

**MINUTES
OF
THE OZARK FOOTHILLS TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**JANUARY 9, 2025
OZARK FOOTHILLS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

OZARK FOOTHILLS RPC, POPLAR BLUFF, MISSOURI

I. Call to Order

Chairman Brian Polk called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

II. Open for Public Discussion

Introductions were made for all in attendance. There were several new faces with Ozark Foothills Assistant Director Andrew Murphy introducing Robert Augsdorfer, the new Community Planning Specialist that will take the lead in developing the Safe Streets for All Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for the region. Ashley Newson, serving as Carter County’s multi-modal representative, works for the National Park Service and with communities on trails and active transportation plans, Eric McSpadden serving Carter County, Larry Wells and Ralph Stucker both newly elected associate commissioners for Butler County joined the TAC as did Gary Pride, serving as Butler County’s multi-modal representative. Matt Wilkerson, MoDOT Southeast District, announced he had taken a new position as Resident Engineer at the Park Hills office and this would be his final Ozark Foothills TAC meeting. Katy Bower was introduced as the new Area Engineer covering Butler, Carter, Ripley, and Wayne Counties along with additional counties in the bootheel.

Chairman Polk stated if you go back through the years, a lot of projects have started in this committee or happened because of the TAC. This is a worthwhile group, and Chairman Polk was happy to welcome the new members.

III. Adoption of October 10, 2024 Minutes

The minutes of the October 10, 2024 TAC meeting were reviewed. The minutes were adopted on a motion by Jesse Roy, Ripley County, and second by Ron Keeney, Carter County.

IV. Missouri Department of Transportation Reports

Katy Bower, MoDOT Southeast District, covered lettings in the region including Route B in Ripley County for a scrub seal form US 160 to MO 142, MO 158 in Butler County for a bridge replacement near Harviell and pavement resurfacing on MO 158 from US Highway 67 to MO 142. Lastly, MO 142 will see pavement resurfacing and bridge rehabilitation from Route HH to MO 53 near Harviell.

Matt Wilkerson covered work zone updates including a bridge deck replacement on Route U

over the St. Francis River, Route B in Reynolds County will see a bridge replacement over Logan Creek, Scrub seals will occur on MO 34, MO 143, and Route AA in Wayne County. Various ITS maintenance and lighting improvements will occur throughout the Southeast District with locations in Butler County. Butler County will also see a bridge replacement on Route B, and US Highway 67 will be upgraded to freeway standards, 3 bridges and 2 box culvert extensions. All lanes will be open with no delays. The next application cycle deadline for the Cost Share Program will be April 11, 2025.

Joe Killian, MoDOT Southeast District covered the Missouri Transportation Finance Corporation (MTFC). The next application deadline is March 18, 2025 followed by June 17, 2025. All FHWA functionally classified highway are eligible except local and rural minor collectors. These are low-interests options to make transportation improvements. All phases of a project are eligible. Projects will follow Local Public Agency (LPA) guidelines, as such; all applicants must have someone on staff that has completed the person of responsible charge training.

Melissa Rose, MoDOT Southeast District, stated there were 17 applications submitted for BRO funding. The selection committee met earlier this week and has selected 7 projects to send to Central Office for approval. Ms. Rose also mentioned that many LPA Person of Responsible Charge certifications are lapsing. This is a requirement even for existing projects and invoices cannot be processed if no one on staff is up to date on the training.

V. Transportation Planning Coordinator Report

Mr. Murphy stated the CDBG program is in the process of announcing grant awards this week. The OFRPC submitted nine paving applications in September 2024. So far, they have heard that two have been awarded and are waiting on the remaining seven.

The CDBG MIT/MID funding tied to the 2017 flood event has an application due date next Friday January 17th. OFRPC staff is working on approximately 40 applications. By far, the most projects ever submitted for one round. These include low water crossings, pavement, sidewalks, trails, river cleanup, safe rooms, tornado sirens, generators, and more.

Carter County was awarded \$490,000 from the State's Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) from the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) for paving CR330 near the Royal Oak charcoal plant.

An application submitted for \$1,823,557 on behalf of the City of Poplar Bluff to DRA's Critical Infrastructure Fund (CIF) to make road improvements to Butzen, Rowe, and Harlo Dunn Road in the Poplar Bluff Industrial Park was not awarded funding from the CIF program, however, the DRA transferred the project to the EDA's PWEAA application funding cycle and recommended the project for funding.

Butler County was not awarded a RAISE grant for County Road 321. We will be resubmitting the RAISE application by January 31, 2025 for what could be final round of RAISE funding.

The MoDOT Traffic and Highway Safety Grant Program supports projects that reduce the number and severity of traffic crashes occurring on Missouri roadways thereby preventing fatalities and

injuries. Areas of emphasis include alcohol- and/or drug-impaired driving, speeding, safety belt and child safety seat use, inattention or distracted driving, young drivers, mature drivers, and traffic crash data collection and analysis. The grant funding cycle corresponds with the federal fiscal year. The FY26 Highway Safety Grant application is open and is due by March 1, 2025.

The Department of Natural Resource's Recreational Trails Program (RTP) applications are open with a March 3, 2025 deadline. In Missouri, RTP grants are open to local and state governments, school districts, non-profit and for-profit organizations. Missouri receives between \$1 and \$1.5 million per fiscal year. The maximum amount awarded is \$250,000 for trail projects and \$25,000 for educational projects. Sponsors must have a minimum 20 percent match, which can be cash or in-kind. Projects must be open to the public for 25 years.

Mr. Murphy announced joint TAC/County Commission meetings will be occurring in March. These meetings allow an opportunity for members of the public to meet with their local TAC members and provide feedback regarding the prioritization process. During the April meeting, each county will prioritize their lists of projects before the regional prioritization in July.

Mr. Murphy mentioned the annual statewide planning partnership meeting will be held on Thursday February 27, 2025 in Jefferson City. At the meeting, all RPCs and MPOs in the state meet with all MoDOT districts and central leadership to review goals for the upcoming year.

The grant agreement for the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant by the USDOT to create a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for the 5-county region was approved by FHWA in November and started our timeline to develop the plan. The plan will take about two years to complete and our goal is to have the plan finalized by December 2026.

VI. Old Business

The Active Transportation Plan for the City of Poplar Bluff, completed by the OFRPC after the Butler County Health Department received a Better Communities Better Health grant, is finished and a public comment period is open. Once the survey feedback is incorporated, we are looking for either the City to adopt or the Health Department to pass a resolution for the plan to be effective. So far, 22 responses have been received.

For the City of Qulin's Active Transportation Plan, An Active Living Community of Practice kick off planning meeting was held here at the OFRPC office for all recipients of the MoDHSS grant. Following the completion of Active Communities Assessment modules in September little was done in the last part of the year. On January 21st the first monthly web meeting is scheduled, and Qulin is to formally name their Community Champion in January. The first formal ATP planning session is currently scheduled for February 12, 2025.

VII. New Business

Mr. Murphy introduced the draft update to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP was last updated in June 2023, and is due for its next update in June 2025. The draft version is available for review until the April TAC meeting, at which time the TAC will be asked to approve the plan. The draft version is available on the OFRPC website. This update is relatively minor after a very large update in 2023. One change is to move from updating the plan every two years

to updating it every two to three years. This will help give some leeway when the plan doesn't have a lot of change, and might try to keep the plan on a 5-year update cycle to coincide with the PTHSTP.

VIII. General Discussion

Chairman Polk requested updates to a few projects. He asked if all improvements to I-70 were guaranteed to occur. MoDOT staff in attendance answered as far as they know the project will be moving forward over a period of several years. There is lots of information on the MoDOT website. Chairman Polk also asked for updates on I-57/US 67. Bill Robison, Butler County, and Chairman of the Highway 67 Corporation stated the Corning Bypass project received a \$25 million RAISE grant for I-57. That bypass is about a \$50 million project and it is good for the corridor to see that investment. The bypass will be about 4 miles in length. Arkansas's next project will be working from Corning to the Missouri state line. Matt Wilkerson stated it will take a few years to see the connection at the state line as it will take bi-state agreements and lots of coordination.

Mr. Robison stated the big priority right now is to go from two-lane to 4-lane. That must be the primary focus first. In Arkansas, Little Rock to Walnut Ridge is now designated as I-57, not future I-57. The important thing about this project is following the traffic, Little Rock to Memphis is severely congested, a lot of the population of the country lives east of the Mississippi River and a lot of the shipping trucks come from the south/southwest and drive to the northeast. Chad Henson, Wayne County, asked what the ADT of Highway 67 was. It was stated about 7-8,000 right now, but once the 4 lane is there, it will increase significantly.

Jesse Roy inquired if anyone from the region applied to serve on the LPA Advisory Committee. Mr. Roy's last meeting is this month. It appeared no one from the TAC applied. Mr. Roy, Chairman Polk, and Mr. Murphy, who has also previously served on the LPA Advisory Committee all encouraged someone from the committee to apply next year.

IX. Adjournment

Vince Lampe moved to adjourn. Chairman Brian Polk adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

TAC ATTENDANCE ROSTER

January 9, 2025

Mr. Andrew Murphy	Ozark Foothills RPC
Mr. Robert Augsdorfer	Ozark Foothills RPC
Mr. Vince Lampe	Butler County
Mr. Ralph Stucker	Butler County
Mr. Larry Wells	Butler County
Mr. Gary Pride	Butler County
Mr. Bill Robison	Butler County
Mr. Ron Keeney	Carter County
Mr. Tom Wilder	Carter County
Mr. Randal Jenkins	Carter County
Mr. Eric McSpadden	Carter County
Ms. Ashley Newson	Carter County
Mr. Steve Chitwood	Reynolds County
Mr. Darrell Dement	Reynolds County
Mr. Craig Foster	Reynolds County
Mr. Jesse Roy	Ripley County
Mr. Gary Emmons	Ripley County
Mr. Michael Williams	Ripley County
Mr. Dennis Cox	Ripley County
Mr. Jarret Ficke	Ripley County
Mr. Freddie Laroux	Ripley County
Mr. Brian Polk	Wayne County
Mr. Doug Wood	Wayne County
Mr. Chad Henson	Wayne County
Ms. Barb Potter	Wayne County (alternate)
Mr. Matt Wilkerson	MoDOT Southeast District
Mr. Joe Killian	MoDOT Southeast District
Ms. Melissa Rose	MoDOT Southeast District
Ms. Katy Bower	MoDOT Southeast District
Ms. Elquin Auala	MoDOT Southeast District
Mr. Randy Potter	Guest

THOSE NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Jeff Darnell	Butler County
Mr. Jordan Collins	Carter County
Mr. Eddie Williams	Reynolds County
Mr. Larry Pogue	Reynolds County
Ms. Alicia Baker	Reynolds County
Mr. Bill Kirkpatrick	Wayne County
Mr. Lee Hillis	Wayne County
Mr. Tylar Pinkley	Wayne County