

**MINUTES
ARK-TEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
May 30, 2024**

The Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG) Executive Committee met at 10:00 a.m., Thursday, May 30, 2024, at the Northeast Texas Small Business Development Center (SBDC), 2nd Floor, located at 105 North Riddle Avenue, Mount Pleasant, Texas, and via videoconference.

Item 1. Bobby Howell, Judge, Bowie County, called the meeting to order.

Item 2. Robert Newsom, Judge, Hopkins County, gave the invocation.

Item 3. Public Comment.

No member of the public made a comment.

Item 4. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director, presented for review and consideration approval of the minutes as submitted for the ATCOG Executive Committee meeting held on February 29, 2024.

Motion to approve was made by Scott Lee, Judge, Franklin County, and seconded by Kent Cooper, Judge, Titus County. It was approved.

Regular Business

Item 5. Mr. Mark Compton presented for review and consideration approval of the Ark-Tex Council of Governments Rural Transit District Drug and Alcohol Policy.

RLS & Associates, Inc. (TxDOT) performed a Drug and Alcohol compliance review of the Ark-Tex Council of Governments Rural Transit District Drug & Alcohol program in November 2023.

RLS & Associates, Inc. recommended condensing and simplifying the Drug and Alcohol Policy while retaining compliance with all USDOT-FTA Drug and Alcohol regulations.

In addition, RLS & Associates Inc. recommended adding the following language to the policy:

- **Page 3, 1. Purpose of Policy, Paragraph 7:** ATCOG Rural Transit District (RTD) reserves the right to conduct NON-USDOT drug and/or alcohol testing under the sole authority of ATCOG. This testing would be completely separate from all USDOT testing in every respect and would be conducted on NON-USDOT / NON-FEDERAL testing forms.

The revised ATCOG Alcohol Rural Transit District Drug and Alcohol policy was provided for Board review.

Motion to approve was made by Judge Lee and seconded by Judge Cooper. It was approved.

Item 6. Mr. Mark Compton presented for review and consideration approval of a grant application to be submitted to the Ram Foundation in the amount of \$25,000 for the Paris Metro Bus System.

The Ram Foundation has advocated for the Paris Metro Bus System since its inception and has been a strong voice in the Paris community for both Paris Metro and TRAX services. The Ram Foundation has contributed grant funds for Paris Metro in the past. As part of the grant agreement, the Ram Foundation receives advertising space on the Paris Metro route maps. ATCOG is

requesting \$25,000 for the Paris Metro Bus System FY2025.

Motion to approve was made by Judge Newsom and seconded by Brandon Bell, Judge, Lamar County. It was approved.

Item 7. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel stated that the review and consideration authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a contract with Airwaves Communications, Inc. to purchase a communications tower and equipment for Lamar County will not be considered at this time.

Item 8. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel presented for review and consideration approval of a resolution supporting the request for state funding for track and bridge rehabilitation in the Northeast Texas Rural Rail Transportation District.

NETEX has over 65 miles of track and 72 bridges to serve unserved and underserved communities. The track speeds on the NETEX line are limited to 10 miles an hour due to defective cross-ties and bridge deficiencies. The rail line continues to deteriorate due to the lack of past rehabilitation and funding. The NETEX rail line must be rehabilitated to continue providing service to existing customers and to attract new business to the region. The livelihood of the growing Northeast Texas economy depends on a strong multi-modal transportation network that includes rail.

The Northeast Texas Rural Railroad Transportation District requests the support of the Ark-Tex Council of Governments in petitioning the Texas Department of Transportation and the Texas Legislature to address its rehabilitation needs with a \$30 million investment of General Revenue Funds and other available funds during the interim to upgrade from an accepted track to a Class 2 track.

Ms. Rudel invited Jill Dutton, Texas State Representative/House District 2, and Mr. Brad Johnson of the NETEX Board to speak to the Executive Committee concerning the resolution. Mr. Brad Johnson provided copies of the rail map and detailed information about the urgent need to rehabilitate the Northeast Texas rail line. Representative Dutton expressed her support for the rehabilitation funding request and pledged her support as the request moves through the legislature and appropriations committee.

Motion to approve was made by Judge Newsom and seconded by Judge Cooper. It was approved.

Executive Closed Session

Item 9. Judge Howell announced that the Executive Committee Open Session would recess and go into an Executive Closed Session to deliberate on matters concerning real property as allowed in the Texas Open Meetings Act, Section 551.072, Omaha Property.

Open Session/Regular Business

Item 10. Judge Howell reconvened the Executive Committee into Open Session and stated that no action was taken during the Closed Session.

Announcements

Judge Howell announced that the Joint NETEDD and ATCOG Board of Directors meeting will be held on June 27, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., at the Northeast Texas Small Business Development Center (SBDC), 2nd

Floor, 105 North Riddle Avenue, Mt. Pleasant, Texas, as well as via videoconference.

Ms. Mary Beth Rudel announced that the Annual Board Meeting will be held at the Love Civic Center in Paris, Texas, on Thursday, August 29, 2024.

Judge Scott Lee announced that Franklin County will host the ATCOG Executive Committee Meeting on Thursday, September 26, 2024.

With no further business to discuss, Judge Newsom made a motion to adjourn, which Judge Cooper seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Brandon Bell, Judge, Lamar County
Kent Cooper, Judge, Titus County
Bobby Howell, Judge, Bowie County
Scott Lee, Judge, Franklin County
Robert Newsom, Judge, Hopkins County
Scott Norton, Executive Director/CEO, TexAmericas Center
Doug Reeder, Judge, Morris County
Marc Reiter, Mayor, City of Hooks
Ann Rushing, Mayor, City of Clarksville

ATCOG BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Mandeep Chatham-Homer, Paris Independent School District
Rosina Duckworth, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Cumby
Laney Harris, Director, City of Texarkana-AR
Ron Humphrey, Mayor, City of New Boston
Brad Johnson, Northeast Texas Rural Rail Authority Board
Jean Matlock, Councilwoman, City of Texarkana-TX

GUESTS PRESENT

Beverly Austin, Franklin County Rural Health Clinic
Jill Dutton, Texas State Representative, House District 2
Dr. Jean Latortue, M.D., Franklin County Rural Health Clinic

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director
Marla Matthews, Executive Assistant
Leslie McBride, Deputy Director
Amber Murr, Human Resources Director



Bobby Howell, President
Board of Directors
Ark-Tex Council of Governments

ATTEST:

