Southwest Rural Planning Organization
Joint Executive Board and Technical Committees Meeting Minutes
June 24, 2026

Call to Order

Mayor Barry Hutcherson opened the Joint Executive Board and Technical Committee Southwest RPO meeting at 1:30 PM (First Floor Conference Room). Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayors (Due to Conflict for District Mayors the meeting had been rescheduled to Wednesday from Thursday.)

Roll Call

RPO Coordinator Chris Pate provided a roll call with the following members present:

Executive Board members –Mayor Terry Bell and Mayor Barry Hutcherson

Technical Board members – Diane Turner (Remotely) Brennon Childress, Jackson Planning Dept. (Jackson MPO proxy)

Others in attendance were Chris Pate, RPO Coordinator; Stacy Morrison, TDOT OCT; Michelle Christian, TDOT OCT; Ashley Owens, TDOT OCT; Sam White, TDOT (District 48), Seth Hendren; TDOT Project Management; Eli Jones, Region 4 TDOT Manager - Program Projects, Jeremy Bowlan, TDOT Safety Office, Tom Skehan SWTDD Regional Planner, Jay Poindexter Mayor of Michie, Reed Jones NW RPO Coordinator

Approval of the Minutes

By Members Present.

Jeremy Bowlan introduced himself and explained that there is an upcoming safety audit in Haywood County. He is now serving Region 4 (and Districts including Clarksville and Columbia) due to staff changes and re-assignment. He handles Road Safety Audits, signage, repaving, intersection work, and even some local road safety initiative projects. (Highway Safety Improvement Program). He wanted to introduce himself to RPOs in West Tennessee.

Tennessee Department of Transportation Updates on the Ten Year Plan/Long Range Transportation Plan Ashley Owens, TDOT OCT

Ashley Owens, TDOT OCT provided the history of the 10-year Plan and the funding breakdowns. The legislative update and fuel funding were highlighted. Rest area and welcome centers have been added. The SPP (Statewide Partnership Program) projects are projects with local funding and engineeering. Bridge projects are included. The Department is delivering projects as promised.

The Long Range Transportation Plan had a kick-off last spring. The last update is 2016. The timeframe of the plan will extend to 2055. The plan is entitled Mobility in Motion. The Long Range Transportation Plan will have community engagement in West Tennessee at the Obion County Fair.

Mayor Bell recalled a meeting with the Tennessee US congressional delegates. He was informed that the money has been allocated and wondered about when it is truly released within a year. OCT explained that the money received was about $1.2 billion with $600 million being applied to state of good repair. The legislative personnel from TDOT may have an update.

Other supplemental plans are available and will be pushed out to RPO's then to the locals. There are roughly 100 projects in the 10-plan but TDOT (Eli) has other projects being actively managed. The Mayors were complimenting the roads around the District which were repaved. Region 4 complimented the leadership for finding funding sources.

FHWA Rural Consultation Process (5 year cycle), Ashley Owens, TDOT OCT and Michelle Christian TDOT OCT

The staff provided an overview of the RPO surveys that had been mailed out. The typical respondent had been involved with the RPO for 5 years.

The survey and outreach are required to be returned to FHWA every 5 years. The report has been turned into FHWA earlier in the week. One on one meetings are to be scheduled to find out the topics that would be of value to the local participants, mayors, municipal street superintendents, and others.

There is a Web-based application (Dashboard) under development so that the historic project rankings that were conducted in RPO meetings will be collected by the app.

There is a Transportation Planning Grant (TPG) Impact Assessment survey that has been sent out. The survey is not an effort to take funds but is an evaluation and a means of ascertaining best management practices for implementation. There have been 145 TPGs and 12.5 million dollars have been invested. Thirty-two percent of the surveys have been completed. Roughly thirty million dollars has been applied to implementation projects.

Other funding resources have been researched and are being compiled for local governments.

RPO member on-boarding is a focus of this year. The RPO coordinators will be a part of this project. Mr. Morrison explained that Ashley has been working with MPOs and RPOs but that a new staffer has been hired to be dedicated to RPO duties in Region 4.

The RPO coordinator thanked Mayor Bell for completing the TPG Impact Assessment.

Rural Service Patrol, TDOT Representative

Mr. Morrison explained that the program available in metro areas has been expanded to Interstate-40 in rural areas. The project is being handled by a company that has extensive experience in other States.

FY 2027-2028 Work Plan, Chris Pate, RPO Coordinator

The RPO coordinator explained that Task 5 was a project submitted to piggyback off of land use planning with contract and non-contract communities who would have major road plans recorded in Courthouses. These plans would be compared with the federal and state Functional Classification System. The TDOT Highway System Access Manual will be outlined and summarized for local implementation. The Work plan was approved by the members present following a motion by Mayor Bell and second by Mayor Hutcherson.

RPO Coordinator's Report, Chris Pate, RPO Coordinator

2026 Transportation Planning Grants and Quad County Transportation Study

The RPO Coordinator announced that Whiteville and Selmer received TPG (Transportation Planning Grants). Both were Community Mobility Plans. Scoping meetings have been conducted between the consultants and each community. TDOT is working on final details.

The RPO Coordinator announced that the Quad County Transportation Study is available.

Other Business

Region 4 inquiries were made from the mayors and answered by Seth Hendren and Eli Jones (throughout the meeting).

Eli Jones, TDOT Programs explained that the 3-Year Plans are available on-line; Bridge Repair and on- system and off-system Bridge Replacement are being planned; Safety projects have increased in the Region (50 projects). The Miscellaneous 3-Year Plan will include Multimodal projects. Timber bridge projects are grouped geographically and have one contactor assigned.

Railroads and funding were discussed in the actual plan implementation. Fiscal years and readiness were explained. The projects do not drop out but are arranged in the next fiscal year.

Seth Hendren was going to provide a follow-up to the projects outlined in the last RPO meeting. Exit 42 in Haywood County has been completed.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned around 2:15 PM (Mayor Bell had questions for Region 4 members)