

Transportation Policy Advisory Committee

August 11, 2021 ♦ Telephonic Conference

MEMBER NAME	ENTITY	PRESENT	ABSENT	STAFF NAME	
Fern Benally	Navajo County	X		Chris Fetzer	
Brady Harris	Town of Tusayan	X		Jennifer O'Connor	
Michael Lomayaktewa	Hopi Tribe		X	Mandia Gonzales	
Mary Mallory	Yavapai County	X		Tod Morris	
Bill Regner	Town of Clarkdale	X		Cindy Binkley	
Matt Ryan	Coconino County	X			
Jerry Smith	Town of Pinetop-Lakeside	X			
Alton Shepherd	Apache County		X	GUEST/ALTERNATE NAME	ENTITY
				Kevin Adam	RTAC
				Gregory Nelson	Coconino County

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Matt Ryan called the meeting to order at 1:05 P.M. Self-introductions were made. A quorum was present.

NACOG hereby gives public notice that it is the Agency’s policy to assure full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other related authorities in all of its programs and activities. NACOG’s Title VI and ADA programs require that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity.

II. Approval of Minutes – June 9, 2021

Chairman Ryan asked for any additions or corrections to the June 9 meeting minutes. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

Jerry Smith moved to approve the June 9, 2021 meeting minutes, seconded by Bill Regner. Motion passed unanimously.

III. Legislative Update

Kevin Adam provided a legislative update.

Federal Update

Federal surface transportation programs are up for renewal. The FAST Act is due for re-authorization at the end of September. At the same time, there has been a push to provide investment in infrastructure. The President, along with a bipartisan group of senators came up with a proposal that provides both surface transportation reauthorization as well as infrastructure.

This legislation passed the Senate, but will need to pass the House of Representatives, which is in recess until 8/23. They will potentially take it up when they return.

The proposed \$1.2 trillion hard infrastructure bill includes continuation of baseline spending, as well as \$550 billion in new spending. It relies on many of the existing programs and formula funding. The bill entails a 34% increase for highway funding. In addition, there is also a \$100 billion increase in competitive grant funding.

Bill Regner asked if this bill would provide funding for a potential expansion of the Verde Canyon Railway's freight services. Kevin Adam responded that guidance wouldn't be made available until after the bill is enacted, but there is the possibility for the project to be eligible either through rail funding, or perhaps through competitive funding.

Tod Morris referred to the discussion at the June meeting regarding much needed renovations on AmTrak's Southwest Chief. He suggested that the committee might like an agenda item to discuss this opportunity at the September meeting. The TPAC members agreed.

State Update

Arizona's state revenues are still coming in strong. Unless there is some sort of an economic collapse, the state should have a robust budget surplus. If that occurs, lawmakers will likely repeat their use of earmark funding for specific projects. The RTAC is developing compromise legislation, which includes earmarks, but with projects prioritized by the local governments. This ties in with the Regional Priority Project List that will be discussed in the next item.

Bill Regner asked how locally elected officials can prepare their communities to receive this money as it comes down. Kevin Adam responded that federal formula funding will come to ADOT, some of which gets sub-allocated to local regions. More directly, communities have the ability to pursue competitive grant programs. Councilor Regner asked if NACOG has funding for communities without a lot of resources for matching funds. Kevin Adam noted that the RAISE grant program has a portion set-aside for rural areas with no match requirement. Chris Fetzer added that NACOG's resources are limited based on the planning funds that ADOT provides to the region. Engagement with lawmakers is imperative to advocate for the need to see some of those funds passed down to local governments, rather than have the funding absorbed by ADOT.

Fern Benally asked if the federal bill would provide funding directly to tribes. Kevin Adam responded that the bill provides funding specific for tribal roads. Supervisor Benally asked about earmark projects on tribal lands that were discussed at the committee level, but never made it into the final state budget. Kevin Adam responded that the sponsors of those projects would have to propose them again in the next session and advocate to build support among lawmakers. He added that earmarks are a less effective way to satisfy local priorities, and the same funding obstacles are likely to occur again next year.

IV. Priority Project List Development Update and Approval

Over the last 6 months, the TPAC has discussed the process to submit projects for the regional priority project list. This list will be used for NACOG's portion of the RTAC legislation that was discussed during Kevin Adam's update. The RTAC proposal will be for \$50 million statewide. NACOG's portion of this is \$9.2 million.

During the call for projects, NACOG received \$83 million in funding requests from across the region. \$9.2 million of this has been ranked and added to the High Priority Project List to be submitted to RTAC for inclusion in their proposal to the State Legislature. The remaining \$71.6 million will be included on the Regionally Significant Project List, for federal funding advocacy.

Jennifer O'Connor presented the project list, which was included with today's meeting materials. She also reviewed the process that was used to develop the project list. Today's list was unanimously approved by the Technical Subcommittee at its 8/4 meeting.

Bill Regner moved to approve the priority project list, seconded by Mary Mallory. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. O'Connor explained the next steps in the process. The priority project list will be presented to the Regional Council for approval at their 8/26 meeting. The Rural Transportation Advocacy Council (RTAC) has developed a draft resolution, staff will email the resolution to the TPAC members for feedback, prior to approval at the September TPAC meeting. The resolution will be presented to the Regional Council Executive Committee for adoption at their 9/30 meeting. The RTAC will roll out the draft legislation during the Rural Transportation Summit in October, and work to garner support this fall. The bill will be introduced to the State Legislature in January.

V. Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority (IPTA) Legislation Update

The Arizona Transit Association (AzTA) would like to play a lead role in the IPTA legislation change. The AzTA Legislative Committee is scheduled to meet on 8/18 to discuss strategy and next steps.

NACOG staff will provide an update and there will be an opportunity to discuss the TPAC's role at the September 8 meeting.

VI. Transportation Program Update

Mandia Gonzales reported on the Regional Traffic Count project. She provided a list and map of the current Phase 2 count locations. Members of the Technical Subcommittee are working to prioritize their Phase 2 and Phase 3 count locations. This process is scheduled to be finalized by 8/25. NACOG will submit the final Phase 2 list to ADOT on 9/1.

The FY25/26 Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) call for projects has been delayed.

The FY21 Tribal Transportation Program Safety Fund has \$10.1 million statewide. The application deadline is 9/9.

NACOG Transportation Planning FY21 Accomplishments:

- Completed TSC by-laws update
- Completed FY22-26 TIP update
- Regional Traffic Count Program is underway
- Regionally Significant Project List is nearing completion
- The NACOG region has brought in \$185.9 million in projects/funding over the last two years

Tod Morris reported that microchip shortages have impacted transit vehicle manufacturing and delivery. Agencies that receive Section 5310 funds have been informed that their vehicles may not be available until spring 2022 or 2023. They have been provided the option to withdraw awards and retain local match, or wait additional time for vehicle delivery.

The 2018 Passenger Transportation Study highlighted the need for route re-design, service coordination and other enhancements within the Navajo Nation. NACOG and Navajo transit are in discussions about NACOG providing planning support to create a 5-year transit plan. Staff is currently working on an IGA to outline terms and structure of the partnership between ADOT and the Navajo Nation.

NACOG Mobility/Transit Planning FY21 Accomplishments:

- Completion of the Yavapai Passenger Transportation Study (YPTS)
- NACOG helped lead the development and launch of AzRideInfo.com, which allows individuals to access local transportation resources
- NACOG Planning partnered with the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to provide COVID-19 vaccine access to seniors and persons with disabilities
- The NACOG Region was the recipient of 58 Section 5310 grants and awards. Specific projects are listed in the TIP.

VII. Next Meeting: September 8, 2021 – 1:00-2:30 PM

Committee members that do not currently receive Kevin's RTAC email updates should contact Cindy Binkley to be added to the distribution list.

The next TPAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for 1-2:30PM on Wednesday, 9/8. Staff will send an outlook invitation to determine if there will be a quorum.

VIII. Adjourn

Chairman Ryan asked for any final questions or comments. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting.

Chairman Matt Ryan adjourned the August 11, 2021 meeting of the NACOG Transportation Policy Advisory Committee at 2:30 P.M.