EB Vice-Chairman**
Clint Huth called the meeting to order at 10:30am. Sign in sheets indicated there were not enough Executive Board members present to constitute a quorum.
- 3) Technical Committee / Call to Order / Roll Call.....Dan Evans, TCC Chairman**
Dan Evans called meeting to order at 10:30am. Sign in sheets indicated there were not enough Technical Committee members present to constitute a quorum.
- 4) Approval of Previous Minutes EB Meeting.....Clint Huth, EB Vice-Chairman**
Due to there not being enough members present to have a quorum, the minutes from the December 14, 2022, Executive Board meeting were not approved.
- 5) Approval of Previous Minutes TCC Meeting..... Dan Evans, TCC Chairman**
Due to there not being enough members present to have a quorum, the minutes from the December 14, 2022, Technical Committee meeting were not approved.
- 6) Southeast RPO Updates.....Marc Holcomb, RPO Coordinator**
Marc Holcomb reminded attendees of the RPO website at sedev.org/rpo and noted that some content from the TDOT project hub will be accessible via the RPO site. Mr. Holcomb then went over the list of prioritized regional TDOT projects from the December 2022, joint RPO meeting. He also reminded members of the recently adopted Southeast Rural Transportation Plan, which is also available on SETD’s RPO website. Mr. Holcomb then informed members this would be his last meeting, and Chad Reese would be taking over the RPO in the interim. Grant funding opportunities was then discussed: TDOT Multimodal Access Grants, DOT Safe Streets for All, DOT Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program, and the DOT PROTECT Program.

7) TDOT Updates TDOT Staff

Kevin Layne, TDOT OCT Planner, discussed the criteria by which TDOT considers the ranking of regional projects. Ranking by the RPO’s typically takes place late November and early December with TDOT developing the Comprehensive 3-year Plan January – March with a public release of the approved Highway Program in April/May. Mr. Layne went over the list of Southeast RPO projects, and showed which ones were moving forward in the 3-Year Plan.

8) NEVI and Carbon Reduction Updates..... Andrea Noel, TDOT Air Quality

Andrea Noel, TDOT Air Quality Planning Office Supervisor, discussed 3 funding programs; NEVI Program Funding, Carbon Reduction Program, and the PROTECT Program. NEVI is expected to generate \$88 million in funding over the next 5 years for Tennessee alone with \$7.5 billion being invested nationwide. There are certain areas of the state where TDOT will focus its funding as highlighted on a map shown in the presentation. Most of these areas are along interstates at designated interchanges, and are spaced about 50 miles apart. In Tennessee, at the time of this presentation, there were only 232 electric vehicles registered in 8 of the RPO’s counties. The Carbon Reduction Program will provide \$6.4 billion nationally, with Tennessee’s portion being \$139,172,276. Goals of the Carbon Reduction Program are to identify alternatives to single occupant vehicle trips, identify vehicles mor modes of travel that result in lower transportation emissions, and identify construction practices that result in lower emissions. 65% of these funds are apportioned to areas of the state based on population and 35% of the funds can be allocated anywhere within the state as determined by TDOT. The Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program is providing \$8.7 billion nationally from FY2022 – FY2026, with Tennessee expected to receive \$158 million over 5 years. The PROTECT program provides funds for resiliency planning, technical capacity building, and evacuation planning and preparation.

9) Local Bridge Funding..... Lisa Dunn, TDOT Local Programs

Lisa Dunn, TDOT State Aid and Bridges, presented on 4 dedicated programs for off-system bridges: 1990 Bridge Grant Program - \$9.5M (98% / 2% match), High Priority Bridge Replacement Program (HPBRP) - \$18.6M, Federal BRZ Program (STBG) - \$12.7M, Federal Bridge Formula Program (in new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) - \$12M.

All these programs follow the same guidelines for selection:

- a. Can only be an off-system bridge
 - i. Rural minor collector or urban/rural local road only
- b. Be on a selection list that is generated by the Department in July
 - i. List 1 weight is less than 10 tons
 - ii. List 2 weight limit is 10-15 tons and overall condition is Critical or Poor
 - 1. Must complete list 1 before going to list 2
 - iii. Other Bridge Needs
 - 1. Scour countermeasures
 - 2. Other off-system bridges
 - 3. On-system bridges less than 150 feet in length and having an ADT of 200 or more
 - 4. Bridge removal
 - 5. Low water crossings (fords)
 - 6. Small drainage structures between 6 and 20 feet in length measured along centerline of the roadway and have a less than 10-ton weight limit
- c. Received a letter from the Department to close the bridge due to weight limit being 3 tons or less (in this instance the bridge does not have to be on a list)

For the 2 federal bridge funded programs

- a. The Department currently has a backlog of \$260M between requests from local agencies and IMPROVE Act projects the Department is completing for local agencies.
- b. These federal funds will not be available until that backlog is complete. Then the Department will put guidelines in place on selection and call for projects

State-Aid Program - \$21M (98/2)

- a. Only County Road Superintendents can use these funds
- b. County Road Superintendent can also elect to move up to ½ of their annual allocation to the Bridge

Grant Program annually
State-Aid Program is receiving a one-time infusion of \$300M across the state

- a. Must provide a 3-year plan
- b. Must be spent along with any current and regular annual allocations within 5 years

10) TCHOA Updates..... Marc Holcomb, RPO Coordinator

Mr. Holcomb shared some updates from TCHOA including the \$300 Million in one-time funding being given to the State Aid program, declining state gasoline and motor fuel revenue collections in FY2022, and considerations for the registrations of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles. TACIR estimates County transportation needs in TDOT Region 2 to be in excess of \$208,303,872 with only \$70,890,013 being available in State Aid Funding.

11) Wildlife Crossing Discussion..... Marc Holcomb, RPO Coordinator

Mr. Holcomb briefly covered the \$350M in Wildlife Crossing funding that is available as part of and FHWA pilot program. Goals of this program are to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and to improve aquatic and terrestrial habitat connectivity. The deadline for applications is August 1, 2023, and there is approximately \$111,850,000 available this round.

12) Other Properly Presented New Business.....Clint Huth, EB Vice-Chairman

There was no other properly presented new business.

13) Executive Board Adjournment.....Clint Huth, EB Vice-Chairman

Meeting adjourned around 12:00pm

14) Technical Committee Adjournment.....Dan Evans, TCC Chairman

Meeting adjourned around 12:00pm

Chairman, RPO Executive Board

Chairman, RPO Technical Committee

RPO Coordinator