



# Small Cities Council Meeting Summary

Wednesday, January 26, 2022 | 9:00 AM  
on Zoom  
*Approved March 30, 2022*

Meeting PowerPoint slides available at <https://metroplan.org/small-cities-council>  
Meeting recording available at <https://www.facebook.com/Metroplan/videos/513284090071261>

## SCC Members Attending

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Mayor Sammy Hartwick, President       | City of Greenbrier    |
| 2. Mayor Mike Kemp, Vice President       | City of Shannon Hills |
| 3. Mayor Bernie Chamberlain              | City of Austin        |
| 4. Mayor Charles Gastineau               | City of Ward          |
| 5. Mayor Sam Higdon                      | City of Guy           |
| 6. Ms. Jennifer Hill, Recorder/Treasurer | City of Haskell       |
| 7. Mayor Butch House                     | City of England       |
| 8. Mayor Allan Loring                    | City of Wrightsville  |
| 9. Mayor Trae Reed                       | City of Lonoke        |
| 10. Mayor Terry Don Robinson             | City of Wooster       |

## Guests

- |                      |                |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 11. Mayor Tom Farmer | City of Benton |
|----------------------|----------------|

## Metroplan Staff

- |                           |                                       |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 12. Mr. Casey Covington   | Deputy Director/CARTS Study Director  |
| 13. Ms. Bernadette Rhodes | Community Planner                     |
| 14. Mr. Jeff Runder       | Senior Planner for Technical Analysis |

## 1. Call to Order & Welcome

Ms. Rhodes advised that the Facebook livestream of this Zoom meeting would end at the end of the Small Cities Council meeting, upon which a special board meeting of the Metroplan Board of Directors would begin livestreaming. However, the Model UDO review meeting starting at 10:00 AM would be recorded via Zoom and made available upon request.

Mayor Hartwick called the meeting to order and welcomed participants, then asked Ms. Rhodes to proceed with the agenda.

## 2. Introductions & Announcements

Ms. Rhodes asked participants to introduce themselves and share any successes or challenges they have encountered. She also asked for a volunteer to give a Community Spotlight presentation at the

March Small Cities Council meeting.

Mayor Loring of Wrightsville shared that he was appointed mayor in September 2021 and welcomes any help from the group in getting up to speed.

Mayor Reed stated that Lonoke is working on water/sewer updates, with four to five months left on the project. He nominated Mayor Higdon for the March Community Spotlight and emphasized the City of Guy's nice new Dollar General store.

Mayor Hartwick shared that Greenbrier has a pre-construction meeting tomorrow on a Metroplan-funded TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) project for sidewalks. The project is anticipated to take 90 days to finish. He also mentioned that staffing has been a challenge for cities during the pandemic.

Mayor Higdon thanked Mayor Reed for his comment and stated the Dollar General has been a benefit to the City of Guy. He shared that ARDOT is letting a bid in February for street paving in Guy, and that the City is in the process of removing old water lines under the existing road so that the newly paved road will not need to be cut should repairs to the water line be needed.

Mayor Gastineau shared that Ward's sidewalk project is under construction. Utilities are currently being relocated so the Hwy 319/367 intersection project can begin construction. City Council has approved an all-inclusive playground. He also stated that Covid infections among employees have created challenges.

Mayor Robinson of Wooster shared that the city has laid 5 miles of sewer line and will soon have it all connected. Then two pump stations will be built starting in April/May. Upon their completion, the City can begin pumping sewer on the main line. The City is working with Metroplan and ARDOT on designs for a potential roundabout at the Hwy 25/285 intersection. The City/water district still has numerous subdivisions waiting to come in once the sewer line is functioning.

Ms. Hill shared that Haskell is gathering engineering plans for sewer projects and also experiencing staff outages due to Covid.

Mayor Chamberlain shared that Austin is also working on sewer upgrades.

Ms. Rhodes introduced two additional Metroplan staff members on the call, Mr. Casey Covington and Mr. Jeff Runder.

### **3. Summaries of Previous Meetings**

Ms. Hill made a motion to approve the summaries of the September 29, 2021 and November 17, 2021 meetings. Mayor Higdon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **4. Metroplan Update**

2022-2023 TAP Grant: Ms. Rhodes shared that approval of the TAP grant awards would be on the agenda of the special board meeting at 10:00 AM. 17 applications were received from 14 jurisdictions. \$2,873,793 was requested. The total amount available was \$1,600,000.

2023 STBG Call for Projects: Metroplan anticipates \$15 million available, and the application is set to

be released in April 2022. Mr. Covington shared that he would present application and scoring information at the February board meeting. The call will include new projects as well as projects that have already been out to bid but require additional funding due to cost increases.

Standard Practice Documents: Mr. Covington stated that staff was drafting Standard Practice documents to clarify how federal funding is awarded and change orders/cost overruns are handled.

## **5. Benchmarking Trip Update**

Ms. Rhodes reviewed the results of the vote on potential destinations from December's board meeting. Allentown received 31 points and Fort Collins received 28 points. During the special board meeting, members will be asked to indicate their preference between the top two destinations so trip details and possible timeframes can be determined.

Mayor Hartwick clarified whether the start date would be a travel day or the start of the actual program. Ms. Rhodes answered that the first and last days of each date range are travel days.

Mayor Reed asked whether both Fort Collins and Allentown had small towns nearby that small city mayors could learn from. Ms. Rhodes indicated that Allentown is surrounded by several small cities that act as suburbs of Allentown, and is in proximity to a mid-sized city, Easton, which could act as a companion to the larger city. In Fort Collins, a city named Berthoud (7,000 residents) is a potential companion city. The mayor of Berthoud is the President of the North Front Range MPO's Planning Council.

Mayor Higdon expressed that expense is a consideration. Allentown would require a flight, whereas Fort Collins is within driving distance for those bringing a spouse. Ms. Rhodes clarified that Metroplan pays travel expenses for one representative from each member jurisdiction (typically mayor or regular proxy). Members may bring additional staff or a spouse, at the expense of the city or individual.

Mr. Covington stated that driving and flying are both options, and mileage is reimbursed for those driving. Allentown is 16-hour drive from Little Rock. He encouraged board members to attend, benchmark regional issues and learn how other locations have addressed challenges.

Mayor Loring asked what the main objective was of the benchmarking trips. Ms. Rhodes stated that this year, the main goal is to learn about the implementation of alternative transportation, shared-use paths, and greenways. There will also be presentations, discussions, and networking opportunities with mayors and other city officials and staff (planning, parks, transit).

## **6. Model UDO Topics, Explained**

Ms. Rhodes asked for requests for clarification on certain topics pertaining to the UDO. Hearing none, Ms. Rhodes proceeded to give an overview of the sign regulations, which is the last section in Article 4 – Development Standards, starting on page 92 in the UDO. Metroplan staff included sign regulations as an option for cities to consider. She emphasized that sign regulations are very individual to each city, and that this language is intended as jumping off point for discussion. The section incorporates best practices based on guidance from American Planning Association and Planning Commissioner's Journal. The section includes a table summarizing regulations for each sign type in each zone.

Key elements: Off-premise signs/billboards and pole signs. In general signs must be on-premise unless an off-premise sign is expressly allowed in the regulations following parameters outlined in the UDO. Parameters include maximum sign size, height, and minimum distances between off-premise signs. Single-pole signs allowed one maximum per lot in certain zones. Maximum height and size vary by zone. Cities must consider what they are comfortable with permitting, balancing best practices with what is currently allowed/desired by developers.

Mayor Higdon shared that Guy has an ordinance against all billboards, but no maximum height on pole signs. Mayor Hartwick stated that Greenbrier does not allow billboards, either. Most signs are ground-mounted, but there are some pole signs in front of buildings such as strip shopping centers. There is a maximum height and businesses must be minimum distance off the state highway to be allowed a pole sign. He also said some digital display signs are too bright and frighten motorists at night. Ms. Rhodes pointed to regulations in the UDO regarding digital display signs, which in the draft are only allowed Neighborhood Center, Commercial Corridor, and Industrial zones. Displays can not be visible from residential zones and require minimum dwell time and shorter transition times. Some cities have regulated maximum foot candles, a measurement of brightness, but cities must have a method of measuring and inspecting brightness in order to enforce the regulations.

Mayor Reed shared his experience with Lonoke's Unified Development Code and recommended that cities be prepared with accountability, enforcement, and a staff member who can interpret the code and advise/educate Planning Commissioners. Certain codes will cost business owners more money and will generate questions and challenges.

Mayor Loring inquired whether the UDO would regulate development along the state highway. Ms. Rhodes advised that city's rules may not contradict or be less restrictive than ARDOT's rules, but can be more restrictive.

Ms. Rhodes advised that the UDO will be held to the highest legal standards and is currently under review by an experienced land use attorney. Metroplan staff is also committed to providing on-going education on the UDO for City Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners, and city staff.

## **7. Preview of Upcoming Meetings**

Ms. Rhodes shared the upcoming dates below and stated that going forward, the Model UDO review meetings will take place on every even-numbered month at 9:00 AM before the full board meetings to allow full participation.

- *Model UDO Review* – immediately following this meeting in Metroplan Library
- *February Model UDO Review* – Wednesday, February 23, 9:00 AM
- *February Board Meeting* – Wednesday, February 23, 10:00 AM
- *March Small Cities Council* – Wednesday, March 30, 9:00 AM

Ms. Rhodes shared an article about a pro-local business movement led by young residents of Utica, New York. The article is available at this link:

<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2022/1/13/building-something-from-nothing-in-utica>

## **8. Adjourn**

Ms. Rhodes provided the link to the 10:00 AM special board meeting in the chat and adjourned the Small Cities Council meeting at 9:50 AM.