



METROPLAN



METROPLAN  
SMALL CITIES  
COUNCIL

# SMALL CITIES COUNCIL

January 22, 2025 • 9:00 AM

# AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Introductions & Announcements
3. Summary of Previous Meeting
4. Community Spotlight: City of Austin
5. Metroplan Update
6. Grants & Capital Improvement Opportunities
7. Member Q&A
8. Preview of Upcoming Meetings
9. Adjourn

## SCC MEMBERS

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Alexander       | 10. Keo           |
| 2. Austin          | 11. Lonoke        |
| 3. Bauxite         | 12. Mayflower     |
| 4. Cammack Village | 13. Mount Vernon  |
| 5. England         | 14. Shannon Hills |
| 6. Greenbrier      | 15. Traskwood     |
| 7. Guy             | 16. Vilonia       |
| 8. Haskell         | 17. Ward          |
| 9. HS Village      | 18. Wooster       |
|                    | 19. Wrightsville  |





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## INTRODUCTIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Projects
- Updates
- Successes
- Challenges



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# SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS MEETING

November 20, 2024



## Small Cities Council Meeting Summary

Wednesday, November 20, 2024, | 9:00 AM  
Pulaski County Regional Center | Little Rock  
DRAFT

Meeting PowerPoint slides available at [www.metroplan.org/small-cities-council](http://www.metroplan.org/small-cities-council)

### SCC Members Attending

1. Mayor Mike Kemp, Chair
2. Mayor Charles Gastineau, Vice Chair
3. Mr. Brady Zweifel
4. Mayor Sammy Hartwick
5. Mayor Stephanie White
6. Mr. Keith Keck

City of Shannon Hills  
City of Ward  
City of Vilonia  
City of Greenbrier  
City of Keo  
Hot Springs Village

### Additional Attendees

7. Ms. Caran Curry
8. Mr. Mark Stodola
9. Mr. Mike Watson
10. Mr. Finley Vanson
11. Mr. Gene Higginbotham
12. Mr. Timothy Simmons

Arkansas Municipal League  
Arkansas Municipal League  
Half Engineers  
TEC  
Congressman G. Scott



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**COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT:  
CITY OF AUSTIN**



# City of Austin, Arkansas

Population: 3460 (2020 Census)

Location: Lonoke County, Central Arkansas

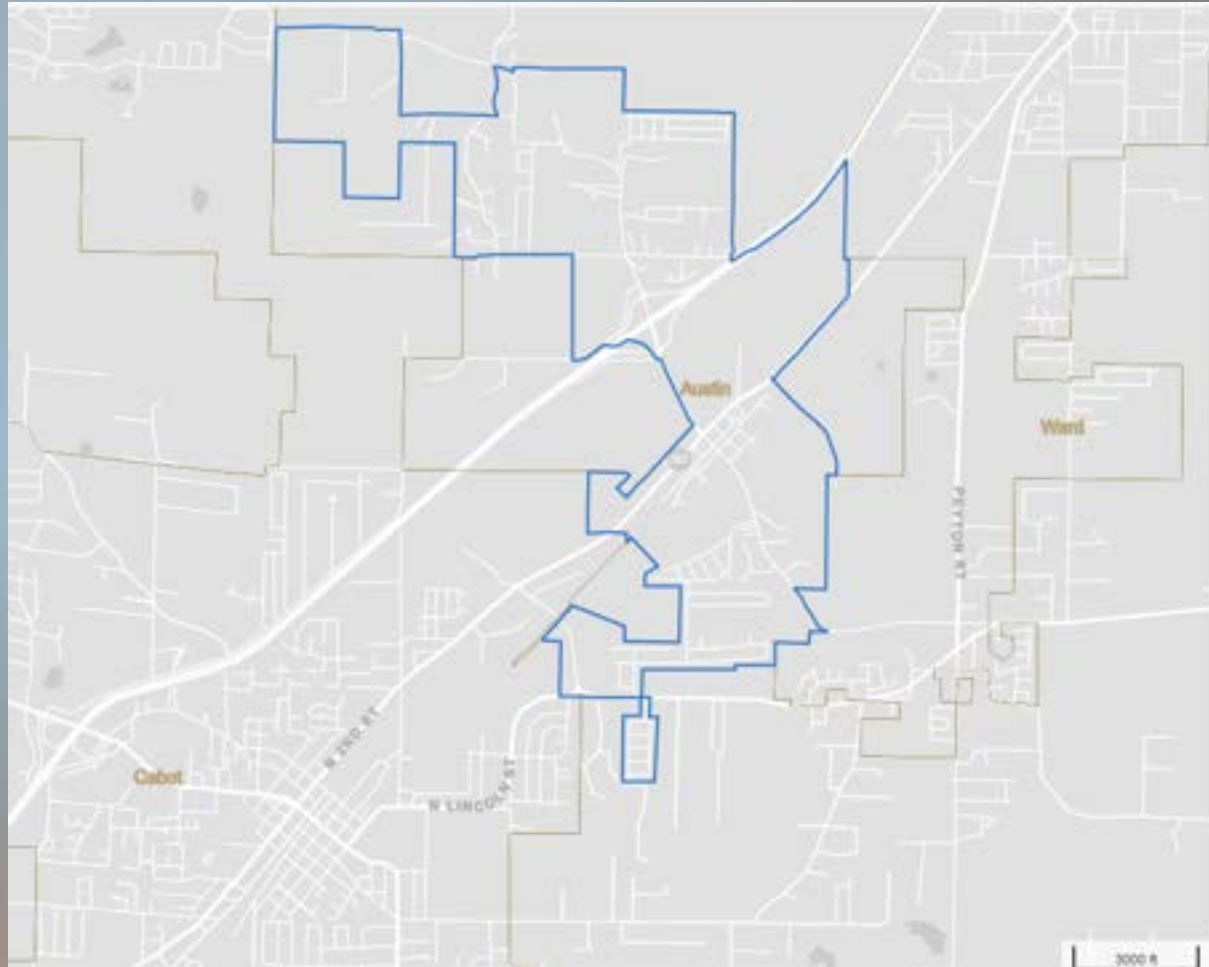
# History

- The City was established in 1872 when the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad built the railroad approximately one mile southeast of Old Austin. Many residents of Old Austin moved near the railroad tracks, in some cases uprooting and transporting entire buildings. The new city forming near the tracks was originally known as "Austin Station" to distinguish it from the original Austin but eventually became known as Austin while the old community became known as "Old Austin".



# Location & Information

- The City of Austin is in northern Lonoke County sharing borders with the City of Cabot and Ward.
- Austin is split along Interstate 57(Highway 67/167) consisting of 3 square miles of land.
- Median Household Income: \$93,315
- Median Age: 30

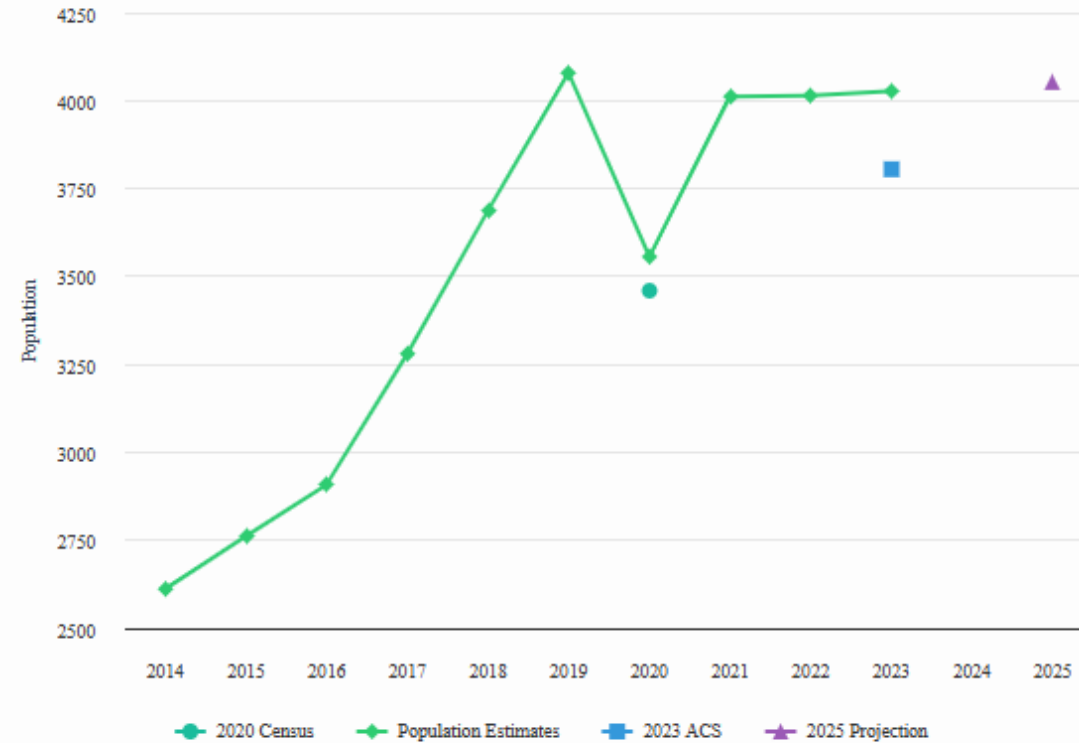




# Growth

- The City of Austin had a tremendous growth change from 2010 to 2018 with numerous housing developments completed during that time. Austin had encountered slow growth from 2019-2023. In 2024, neighborhood developments have increased, and land has become available to developers.

## Austin Population Trends



# Planning & Code Enforcement

- A new modern Unified Development code and zoning map was approved in late 2024
- Our Planning Commission is made up of a wide range of individuals and experiences.
- Their knowledge along with their desire to help serve, protect and direct the city's growth path is greatly appreciated.
- Code Enforcement went full time in 2023 to better serve the residents of Austin.

# Police Department

- The City of Austin Police Department is committed to making a positive difference in the lives of our citizens through professionally supported and trained police officers. Officers strive to provide an environment that will allow citizens to live and work in a safe and secure community.
- Department consists of 1 Police Chief, 4 full time officers and numerous part time officers.



# Fire Department

- The City of Austin Fire Department is a fully volunteer fire department that covers inside city limits and some area in the county.
- Austin Fire Department has partnered with Southern Paramedics to keep an ambulance at Fire Station #3 in 2024.
- Facilities: 3 stations, and 1 business office.
- Vehicles:
  - (2) Rescue Units
  - (2) Brush Trucks
  - (3) Engines/Pumpers



# Public Works Department



- Public Works Department consists of 7 full time employees. 3 Office/Administration Personnel and 4 Field Personnel.
- Water, Sewer, and Street departments fall under Public Works.



# Public Works Department - Water

- Quality water sourced from Greers Ferry Lake
- Ownership partners in Lonoke White Public Water Authority and is a long-term water source for Austin residents.
- Public Works handles all maintenance, repairs, and operation of the Austin Water Distribution System



# Public Works Department - Wastewater

- All wastewater is treated at the Austin Wastewater Treatment Plant Facility.
- 3-million-dollar treatment plant upgrade completed in 2024 with capacity for future growth.
- System consists of 10 collection pump stations, 20 collection pumps, 1 wastewater treatment plant





# Public Works Department - Streets

- Austin Public Works is responsible for 21 miles of streets within the City.
- Public Works has adopted a street conditions map with project planning for the next several years.



# Parks & Recreation

- City of Austin currently has one city park, The Howard and Edith Martin Memorial park located on South First Street.
- A master park plan was completed in 2023 to provide for future planning of the property. The master plan includes 3 pickleball courts, soccer field, walking track, community garden, permanent restrooms, new playground, parking, and more.



# Future & Current Projects

## Parks & Recreation

- Overturf Ball Fields
  - Ball fields located on East Main Street recently donated to the city to rehab and re-open to the public
- LOCOMUT – Regional Walking Trail
- Howard & Edith Martin Memorial Park
  - Walking trail funds secured
  - Playground, community garden, disc golf funds secured



# Future & Current Projects

## Public Works

- Public Works Maintenance Facility – 2025
- Water
  - Secondary connection to Lonoke White Public Water Authority
  - Second water storage facility
  - Ernie Davis Rd waterline upgrades
- Wastewater
  - System-Wide collection system upgrades
  - Pump station upgrades





# Current Businesses

- Dollar General
- Austin Fish & Seafood
- C-Dub's Cruise'n Dairy Bar
- First Arkansas Bank & Trust
- Red River Auto Group
- Cadens Auto Sales
- WCS Construction
- Southern Paramedics
- Sundown Self Storage
- Austin Car Wash LLC
- Early Impression Daycare
- USPS
- J Cole Construction
- Austin Academy for Kids



# City of Austin, Arkansas

Thank you for taking the time to review information about our community.



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## METROPLAN UPDATE

- New Metroplanner Alert!

*Drumroll*

- Welcome Brittany Nichols !!



- CPRG Opportunities:

- Green Networks: Deadline 21 Feb, 2025
- Transportation Efficiency: Deadline 21 Feb, 2025
- Know more: [Energy and Environment Innovation Plan - Metroplan](#)



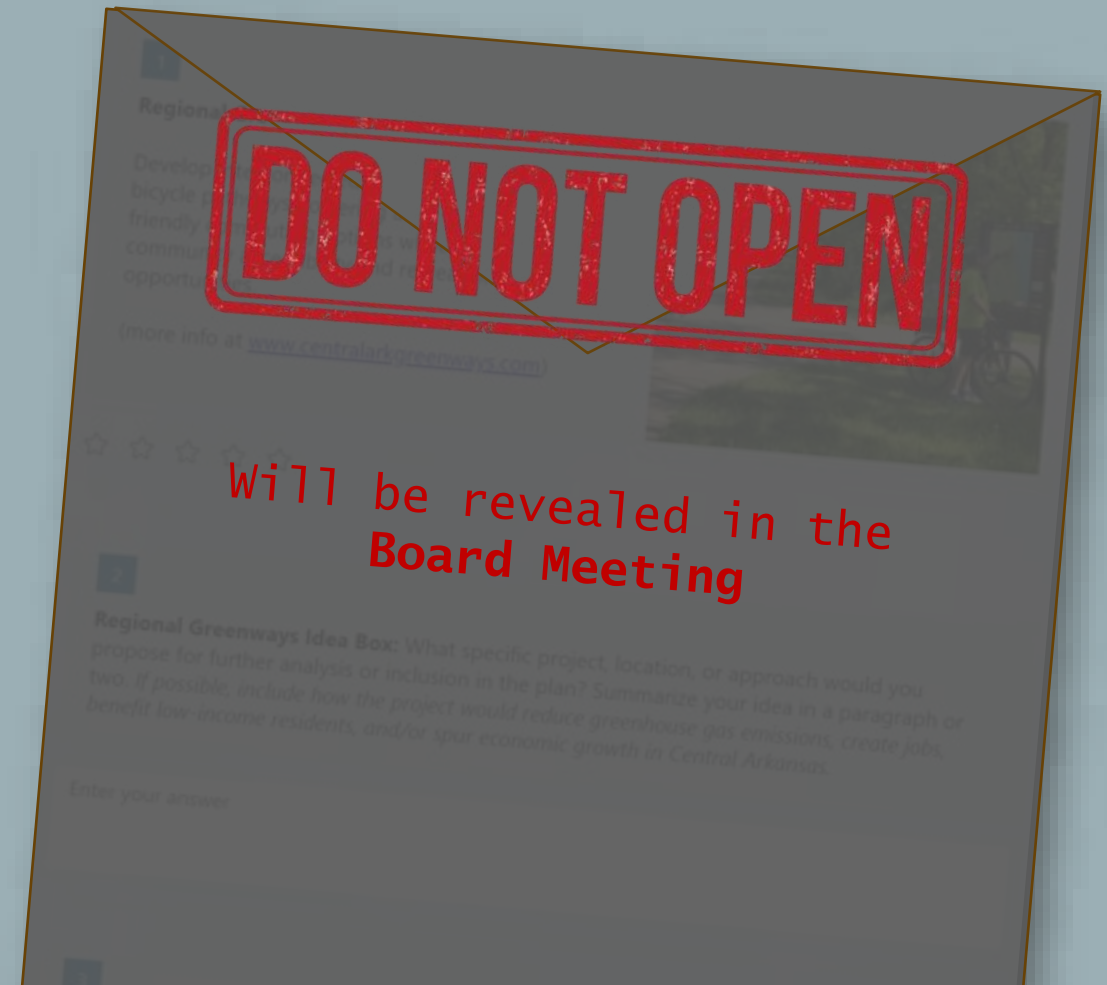


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## EEI SURVEY RESULTS & FOCUS AREAS





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## GRANTS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



- Focus on direct investment deals \$50 Mil. And Above
- Pursue co-investment from network partners \$10 Mil.
- Refer deals under \$10 Mil. To network partners
- Invest >\$40 Bil. In 7 Years

### Investment Focus

#### Priority Project Areas

- Distributed Energy Generation and Storage
- Zero-Emissions Transportation
- Net-Zero Emissions Buildings
- Other (can include grid-related investments, offshore wind-related investments, critical clean water infrastructure)

#### Project, Activity, or Technology

- Reduces or avoids greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and other air pollutants
- Delivers additional benefits such as jobs, energy savings, and improved health
- May not have otherwise been financed
- Mobilizes private capital
- Supports commercial technologies



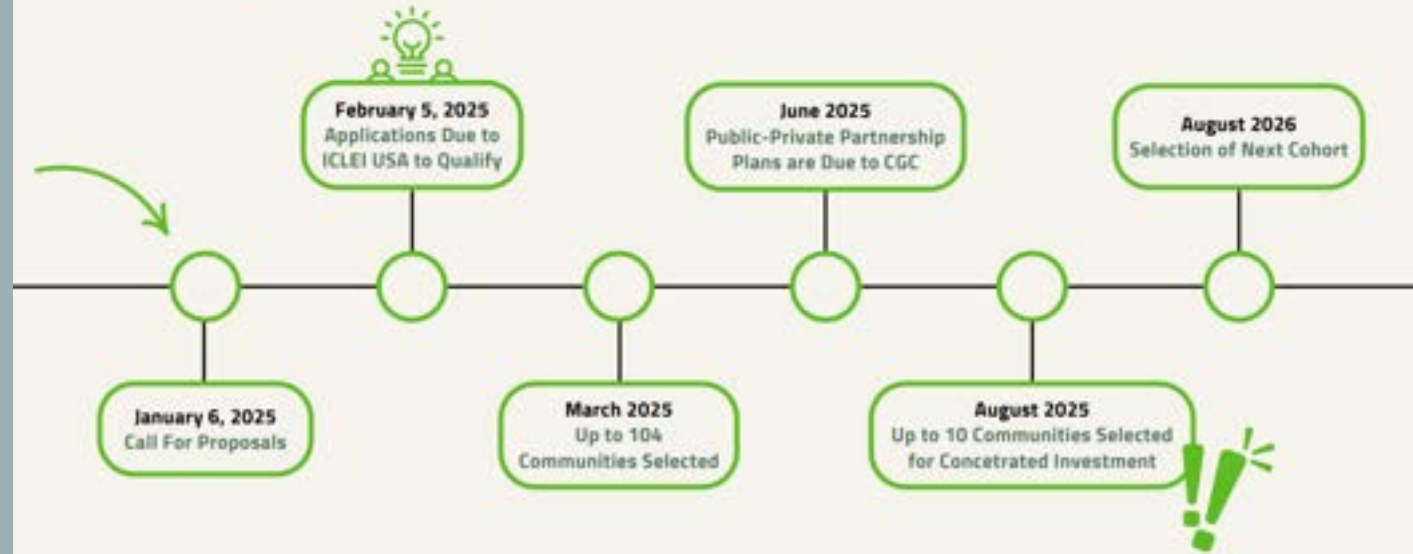
- CGC does business as the American Green Bank Consortium.
- **Green Banks:** Use Public and Philanthropic funds to mobilize private investments in:
  - Renewable energy
  - Energy Efficiency
  - Any Decarbonization Tech



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## Municipal Investment Fund Timeline



### At a Glance: CGC's Municipal Invest Fund will:

- Accelerate deployment of public-private partnership plans:
  - Projects in distributed energy generation and storage
  - Zero emissions transportation
  - Net zero buildings, etc
- Focus on communities:
  - Serving populations of 10,000-750,000 (tribes exempt)
  - With at least one low-income or disadvantaged census tract
- CGC will select up to 104 communities:
  - Up to 2 in each state
  - Up to 4 tribes, the District of Columbia, or local governments in federal territories
- Know more here: <https://coalitionforgreencapital.com/municipal-investment-fund/>



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## GRANTS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### Local Infrastructure Hub

- **Designed for small & mid-sized communities (150,000 or lower)**
- Helps with **resources & expertise to access federal infrastructure funding.**
- The offer technical assistance in grant training that runs for 3 months.



- **Upcoming Resource Programs**
  - Developing Clean Energy Projects
  - Clean Water State Revolving Fund
  - Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)
  - Grant Implementation, Compliance & Management
  - Combined Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Program & Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program

<https://localinfrastructure.org/application-bootcamp/>



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# TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

## **APAC's 2025 Certified Group Facilitator Program**

*Open for Registration | Deadline: January 28, 2025*

- **Key Benefits:**

- Learn facilitation techniques for decision-making, planning, and problem-solving
- Practice designing, leading, and evaluating facilitated events
- Manage challenging individual and group behaviors while fostering productive dynamics
- Gain experience with both in-person and online facilitation tools and strategies
  - Know Your Instructor: <https://ualr.edu/publicaffairs/apac/apac-instructors/>
  - Know More About Arkansas Public Administration Consortium: <https://ualr.edu/publicaffairs/apac/>
  - Program Requirements: <https://forms.gle/9XL8hRsHhadJMoZF7>





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## GRANTS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### **Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment Plan**

- The 2025 Arkansas Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment Plan has been submitted to the Joint Office of Energy and Transportation.
- The plan complies with federal legislation and mandates.
- It aims to ensure a reliable and equitable electric vehicle network.
- Implementation aligns with ARDOT's purpose to enhance safety and quality of life in Arkansas.
- Know more: <https://ardot.gov/divisions/planning/electric-vehicle-infrastructure/>

Grant	Status	Deadline
Transportation		
USDOT Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)	Closed	December 2, 2024
USDOT Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI)	Closed	September 11, 2024
Transportation Alternatives Program 2025-2026	Closed	January 8, 2025
Recreational Trails Program 2025	Opening Soon	February 26-27, 2025
Reconnecting Communities	Closed	September 30, 2024
Rail Crossing Elimination	Closed	September 23, 2024
Water		
FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure Communities (BRIC)	Open	April 18, 2025
FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance	Open	April 18, 2025
Energy		
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG)	Open	May 31, 2025
Environmental		
EPA Inflation Reduction Act Community Change Grants Program	Closed	November 21, 2024
Housing		
HUD Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing)	Closed	October 22, 2024
HUD Choice Neighborhoods	Closed	June 10, 2024





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## PREVIEW OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

- **TODAY**
  - 10:00 AM: Board Meeting
  
- **Wednesday, February 26, 2025**
  - 9:00 AM: SCC Meeting
  - 10:00 AM: Board Meeting



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**THANK YOU!**

**SCC Leadership:**

Mayor Mike Kemp, Chair  
City of Shannon Hills  
501-455-2003  
shannonhillsmayor@aristotle.net

Mayor Charles Gastineau, Vice Chair  
City of Ward  
501-843-2226  
mayor@cityofward.com

**Metroplan:**  
501-372-3300

Bernadette Rhodes  
brhodes@metroplan.org

Paritosh (Pari/PJ) Jambhale  
pjambhale@metroplan.org



# Small Cities Council

## Meeting Summary

Wednesday, January 22, 2025, | 9:00 AM  
Pulaski County Regional Center | Little Rock  
Approved: February 26, 2025

Meeting PowerPoint slides available at [www.metroplan.org/small-cities-council](http://www.metroplan.org/small-cities-council)

### SCC Members Attending

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Mayor Mike Kemp, Chair              | City of Shannon Hills |
| 2. Mayor Charles Gastineau, Vice Chair | City of Ward          |
| 3. Mayor Bernadette Chamberlain        | City of Austin        |
| 4. Mayor Derrick Rainey                | City of Wrightsville  |
| 5. Mr. Jeff Arey                       | City of Haskell       |
| 6. Mayor Don Robinson                  | City of Wooster       |
| 7. Mr. Keith Keck                      | Hot Springs Village   |

### Additional Attendees

- |                          |                               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 8. Ms. Caran Curry       | Arkansas Municipal League     |
| 9. Mr. Gene Higginbotham | Congressman Crawford's Office |
| 10. Mayor Tom Farmer     | City of Benton                |

### Metroplan Staff

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 11. Mr. Casey Covington   | Executive Director                                       |
| 12. Ms. Bernadette Rhodes | Deputy Director/Senior Planner for Partnerships & Grants |
| 13. Mr. Jonathan Lupton   | Senior Planner for Publications                          |
| 14. Ms. Brittany Nichols  | Sustainable Transportation & Energy Ambassador           |
| 15. Ms. Sydney Dozier     | Public Engagement Planner                                |
| 16. Mr. Paritosh Jambhale | Community Planner  |

## **1. Call to Order**

Mayor Gastineau called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He welcomed participants and asked participants to introduce themselves.

## **2. Introductions & Announcements**

Participants introduced themselves. Ms. Brittany Nichols was introduced as the new Sustainable Transportation and Energy Ambassador of Metroplan. Mayor Chamberlain told the council that the City of Austin was the city in Spotlight for the meeting. Ms. Bernadette Rhodes was promoted to the position of the Deputy Director for Metroplan, and it was also discussed that she will still be involved with her current role of Senior Regional Planner for Partnerships & Grants.

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

Mayor Gatineau made a motion to approve the summary of the November 22, 2024, meeting. Mayor Chamberlain seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **4. Community Spotlight: City of Austin:**

Mayor Chamberlain led this section by introducing the history of the City of Austin with the council. She mentioned how the city got its name due to the residents moving from Old Austin to near the railway tracks and forming a new city originally called "Austin Station". The city has a median household income of \$93,315 and a median age of 30. It shares its borders with Ward and Cabbot. Discussing the recent burst of growth from 2010 to 2018, Mayor Chamberlain discussed how new housing developments aided in the growth and that neighborhood developments have increased even more so in 2024. It was brought to the council's notice that Austin approved a modern Unified Development Code and zoning map in late 2024. The mayor also added that the Code Enforcement started operating as a full-time entity since 2023 to better serve the residents of Austin.

Discussing the services provided to residents, the mayor discussed the police department, the fully volunteered fire department which has three stations that cover the city. Mayor Chamberlain also informed the council about the public works department, and the water, sewer, and street departments that fall under it. The mayor also added that all the wastewater is treated internally at the Austin wastewater treatment plant. A \$ 3-million upgrade was completed at the facility. The PWD has also adopted a street conditions map which plans projects for the next several years. The city has one park named the Howard and Edith Martin Memorial Park. A master park plan was completed in 2023 to provide fir future planning of the property. She also discussed with the council that the city selected an engineering firm to work out the plan and applied for a no-match grant for the same. Ms. Rhodes commented and brought to the council's attention, how planning ahead paves the way for major wins after referring to the examples presented by Mayor Chamberlain. Further on, Ms. Chamberlain discussed the businesses that are present in Austin and ended the much praised presentation.

## 5. Metroplan Update

Ms. Rhodes introduced Ms. Brittany Nichols as the newly added team member of Metroplan. Ms. Nichols will be the new Sustainable Transportation and Energy Ambassador for Metroplan. She added that Ms. Nichols has been working with Metroplan on the CPRG since 2022. Ms. Rhodes quickly mentioned the different CPRG funding opportunities, i.e. Green Networks, and Transportation Efficiency, both of which have a deadline of 21 February, 2025. She also mentioned that Ms. Nichols would be a great contact to reach out for understanding and helping to apply for the grants. Mayor Gastineau asked if Ms. Nichols would be able to aid the small cities with RFP (request for proposal) works and Ms. Rhodes answered that Ms. Nichols would indeed be helpful and the first point of contact for the same.

Regarding the funding opportunities, Mr. Keck asked if anyone has shown interest in the funding for upgrading to LED streetlights, to which Ms. Rhodes and Ms. Nichols gave a positive reply. They informed the council that the City of England, and City of Ward have been looking into it. Mayor Kemp then congratulated Ms. Nichols on helping the City of Shannon Hills with their grants and funding opportunities. Ms. Nichols after thanking Mayor Kemp discussed with the council that the LED streetlights grant opportunity could be used to increase lights on trails, floodlights of parks, or for any bulb that lights up public spaces. It need not be a street light conversion project only.

Mr. Covington then brought to the council's attention that Metroplan has proposed changes to its bylaws, focusing on the election of officers and the frequency of board meetings. Eligible members for officer selection will now include cities, counties, and first-class cities. Proxies will still be allowed, but mayors and judges of CARTS-served cities are encouraged to attend meetings personally. The new executive committee will have one representative from each county which forms the CARTS region. The board members from the Small Cities Council will no longer have a separate seat on the executive committee but they can be voted as representee of their respective counties.

Metroplan sought feedback from the Small Cities Council on the changes. Concerns were raised about the importance of having a small cities representative on the executive committee to ensure smaller cities are informed about decisions. This issue, along with the potential benefits for smaller cities registering as first-class cities, will be discussed in future board meetings. Mr. Covington assured the council that this issue was not to be voted on at this board meeting.

Additionally, Metroplan aims to reintroduce TCC and allow newly absorbed second-class cities to join the Small Cities Council without dues. The council was informed that any bylaw changes require a two-week notice to members, and discussions on these updates will continue in upcoming meetings.

## 6. **Upcoming Grants & Capital Improvement Opportunities:**

Ms. Rhodes introduced the council to two new opportunities:

- Coalition for Green Capital
- Local Infrastructure Hub

The Coalition of Green Capital (CGC) uses public and philanthropic funds to mobilize private investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and any decarbonization technology installations or research. It will select up to 104 communities 2 in each state and these communities should be serving populations of 10,000 – 750,000 excluding tribes. They should have at least one low-income or disadvantaged census tract to be eligible. Know more about CGC here: <https://coalitionforgreencapital.com/municipal-investment-fund/>

The Local Infrastructure Hub is an entity designed for small and mid-sized communities (150,000 or lower). It helps with resources and expertise to access federal infrastructure funding. They also offer technical assistance in grant training that runs for three months. Ms. Curry also seconded the Local Infrastructure Hub's prowess in helping small communities and discussed the upcoming resource programs offered by them. They include training for applying for safe streets for all grant proposals, developing clean energy projects, and many more. Know more about Local Infrastructure Hub here: <https://localinfrastructure.org/application-bootcamp/>

## 7. **Member Q&A**

Mr. Keck asked the council about their opinion on adding fluoride in the water supply system for cities. Mayor Gastineau replied that there need to add it to the supply and that it is completely optional. He added that fluoride is present in many other substances that we all use in our daily lives so it need not be added to the water.

## 8. **Preview of Upcoming Meetings**

- Wed., March 26<sup>th</sup>
  - 9:00 am: Small Cities Council Meeting
  - 10:00 am: Board of Directors Meeting

## 9. **Adjourn**

Mayor Rainey made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Chamberlain adjourned the Small Cities Council meeting at 9:55 AM.