

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

Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, December 19th, 2024
11:00 a.m. Eastern Time**

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

In Attendance:

EB: Bently Thomas, Will Rice, John Myers, Chuck Hammonds, John Gentry, Clint Huth, Hurley Marsh, Wanda Fulmer

TCC: Ben Burchfield, Kat Volzer, Byron Clinton, Nathan Wehunt, Dan Evans, Linda Hixon, Sandra Crabtree, Winston Pickett, Tobe Smith, Tom Trotter, Tabb Sanford

Others in Attendance: Greg Maloof (Monteagle), Michelle Christian (TDOT), Brandon Darks (TDOT), Tom Every (TDOT), Matt Givens (TDOT), Abigail Louderback (TDOT), Haley Slifko (TDOT), Curt Duncan (TDOT), Christopher Smith (TDOT), David Shinn (City of Dayton), Gracie Shamblin (TDOT), David Wagner (TDOT), Rob Howard (TDOT), Rachel Gentry (TDOT), Danny Oliver (TDOT), Kelly Ware (TDH), Adam Casteel (TDOT), Andrew Zazzara (TDOT) W. Allen Miller, Cheryl Farley (SETHRA), Rohan Thompson (SETD), Emmalyn Porter (SETD), Garrett Haynes (SETD), Kelly Puckett (SETD), Shelby Hammonds (SETD), Chad Reese (SETD)

- 1) Welcome & Introduction.....Emmalyn Porter, RPO Coordinator**
Emmalyn Porter welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 2) Executive Board / Call to Order / Roll Call.....Clint Huth, EB Chairman**
Clint Huth called the meeting to order at 11:08 am. Sign in sheets indicated sufficient attendance for quorum for EB.
- 3) Technical Committee / Call to Order / Roll Call.....Dan Evans, TCC Chairman**
Dan Evans called the meeting to order at 11:08 am. Sign in sheets indicated sufficient attendance for quorum for TCC.
- 4) Approval of Previous Minutes EB Meeting.....Clint Huth EB Chairman**
Motion to approve made by Chuck Hammonds, seconded by Executive Board member. Motion carried.
- 5) Approval of Previous Minutes TCC Meeting.....Dan Evans, TCC Chairman**
Motion to approve made by Ben Burchfield, seconded by Tobe Smith. Motion carried.
- 6) Bylaws Adoption.....Chad Reese, SETD Planning Director**
The purpose of changing the bylaws is to combine the RPO's Executive Board and Technical Committee. Joint meetings have been conducted for years and the RPO previously used the Technical Committee to vote and prioritize projects to recommend to the Executive Board. TDOT presented their 10-year plan in 2023, and the TC no longer prioritizes projects.
Chad outlined the changes as follows:

- One board known as Southeast Tennessee RPO
- Appointment authority for Board members – Mayors keep appointing authority, and Highway Superintendents now have appointing authority under the new bylaws.
- Election of Chair and Vice-Chair – Chair and Vice-Chair rotate between a Mayor and Highway Superintendent. This will swap every even year.

No changes in bylaws:

- Purpose statement, attendance, quorum requirements, voting, etc.
- Number of members on the RPO

Chad notified everyone that the bylaws will take effect January 1, 2025, if approved. At our Spring meeting, we will appoint new officers for a one-year term. In 2026, we will appoint new officers that will change every even year (2 years).

Motion to approve the bylaws made by Bently Thomas, seconded by seconded by Executive Board member.

7) TPG Updates & Funding Opportunities.....Emmalyn Porter, RPO Coordinator

The City of Niota was recently awarded a 2024 Traffic Signal Modernization Grant, and Roy Thomason was selected to serve as the 2024-2025 State President of the TN County Highway Officials Association at the TCSA Annual Fall Conference in Murfreesboro, representing road officials and departments across all 95 TN Counties at the state level.

The Southeast region was awarded 2 Transportation Planning Grants in 2024, for Walden, TN and Etowah, TN. Etowah is conducting a corridor study on US Route 411 with consultant WSP and TDOT. 94 reported crashes have occurred along the corridor with 1 fatality and 15 injury-related incidents, making safety a primary concern of the study. The study also seeks to meet the demands of the through traffic, as well as make the corridor a safe, pedestrian friendly area in which locals and tourists can support businesses in the historic downtown area. WSP has created an existing conditions report of the study findings, with recommendations for improvements as well as funding opportunities for each recommendation. \$110,000 has been awarded through our current RPO contract under Task 5 for communities in the RPO to pursue a similar Transportation Planning Grant, such as a corridor study, bike and pedestrian plan, resurfacing plan, and others. There is a \$25,000 max award for planning services, administered through the RPO with a pre-qualified TDOT consultant of your choosing. Applications are currently open and are due April 1st. Awardees will be announced at the Spring 2025 RPO meeting and projects will follow a 12-month timeline from the time of award.

8) TDOT Updates.....TDOT Staff

a. 10-year Plan Update – Stacy Morrison

Stacy introduced TDOT staff in attendance and mentioned the ongoing reorganization. Stacy outlined Legislative Projects including Choice Lanes, Program Projects, the 10-year Plan and funding sources. He pointed out where to find additional information online about the projects. 10-year Plan updates will be delivered in the spring through elected officials and updated annually. Statewide Partnership Projects will be added in as well. The Statewide Partnership is a fall process and is an important part of the budget request to the Governor by showing the project requests and needs of the local jurisdictions. Wet weather impact has been the primary delay in the 10-year plan this year. Hurricane Helene’s impact is around \$500 million but TDOT is deploying personnel and resources from all regions.

b. Regional Project Updates – Rob Howard, Curtis Duncan

Rob presented on Program Projects and Curt presented on Legislative Projects. Legislative Projects are identified and funded by the Legislature. Program Projects include pavement,

bridge replacements, safety projects, etc. Curt detailed several Highway Program projects in our region for the next 3 fiscal years. Rob detailed the pavement projects, bridge projects, and program projects in our region for the next 3 years. Curt detailed the Alternative Delivery projects in Hamilton and Marion counties. He also provided links to more project details and contact information of TDOT staff.

c. **Corridor K Updates – Haley Slifko**

This project is part of the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965, spanning from I-75 near Cleveland to Dillsboro, NC, and includes one of the last incomplete sections. The most recent effort began in 2009 with several different options, but a rockslide caused a 70-mile, hour and a half detour. In 2018, TDOT started pursuing the targeted approach for the corridor. The Cherokee National Forest has affected the environmental review process. The adjacent river and mountain around the roadway have also presented challenges. The targeted approach addresses 35 specific issues including improving curves, mitigating rockfall hazards, and others. Geometric improvements will also be included in the targeted approach. In 2024, 4 locations were chosen to progress towards implementation and are currently in the 10-year plan. They are in the preliminary engineering and design phase. Haley detailed the 4 locations and the plans for each, along with a QR code to receive more information.

d. **RSA Process – Brandon Darks**

Brandon discussed the Strategic Highway Safety Plan and the Highway Safety Improvement Program. In November, Governor Lee signed the latest Strategic Highway Safety Plan update that will be in effect for the next 5 years. This plan is a group of safety agencies utilizing the federal funding of HSIP, which is a primary source for TDOT to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on roads in the state. He explained the plan, the emphasis areas, and the Safe System Approach. He also discussed the Road Safety Audits process. To request a RSA, reach out to Brandon, Stacy, the RPO or the Project Safety Office. TDOT will run crash data to see if it is eligible for HSIP. There are currently 112 active LRSIs, \$52 billion dollars let to construction, and 245 projects let to contract since 2014. HSIP money can be utilized for resurfacing. He outlined the active HSIP projects within the Southeast RPO.

An audience member asked if TDOT is studying how different types of headlights contribute to accidents. TDOT is not an enforcement agency and cannot do anything about headlights. Tennessee does not offer comprehensive vehicle inspecting outside of commercial vehicles. Brandon also mentioned the reflectivity of street signs and the blinding effects it can cause. Another audience member asked if TDOT is using a proactive approach regarding safety projects and their development. Brandon responded that the Map 21 bill allows HSIP to now be proactive. A crash cluster is no longer required to add a guardrail in a specific area. This is a great improvement in safety compared to 5 years ago. Another member mentioned that other funding sources do not require crash criteria.

e. **Other Updates – Kevin Layne**

Kevin provided his contact information and a flyer for TDOT Highway Entrance permits that details the process of managing access onto the State Highway System.

9) **Other Properly Presented New Business.....Clint Huth, EB Chairman**
There was no other business.

10) **Executive Board Adjournment.....Clint Huth, EB Chairman**

Motion to adjourn made by John Gentry, seconded by John Myers. Meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

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

Motion to adjourn made by Tom Trotter, seconded by Ben Burchfield. Meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

Chairman, RPO Executive Board

Chairman, RPO Technical Committee

RPO Coordinator

