

**MINUTES
NORTH EAST TEXAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, INC., AND
ARK-TEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS BOARD MEETING
JUNE 25, 2026**

The North East 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, June 25, 2026, at the Pilgrim's Community Center, 820 West Pecan Street, Mt. Pleasant, Texas, and via videoconference.

1. Scott Norton, Executive Director/CEO, TexAmericas Center, called the meeting to order.
2. Scott Lee, Judge, Franklin County, gave the invocation.
3. Public Comment.

No members of the public made comments.

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, April 30, 2026.

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

5. Ms. Toni Lindsey presented for review and approval of the 2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) – 2026 Update.

The 2026 CEDS update establishes annual updates and removes any references to equity and/or climate change, per the updated CEDS guidelines. The CEDS – 2026 update includes the following revisions:

- Updated NETEDD Board of Directors on page 2.
- Updated Incorporated Cities/Towns and Unincorporated Communities on pages 9 – 10.
- Added Colleges & Universities to School Districts on page 12.
- Highlighted the seven (7) identified needs from the Regional Broadband report completed in 2023 on page 17.
- Reviewed and documented the seven (7) CEDS targets remaining for 2025/2026 on page 22.
- Added ATCOG participation in Texas Area Regional Council (TARC) and the Broadband Development Office (BDO) regional planning on page 25.
- County Updates: The data on pages 38 – 46 has been updated for each County. Updated the link on each county page for "Economic Overview 2025."
- Economic Distress Criteria: The data on page 47 has been updated. Removed SBA icon from CEDS on page 54.

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

This concludes all NETEDD agenda items.

ATCOG Board of Directors Agenda Items

6. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director, 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, May 28, 2026.
- Acceptance of the minutes as submitted for the ATCOG Area Agency on Aging Regional Council meeting held Thursday, June 4, 2026.

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

7. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director, presented for review and approval of public input and the 2027 Texas Community Development Block Grant (TxCDBG) Community Development Fund Regional Project Priority Scoring for the ATCOG State Planning Region.

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) administers the non-entitlement portion of the Texas Community Development Block Grant (TxCDBG) Program, which provides financial assistance to cities with populations of less than 50,000 and counties with populations under 200,000. At the federal level, the funds are allocated to the State annually under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The TxCDBG funding is a key federal source of funding that provides direct grant assistance to rural areas for public infrastructure improvements, disaster relief, housing, and economic development.

The maximum score for a Community Development Fund application will be 200 points in all regions. These points are assigned in three ways:

- 65% of the points are assigned based on objective factors adopted by the Unified Scoring Committee.
- 25% of the points are assigned based on the Regional Project Priorities selected by the governing board, or a designated committee, of each state planning region.
- 10% of the points are assigned based on State Scoring factors adopted by TDA.

Ms. Rudel announced that Lowell Walker, Mayor of the City of DeKalb, has been appointed to represent ATCOG on the Unified Scoring Committee.

After review and discussion, it was recommended that Solid Waste Disposal Improvement be moved from Tier 3 to Tier 1. The Board recommended the following 2027 TxCDBG Community Development Fund Regional Project Priority Scoring for the ATCOG State Planning Region:

- Project Priority Tier 1 (50 Points): Flood Drainage Improvements, Water/Sewer Improvements, Street Improvements, and Solid Waste Disposal Improvements
- Project Priority Tier 2 (25 Points): Housing
- Project Priority Tier 3 (10 Points): all other eligible activities

Motion to approve was made by Wesley Lyon, Mayor, City of Mount Pleasant, and seconded by Judge Bell. It was approved.

8. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director, presented for review and approval of the proposed ATCOG Salary Schedule for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2027.

The State requires regional planning commissions to submit a salary schedule 45 days prior to the start of the fiscal year to compare salaries of ATCOG employees with salaries in equivalent jobs and must be approved by the Board of Directors. The State will not allow the salaries of ATCOG employees to exceed those of State employees in equivalent positions.

Ms. Rudel presented the proposed recommendation for the FY2027 Salary Schedule, which included a 3% COLA for ATCOG employees. All ATCOG employees are paid at the lower end of the State salary scale. No positions at ATCOG exceed the pay of State employees in equivalent positions.

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

9. Ms. Leslie McBride, Deputy Director, presented for review and approval authorizing the Executive Director to sign the Rerate and Benefit Verification Form with Texas Health Benefits Pool to continue to provide health, dental, and life insurance benefits to staff for Plan Year 2026-2027.

Ms. McBride advised the Board that the Rerate Notice for FY 2027 includes a 6% increase in health premiums, no increase in dental, and a decrease in life insurance rates.

ATCOG will be offering four plan options to staff. We propose a defined contribution of \$1,003.34 per employee per month. This will cover the basic PPO health plan rate of \$1,003.34. Staff who wish to “buy up” to a more expensive plan may do so at their own expense. There is also a high-deductible plan at a rate of \$884.22 per month that would allow staff to contribute the remaining defined contribution to a health savings account.

Ms. McBride informed the Board that the Budget and Personnel Committee met yesterday and approved for recommendation to the Board.

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

10. Ms. Laura Cowling presented for review and annual approval of the Investment Policy that establishes procedures to be followed in investing funds for ATCOG.

ATCOG normally operates on a reimbursable basis, whereby we receive approval for grant funds, provide services, and then are reimbursed our money from the grant. In the event ATCOG receives funds in advance, the Investment Policy stipulates how the funds are invested.

The Public Funds Investment Act requires that the ATCOG Board of Directors review and approve the Investment Policy annually. This is an opportunity for the Board to make any necessary changes. The Policy is and will remain a part of the Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual.

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

11. Ms. Laura Cowling presented for review and approval of the revision to the Accounting Policy and Procedures Manual that establishes procedures to be followed in the Finance Department for the Ark-Tex Council of Governments.

The following administrative updates are needed to reflect current practices and improve operational efficiency. The proposed revisions include:

- Separation of Duties: Journal Vouchers – Updating the journal voucher approval authority to the Finance Director or designated staff.
- Bank Reconciliation – Revising bank reconciliation responsibilities from the Payroll Specialist to the Accounting Coordinator.
- Travel: Travel Vouchers – Establishing a three-day deadline for submission of finalized overnight travel paperwork.

ATCOG policy requires that the ATCOG Board review and approve any policy and procedure changes.

Motion to approve was made by Tanner Crutcher, Judge, Delta County, and seconded by Judge Lee. It was approved.

12. Ms. Leslie McBride, Deputy Director, presented for review and approval of the revision to the Ark-Tex Council of Governments Policies and Procedures Manual.

The following revisions to the policy and procedures manual are being proposed to adjust leave accruals:

- 6.03 Annual Leave Accrual – adding a level of accrual at fifteen (15) + years
- 6.08 Sick Leave Accrual – increasing from seventy-two (72) hours to ninety-six (96) hours per year
- Additionally, the policy revision will remove the term “days” and replace it with “hours.”

Ms. McBride informed the Board that the Budget and Personnel Committee met yesterday and approved for recommendation to the Board.

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

13. Ms. Daneshia Cherry presented for review and approval and certification of the ATCOG Housing Annual Plan for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2026.

The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, enacted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), requires that the Annual Plan be submitted to establish goals and operating procedures for achieving them. The Annual Plan for fiscal year 2026 is now due to HUD and must be approved and certified by the Board of Directors.

The Annual Plan outlines four (4) primary goals to enhance housing and self-sufficiency services. The goals focus on expanding housing opportunities by reducing voucher lease-up times and increasing HCV utilization; promoting self-sufficiency through the FSS program by enrolling families, tracking income increases, and supporting financial independence; strengthening community partnerships via outreach and service connections; and improving operational efficiency by streamlining processes, transitioning to digital platforms, and maintaining HUD compliance through timely reporting. These goals align with HUD’s goals for the programs and help to advance the program forward.

HUD required a public meeting, and a public notice was published forty-five (45) days prior to the meeting. The meeting was scheduled for 9:00 a.m. on June 10, 2026, and the only attendees

were the Housing Program staff. There were no comments or recommendations for changes to the Plans received in person, by email, or by phone.

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

14. Ms. Patricia Haley presented the Computerized Criminal History (CCH) System updates.

The deadline for counties to meet the 90% or higher criminal history disposition percentages for both adults and juveniles is August 1, 2026. If the disposition percentages are not met by August 1, counties will not be eligible for any grant funding through the Office of the Governor and may be ineligible for funding from other agencies.

Ms. Haley provided the current numbers as of the Board meeting date and will continue to provide updates to the county judges and sheriffs.

15. Ms. Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director, presented for review and approval to cancel the July ATCOG Executive Committee meeting and to move the annual meeting from September to August.

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

16. Following the announcements, Scott Norton called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion to adjourn was made by Judge Lee and seconded by Judge Cooper. It was approved. Meeting adjourned.

Announcements

Ms. Rudel announced the Annual Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, August 27, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., located at the Pilgrim's Community Center, 820 West Pecan Street, Mt. Pleasant, Texas, and via videoconference.

NETEDD BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Scott Norton, Executive Director/CEO, TexAmericas Center
Scott Lee, Judge, Franklin County
Brandon Bell, Judge, Lamar County
Kent Cooper, Judge, Titus County
Tanner Crutcher, Judge, Delta County
Seth Cox, Commissioner, Delta County
Robert Newsom, Judge, Hopkins County
Doug Reeder, Judge, Morris County

ATCOG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Scott Norton, Executive Director/CEO, TexAmericas Center
Scott Lee, Judge, Franklin County
Brandon Bell, Judge, Lamar County
Kent Cooper, Judge, Titus County
Tanner Crutcher, Judge, Delta County
Robert Newsom, Judge, Hopkins County
Doug Reeder, Judge, Morris County

ATCOG BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Brad Cecil, Executive Director, NorthEast Texas Regional Advisory Council
Becky Fellers, Board of Trustees, Liberty Eylau Independent School District
David Fordinal, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Como
Laney Harris, Director, City of Texarkana-AR
Greg Ostertag, Mayor, City of Mount Vernon
Jeff Parker, Council Member, City of Hooks
Shawn Tulley, Director, Red River Appraisal District
Jean Matlock, Council Member, City of Texarkana-TX
Wesley Lyon, Mayor, City of Mount Pleasant

GUESTS PRESENT

Lynn Barret, City of Mount Pleasant
Charles Edwards, GrantWorks
Sherrie Houff, Department of State Health Services
Garrett Houston, City of Mount Pleasant
Rea Donna Jones, Texarkana MPO
John McElfish, GrantWorkds
Janeth Morena, Mount Pleasant Economic Development
David Shultice, City of Mount Pleasant
Jennifer Studdard, Director of Finance, City of Nash

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Mary Beth Rudel, Executive Director
Leslie McBride, Deputy Director
Jenny Butler, Director of Area Agency on Aging
Daneshia Cherry, Housing Director
Laura Cowling, Finance Director
Whitney Fezell, Homeland Security Coordinator
Patricia Haley, Criminal Justice Coordinator
Melody Harmon, Economic Development Coordinator
Toni Lindsey, Regional Development Coordinator
Marla Matthews, Executive Assistant
Paul Prange, Environmental Resources Coordinator
Debbie Purifoy, Compliance and Purchasing Officer

/s/ Scott Norton, August 27, 2026

Scott Norton, Vice President
Board of Directors
Ark-Tex Council of Governments

ATTEST:

/s/ Kent Cooper, August 27, 2026

Board of Directors
Ark-Tex Council of Governments