

**MINUTES
NORTHEAST TEXAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, INC., AND
ARK-TEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
AUGUST 28, 2025**

The Northeast Texas Economic Development District, Inc. (NETEDD) and the Board of Directors of the Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG) met at 10:00 a.m., Thursday, August 28, 2025, at the Pilgrim's Community Center, 820 West Pecan Street, Mt. Pleasant, Texas, and via videoconference.

1. Bobby Howell, Judge, Bowie County, called the meeting to order.
2. Robert Newsom, Judge, Hopkins County, gave the invocation.
3. Public Comment.

No member of the public made a comment.

NETEDD Agenda Items

4. The next order of business was to review and consider approval of the minutes as submitted for the NETEDD meeting held on Thursday, June 26, 2025.

Motion to approve was made by Chris Brown, Vice President, Hopkins County Hospital District, and seconded by Scott Lee, Judge, Franklin County. It was approved.

5. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director, presented for review and approval of NETEDD's portion of ATCOG's Financial Plan for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026.

Motion to approve was made by Scott Norton, Executive Director/CEO, TexAmericas Center, and seconded by Chris Brown. It was approved.

6. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel presented the NETEDD Program announcement for information only.

This concludes all NETEDD agenda items.

ATCOG Board of Directors Agenda Items

7. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel presented for review and approval of the consent agenda items.
 - Approval of the minutes as submitted for the ATCOG Board of Directors Meeting held Thursday, June 26, 2025.
 - Acceptance of the minutes as submitted for the ATCOG Area Agency on Aging Regional Advisory Council meeting held Thursday, June 5, 2025.
 - Acceptance of the minutes as submitted for the ATCOG Solid Waste Advisory Committee meeting held Wednesday, April 2, 2025.

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

8. Judge Howell called for the Board of Directors to recess from the Open Session and move into an Executive Closed Session at 10:11 a.m., to discuss personnel matters, as allowed under the Texas Open Meetings Act, Section 551.074, regarding the Executive Director's performance evaluation.
9. Judge Howell reconvened the Board of Directors meeting into an Open Session at 10:20 a.m. Upon review of Ms. Rudel's performance evaluation, Judge Howell recommended that she receive a 5% COLA increase.

Motion to approve was made by Doug Reeder, Judge, Morris County, and seconded by Judge Lee. It was approved.

10. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel presented the Executive Director Report for information only.
 - Indirect Finance Quarterly Report
 - Quarterly Program Reports
11. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel presented for review and approval of ATCOG's Financial Plan for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026.

Ms. Rudel stated the Plan reflects anticipated revenues and expenditures of \$27,646,541. This document combines a Work Program and a Financial Plan. It is not technically a budget because ATCOG does not have taxing or oversight authority. Within each State or Federal grant that ATCOG administers, the funding agency regulates the categories in which we are allowed to spend funds. The funding source has complete oversight of the individual grant programs.

Ms. Rudel stated that each program area, specific project-by-project tasks, and performance measures are delineated for the year. Each project is assigned an objective, work tasks, performance measures, and human resource requirements.

There are 14 managed programs, comprising over 60 projects and contracts, that make up the revenue sources in the FY 2026 Ark-Tex Council of Governments Strategic Work Program and Financial Plan.

Ms. Rudel stated that this Plan does include various merit step increases for staff. Funding is provided for the Salary Schedule effective October 1, 2025. This Plan includes a COLA for all staff. The total COLA increases for the past 10 years add up to 27.20%, while the SSI COLA increased by a total of 28.3% prior to FY2026.

ATCOG has 80 full-time and 15 part-time personnel, for an approximate total of 84.22 FTEs.

Ms. Rudel stated that ATCOG's healthcare provider continues to be the Texas Health Benefits (TXHB). Premiums for our basic medical plan remained the same this year. ATCOG's defined contribution amount is \$946.54 per month for each employee's basic medical coverage, which is 100% of the employee's premium. Employees have the option to "buy up" to a medical plan with a lower deductible and/or out-of-pocket costs and to make extra contributions to their HSA. Additional premium costs over the defined employer contribution of \$946.54 per month will be paid by the employee. Employee dental insurance premiums remain \$30.72 per employee per month. Rates for life, accidental death, and dismemberment (AD&D) did not change.

Ms. Rudel stated that ATCOG's current retirement plan is under TCDRS. We are currently at a 200% employer-to-employee match with an employee contribution rate of 4%.

The Benefit rate is estimated to be 52.8%, which includes utilizing the FY24 overallocation.

According to Texas Health and Human Services (HHS), ATCOG's State Cognizant Agency, which reviews/approves the indirect rate each year, will utilize the fixed with carry-forward calculation based on prior year audit figures. The indirect rate is applied to salaries and benefits, and the approved rate is 20.8%.

Ms. Rudel stated it was reported last year that ATCOG program revenues would trend back down due to the previous utilization of CARES and ARPA funding. Revenues and Expenses may continue to see some adjustments as the timing of funding and other factors are taken into account.

Ms. Rudel added that current estimates would utilize approximately \$31,574 of ATCOG Unrestricted Funds for Transportation and Aging match, as well as other needs, to support ATCOG programs and personnel. The FY24 Audit reflects an unrestricted balance of \$3,447,570, which decreased from the FY23 audit amount of \$4,740,183. This is due to the required match for Transportation.

- Housing, Environmental, Criminal Justice, and Regional Development revenues are increasing.
- Transportation will see a significant decrease, which will result in a reduction in services across the region. A reduction-in-force was implemented prior to the start of the fiscal year.
- Aging, 9-1-1, Economic Development, and Special Projects experienced decreases.

The Budget/Personnel Committee met on August 25, 2025, and approved recommending the FY2026 Financial Plan to the ATCOG Board of Directors for approval.

Motion to approve was made by Scott Norton and seconded by Lowell Walker, Mayor, City of DeKalb.

12. Ms. Debbie Purifoy presented for review and approval of an agreement with Guaranty Bank to provide banking services beginning October 1, 2025.

On July 6, 2025, the Ark-Tex Council of Governments (ATCOG) issued a comprehensive Request for Proposal (RFP) inviting financial institutions to submit proposals for banking services.

By the specified deadline of August 6, 2025, we received a single, detailed proposal from Guaranty Bank & Trust, the only institution to respond to our RFP. The evaluation committee meticulously reviewed the submitted proposal based on criteria that included service offerings, cost-effectiveness, and customer support. After a thorough assessment, Guaranty Bank & Trust's proposal was found to align perfectly with our requirements and expectations.

The banking services will begin on October 1, 2025, and extend through September 30, 2029, with one possible one-year extension, subject to approval by the ATCOG Board of Directors.

Motion to approve was made by Mayor Walker and seconded by Dana Reeves, General Manager, Franklin County Water District. It was approved.

13. Ms. Debbie Purifoy presented for review and approval of revisions to the ATCOG Procurement Policy and Procedures Manual.

On May 29, 2025, the Texas Legislature enacted revisions to Texas Government Code 252, which impact procurement processes by raising the threshold for competitive purchasing requirements to \$100,000. This legislative change alters the criteria for how ATCOG will handle various procurement activities and changes the scope of transactions that require a formalized competitive bidding process.

The proposed revisions to the Procurement Policy and Procedures manual are as follows:

- **Introduction** – Updates specifically in paragraphs 3 and 6. (Page 3)
- **3.0.2 Competitive Small Purchase** – This revision reflects the following change: If the purchase is more than \$10,000.00 but less than \$100,000. (Page 18)
- **3.0.3 Competitive Formal Sealed Solicitation** – This revision reflects the following change: If the purchase amount is nearly \$100,000.00, a detailed competitive formal sealed solicitation process will be implemented. (Page 18)

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

14. Ms. Leslie McBride presented for review and approval of revisions to the ATCOG Policies and Procedures Manual.

The proposed revisions to the policy and procedures manual are as follows:

- **17.02 Day Travel-General Policy**
- **17.04 Overnight Travel-General Policy**

Both policy revisions update verbiage to align with ATCOG's contract with Enterprise for rental vehicles. A standard-size car was replaced with a full-size car, and 26 miles per gallon was replaced with 21 miles per gallon.

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

15. Ms. Amber Murr presented for review and approval of the annual renewal of the ATCOG Ethics Policy Manual.

The rules adopted by the Texas Transportation Commission established a framework for the internal ethics and compliance program of any entity that receives financial assistance from the department. The compliance program must satisfy specific requirements, with the goal of discouraging fraud and illegal activity. TXDOT also instituted an internal ethics and compliance program designed to encourage further ethical behavior within the department, as well as compliance with the law and departmental policies.

This Ethics Policy Manual was approved by the Board of Directors on December 16, 2010, making our agency eligible to apply for and receive state and federal funding.

ATCOG enforces a compliance program by reviewing and providing all employees a copy of the "Ethics Policy Manual" during new hire orientation; by conducting yearly Ethics Manual Training that is mandatory for all employees; by reminding Board members of the standard of ethical behavior that our employees and board members must meet; by internal controls used to monitor activities; and by conducting investigations of any alleged misconduct. A copy of the Ethics Policy Manual is also available on the shared administration computer folder for constant access by employees.

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

16. Ms. Amber Murr presented for review and approval of updates to the Equal Employment Opportunity Plan.

The purpose of the Equal Employment Opportunity Plan is to affirm that ATCOG will provide a work environment that is free from discrimination, including harassment, based on race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression.

The plan provides guidelines for employment practices, the complaint process, and data representing the ATCOG workforce. This data includes employment practices such as separations, disciplinary actions, promotions, and hiring.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) reviewed ATCOG's EEO Plan on August 20, 2025. No revisions were suggested.

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

17. Ms. Amber Murr presented for review and adoption of the ATCOG Flexible Benefits Cafeteria Plan for FY2026.

The ATCOG Flexible Benefits Cafeteria Plan will allow ATCOG to offer additional benefits to employees on a pre-tax basis, such as cancer, critical illness, and accident insurance. ATCOG remains in compliance with Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 by updating the written plan annually, distributing it to all eligible employees, offering the plan to all eligible employees, and completing nondiscrimination testing on the plan to ensure that only those who are eligible receive the pre-tax benefit.

Motion to approve was made by Becky Fellers, Board of Trustees, Liberty Eylau Independent School District, and seconded by Chris Brown. It was approved.

18. Ms. Jenny Butler presented for review and approval of appointment to the ATCOG Area Agency on Aging Regional Advisory Council.

The Area Agency on Aging Regional Advisory Council has a vacancy for the Lamar County Representative. It seeks the approval of the Ark-Tex Council of Governments Board for the appointment of one new member to fill the vacancy.

- AAA RAC Member nomination to represent Lamar County - Ms. Rhonda Rogers, the Texas Silver Hared Legislature Immediate Past Speaker, Paris, Texas

Ms. Rogers has served on numerous committees during her ten years with the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature and has been a strong advocate for older Texans. She is retired from the U.S. Air Force, has taught various classes in high school and university-level classes, served as the Lamar County Veterans' Service Officer, and has founded and served on several committees in the Paris area.

Motion to approve was made by Chris Brown and seconded by Dana Reeves. It was approved.

19. Ms. Toni Lindsey presented for review and approval of the submission of an application for FY26 Brownfield Coalition Assessment Grant Funds through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The grant opening is expected in September 2025 with an estimated 2-month application completion timeframe. ATCOG seeks to apply for \$1,500,000 in Coalition Assessment Funding to be utilized in eligible rural areas of the ATCOG region. Brownfield sites will be assessed by the ATCOG Environmental Coordinator and the Environmental Specialist procured in 2024 for site eligibility for coalition application inclusion. Further guidance relating to the 2026 applications will be posted on the EPA site when the grants officially open.

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

20. Ms. Whitney Fezell presented for review and approval authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a contract with MAL Technologies Fleet, LLC., to purchase and install dispatch consoles and accessories for Franklin County.

In 2024, ATCOG Homeland Security Program secured funding through the Statewide Emergency Radio Infrastructure grant to support projects that support state and regional efforts to improve or sustain interoperable emergency radio infrastructure. Emergency management coordinators in Franklin County evaluated their communication systems and determined what radio infrastructure equipment was needed to enhance/sustain their communication systems.

ATCOG Homeland Security Program utilized The Interlocal Purchasing System (TIPS) to obtain a quote from MAL Technologies Fleet, LLC to purchase/install the following:

- A two-position dispatch console with radios, antennas, coax, and accessories.

The total estimated cost of the project is \$108,672.74. The grant will cover approximately \$112,000 of the expenses, and any remaining costs over \$112,000 will be the responsibility of Franklin County.

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

21. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel presented for review and approval to combine the November Executive Committee and December Board of Directors meetings to be held on Thursday, December 4, 2025.

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

Announcements

Ms. Mary Beth Rudel announced that presentations for the ATCOG Annual Meeting will be held, along with a special guest speaker, immediately after the Board meeting. A meal will be provided, and she encouraged everyone present to stay and enjoy lunch along with the presentations.

Ms. Rudel informed the Board that the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Annual Training Conference 2025 will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah, from October 14 to 17, 2025. Please contact Marla or Mary Beth if interested in attending.

Ms. Rudel stated that the next Executive Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, September 25, 2025, at the Pilgrim's Community Center, 820 West Pecan Street, Mt. Pleasant, Texas, and via videoconference.

Judge Howell called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Judge Reeder and seconded by Ann Rushing, Mayor, City of Clarksville. It was approved. Meeting adjourned.

NETEDD BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

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

ATCOG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

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

ATCOG BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Chris Brown, Vice President, Hopkins County Hospital District
Becky Fellers, Board of Trustees, Liberty Eylau Independent School District
Laney Harris, Director, City of Texarkana-AR
Deana Ramsey, Council Member, City of Blossom
Kelly Redfearn, Council Member, City of Mt. Pleasant
Dana Reeves, General Manager, Franklin County Water District
Wesley Lyon, Mayor, City of Mt. Pleasant
Lowell Walker, Mayor, City of DeKalb

GUESTS PRESENT

Claribel Banda, Mt. Pleasant Economic Development Corporation
Reece DeWoody, Office of Senator Bryan Hughes
Ginny Lewis-Ford, Executive Director/Texas Association of Regional Councils
Andrea Loreda, Texarkana Gazette
L.D. Williamson

Karen Fuse

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director
Leslie McBride, Deputy Director
Laura Cowling, Finance Director
Rea Allen, 9-1-1 Program Director
Tina Bell, Public Relations/Media Coordinator
Jenny Butler, Area Agency on Aging Director
Nancy Flowers, Area Aging on Aging Program Specialist
Daneshia Cherry, Housing Director
Whitney Fezell, Homeland Security Coordinator
Patricia Haley, Criminal Justice Coordinator
Melody Harmon, Economic Development Director
Toni Lindsey, Regional Development Director
Marla Matthews, Executive Assistant
Amber Murr, Human Resources Director
Paul Prange, Environmental Resources Coordinator
Debbie Purifoy, Compliance and Purchasing Officer
Bobby Williams, Transportation Operations Coordinator

Signature on File

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

ATTEST:

Signature on File
