



# Small Cities Council Meeting Summary

Wednesday, March 30, 2022 | 9:00 AM  
Metroplan | Jeffrey Hawkins Conference Room  
*Approved May 25, 2022*

Meeting PowerPoint slides available at <https://metroplan.org/small-cities-council>

## SCC Members Attending

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Mayor Sammy Hartwick, President       | City of Greenbrier    |
| 2. Mayor Bernie Chamberlain              | City of Austin        |
| 3. Mayor Charles Gastineau               | City of Ward          |
| 4. Mayor Sam Higdon                      | City of Guy           |
| 5. Ms. Jennifer Hill, Recorder/Treasurer | City of Haskell       |
| 6. Mayor Allan Loring                    | City of Wrightsville  |
| 7. Mr. Jeffrey Reed                      | City of Shannon Hills |

## Guests

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 8. Mr. Hunter Sadler | Office of Congressman French Hill            |
| 9. Mr. Finley Vinson | Transportation Engineering Consultants (TEC) |
| 10. Mr. Mike Watson  | Half Associates                              |

## Metroplan Staff

- |                           |                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 11. Ms. Lynn Bell         | Graphics Specialist                  |
| 12. Mr. Casey Covington   | Deputy Director/CARTS Study Director |
| 13. Mr. Jonathan Lupton   | Senior Planner for Publications      |
| 14. Ms. Bernadette Rhodes | Community Planner                    |
| 15. Mr. Tab Townsell      | Executive Director                   |

## 1. Call to Order & Welcome

Mayor Hartwick called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed participants, then asked Ms. Rhodes to proceed with the agenda.

Ms. Rhodes shared that Mayors House and Reed have sent their regrets at being unable to attend due to inclement weather.

## 2. Introductions & Announcements

Ms. Rhodes asked participants to introduce themselves and share successes or challenges.

Mayor Hartwick shared that Greenbrier is finishing up a Metroplan-funded TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) sidewalk project. Greenbrier has its annual Chamber banquet coming up in April. The theme is “Off to the Races.”

Mayor Higdon shared that several new homes are being built in Guy, including new residents from Oregon. The city has an ongoing water line project, where lines are being moved out from under the road before the State Aid program repaves the road.

Mayor Loring of Wrightsville stated that he looks forward to partnering with Metroplan to complete transportation improvements in the coming year. There was a burglary in the city’s storage yard; a van, a pickup truck, and brand-new trailer were stolen. The Pulaski County Sheriff’s Office is investigating. Ms. Rhodes added that ARDOT will be meeting with the Mayor regarding safety and traffic management at the Hwy. 365-145<sup>th</sup> Street intersection. The Wrightsville Correctional Unit has agreed to pick up litter around the intersection and in the city park.

Mayor Chamberlain noted that Austin is in the middle of updating all its sewer ponds. Austin also became a city of the first class in the beginning of March.

Mayor Gastineau shared that the Hwy 367/319 intersection project has begun construction and will provide Ward with its first traffic light. Cost overruns are likely. Ward has entered into a maintenance agreement with the City of Cabot for the traffic light. Also underway is a joint TAP/Recreational Trails Program project to provide a walking path in the park, around the ballpark, and sidewalks down several streets. A new concession stand in the park is 50% complete, then construction of the new all-inclusive playground will begin through an Arkansas Development Council grant. The city is continuing to grow with new subdivisions.

Mr. Reed, Shannon Hills Public Works Director, attended as Mayor Kemp’s proxy. He stated the Shannon Hills will soon start a south-east sidewalk project to tie into the Southwest Trail and provide connectivity to both sides of town. Upgrades are ongoing to wastewater treatment plant to correct infiltration problems. Last year, the city finished a 0.5-mile Safe Routes to School sidewalk on west side of town, as well as another 0.5-mile section that was City-funded. The entire 2-mile sidewalk connection through town is nearing completion.

Mayors Higdon and Hartwick volunteered to give the May Community Spotlight presentation.

### **3. Summary of Previous Meeting**

Mayor Gastineau made a motion to approve the summary of the January 26, 2022 meeting. Mayor Chamberlain seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **4. Metroplan Update**

Long-Range Metropolitan Transportation Plan: Mr. Covington shared that Metroplan staff is writing strategies to support the themes identified for the plan. A roadmap for local implementation will be included, with a focus on land use decisions that impact the transportation system. Resources such as the UDO and CARTS Multimodal Guidelines will be utilized as primary vehicles for

implementation. The concise plan is anticipated by the end of the year.

Mr. Townsell added that this will be the first plan to include recommendations on how to build local roads and plan land use to provide residents and visitors with more options to get around. He referenced Metroplan's *Best Practices* newsletter as another useful resource for local implementation.

2023 STBG Call for Projects: Mr. Covington asked attendees to review the draft application for STBG funds. The final application will be released early next week. The format and sample resolution are similar to previous formats. Funds will be awarded in October and must be obligated by the following September 2023.

Metroplan is getting a \$15 million STBG allocation. Individual awards are limited to \$3 million maximum for construction. Member jurisdictions may apply for engineering or construction funding, but not for both in the same round. Projects must be on the federally classified system. A map of eligible roadways will be included with the application. Right-of-way can be applied for with either an engineering or construction application. Utility relocations may only be funded as part of a construction grant. 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. An overmatch must be maintained from prior applications if a jurisdiction gets additional funding.

Mr. Reed asked whether this funding was separate from the State Aid overlay program. Mr. Townsell answered yes.

Mayor Hartwick asked whether a project would be eligible if the street is on the Master Street Plan as connecting neighborhoods to existing streets. Mr. Covington indicated that the street might be considered a collector if it is a through street and may be eligible in individual cases, and that he could review the individual case as the federal classification sometimes differs from cities' Master Street Plans.

Employee Handbook: Mr. Townsell stated that an updated employee handbook was currently under legal review and would be on the April Board of Directors agenda for consideration. A section addressing political activity was added to protect Metroplan's neutrality while also protecting employees' First Amendment rights. Mr. Covington emailed the handbook to members for review last Friday and indicated that paper copies are available upon request.

TIP and MTP Amendment: Mr. Covington informed participants that the Hwy 67/167 widening up to Cabot, which was originally one project, has been split into three projects on ARDOT's improvement plan with updated cost estimates (from \$194 million originally to over \$300 million), which requires an amendment to Metroplan's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Project 1 widens Hwy. 67 from North Little Rock through Jacksonville, with a letting date in late 2022. Project 2 will widen Hwy. 67 from Hwy. 5 to Hwy. 89 to 6 lanes, with a letting date in 2023. Project 3 will include the two Cabot interchanges, with a letting date in 2024. The TIP amendment will be out for public comment through late April and will be on the April Board of Directors agenda for adoption.

Mayor Gastineau inquired whether there was information about the change on social media or a flyer that cities could share. Mr. Covington indicated that members could share Metroplan's post advertising the public comment period.

Model UDO: Ms. Rhodes shared that the UDO is currently under review by a land use attorney. Once recommended changes have been made, cities may consider the document for adoption. Metroplan staff is actively meeting with officials in Ward, Austin, and Mayflower to review and train on the document prior to adoption. Topics that are being clarified based on cities' input are non-conforming structures and uses, private drives, and temporary dwellings.

Ms. Rhodes asked participants how they handle temporary dwellings. Participants agreed it is a delicate situation, and code enforcement is needed to address violations. Mayor Loring has been asked whether Wrightsville has an ordinance regulating temporary dwellings. Currently, the city does not have a specific ordinance for the issue, but there is an ordinance that every permanent residence must be connected to the sewer system. As a result, any dwelling would need to be registered with the sewer utility. There was a question whether there was a certain time residents had to connect by. Mayor Loring clarified that the sewer connection is enforced at the time when the dwelling is occupied as a permanent residence. There has been an instance of an RV being connected to the system without a permit or inspection.

Mr. Reed asked how other cities handled food trucks. A new food truck has located in Shannon Hills on a lot with a cleanout. Do cities allow them to run wastewater across the lot? Mayor Hartwick shared they have a food truck that is hooked directly into the system with a solid pipe, hooked to the house's sewer. He offered to share Greenbrier's new food truck ordinance with the group.

Ms. Rhodes asked the group what timeframe they would find reasonable to allow temporary dwellings. Mayor Hartwick shared that at Greenbrier's RV park, RVs are allowed to stay up to 60 days. There has been discussion about the time limit due to certain circumstances, for example nurses who traveled in to work in the Conway hospital due to COVID. Mr. Covington stated that regulations could vary by zone in the UDO. Mayor Loring asked if each city could set their own time limits, and stated that one model may not fit everyone and cities need discretion.

Mr. Covington and Mr. Reed emphasized that temporary dwellings should not be allowed on streets. Mr. Reed shared that an RV is currently being used as a dwelling that is parked on a public street in front of a no parking sign. Ms. Rhodes stated that the UDO currently had regulations for storing boats, RVs, etc., but that staff was attempting to determine what types of regulations to recommend for temporary dwellings. Each city would have the authority to revise those recommendations in their own ordinance. Mr. Reed added that temporary dwellings can also create issues if located in a floodplain. In that case they would have to conduct an engineering study.

Regional Greenways Workshop 2: Mr. Covington reminded participants about the workshop coming up on April 6<sup>th</sup> at UCA. The focus will be on facility design and route alignments. In the afternoon, participants will have the option to tour actual bike-ped facilities and street crossings in Conway.

NWA Lane Shift Study Tour: Mr. Townsell shared that there is still time to schedule a Northwest Arkansas LaneShift Study Tour to learn about bike-ped facilities and the Razorback Greenway. Cities can send an entire 12-person group or combine with other cities to put together a tour. Mr. Townsell emphasized that there were still spots open for the June 15-16 study tour, but participants would need to notify him of their interest this week. Several participants shared that the date coincided with the Arkansas Municipal League's summer conference. Metroplan offers a \$5,000 sponsorship to help defray the cost of each 12-person study tour.

Benchmarking Trip Update: Ms. Rhodes thanked participants for responding with their availability for the benchmarking trip to Fort Collins on August 16-19. Mayors are urged to attend, but can send a proxy if needed, and can also add additional staff members at the city's cost. Spouses are welcome at participants' personal cost. Metroplan has secured a group rate at the Marriott hotel at \$139/night plus tax. The next step is to book flights. Ms. Cindy Segebarth, Metroplan Administrator, will present options and book flights on behalf of participants. Metroplan staff is in the process of planning the program. Ms. Rhodes shared that a bike ride will be offered, with e-bikes available.

## **5. Presentation: Winter 2022 Metroplan Best Practices Newsletter on Pedestrian Safety (<https://bit.ly/3wz2BYF>)**

Mr. Lupton provided an overview of Metroplan's latest publication on safety for pedestrians and bikes. The newsletter's purpose is to share ideas and generate dialogue with member jurisdictions. Mr. Lupton welcomed ideas or requests for future topics. He shared that pedestrians face challenges crossing roads which are relevant to all users. Pedestrian injuries and deaths have increased in recent years. Young, male, and minority populations are disproportionately affected. Five-lane cross-sections with a continuous center turning lanes are especially dangerous.

The newsletter includes road design methods that can increase safety, regardless of user behavior. Many treatments, such as road diets, can be implemented relatively inexpensively, and signal to residents that they are in a safe place to walk and live. Road diets convert a 4-lane street into a 2-lane street with a center turning lane and bike lanes on both sides. They work best on streets with under 20,000 cars per day but can also work with higher traffic levels without making congestion any worse since many accidents and backups are caused by vehicles turning left. Metroplan staff can help cities conduct a traffic study to ascertain whether a road diet would be a feasible option on a particular roadway.

Cities and neighborhoods in central Arkansas with walkable infrastructure tend to have higher property values. Small cities have a unique opportunity to plan their street cross-sections before arterials become overly busy and dangerous.

Mr. Lupton pointed to other techniques that have successfully increased pedestrian safety without slowing traffic down: mini traffic circles, pedestrian refuge islands, Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs), speed tables, mid-block crossings, curb bulbouts, chicanes, underpasses (use wide box culverts for cost effectiveness), overpasses, and textured sidewalks and crosswalks. He stated that public investment in a road often attracts private investment.

Mr. Lupton referenced the new CARTS Multimodal Guidelines on Metroplan's website, which

includes examples of street cross-sections designed with safety in mind for all users.

Mr. Townsell added that cities should consider including bike-ped access through wider and higher box culverts under any new road, and that these passageways will help cities tie their bike-ped network into the Regional Greenways System.

## **6. Preview of Upcoming Meetings**

Ms. Rhodes shared the upcoming dates below.

- *Regional Greenways Workshop 2 – Wednesday, April 6, 9:00 AM*
- *April Board Meeting – Wednesday, April 27, 10:00 AM*
- *May Small Cities Council – Wednesday, May 25, 9:00 AM*

Ms. Rhodes shared an article from the American Planning Association about three essential questions to ask for better planning: *Who is helped? Who is harmed? Who is missing?*

The article is available at this link: <https://bit.ly/3JGImdR>

## **7. Adjourn**

Mayor Hartwick adjourned the Small Cities Council meeting at 9:55 AM.