



Small Cities Council

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, May 27, 2026, | 9:00 AM

Pulaski County Regional Center | Little Rock

Passed on June 24, 2026

Meeting PowerPoint slides available at www.metroplan.org/small-cities-council

SCC Members Attending

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| 1. Mayor Mike Kemp | City of Shannon Hills |
| 2. Mayor Charles Gastineau, Vice Chair | City of Ward |
| 3. Mayor Bernadette Chamberlain | City of Austin |
| 4. Mayor Crystal Herrmann | City of Alexander |
| 5. Mayor Derrick Rainey | City of Wrightsville |
| 6. Mayor Sammy Hartwick | City of Greenbrier |
| 7. Mayor Wayne McGee | City of Lonoke |
| 8. Mr. Keith Keck | City of Hot Springs |
| 9. Mr. Brady Zweifel | City of Vilonia |

Additional Attendees

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| 1. Ms. Gail King | City of Des Arc |
| 2. Mr. Truett Smith | Crafton Tull |
| 3. Mr. John Miller | Crafton Tull |
| 4. Mr. Jamie Collins | Neel-Schaffer |
| 5. Mr. Mark Stodola | Arkansas Municipal League |
| 6. Mr. Mike Watson | Halff |
| 7. Ms. Conya Spencer | Central Arkansas Planning and Development District |
| 8. Ms. Leigh Anne Pool | Central Arkansas Planning and Development District |
| 9. Mr. Timothy Riley | Central Arkansas Planning and Development District |
| 10. Ms. Tammy Childers | Central Arkansas Planning and Development District |
| 11. Mr. Charles Van | Bennet Associates |
| 12. Ms. Stacy McMinn | City of Ward |
| 13. Mr. Joseph White | Trail Runs Arkansas |

Metroplan Staff

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| 1. Mr. Casey Covington | Executive Director |
| 2. Ms. Bernadette Rhodes | Deputy Director |
| 3. Mr. Hans Haustein | GIS Analyst/ Planner Performance Measure Coordinator |
| 4. Ms. Lynn Bell | Graphics Specialist |
| 5. Ms. Bridgette Bavon | Intern |
| 6. Mr. Paritosh Jambhale | Community Planner |

1. Call to Order

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

2. Introductions & Announcements

All the council members and guests introduced themselves. Ms. Bridgette Bavon was introduced as new intern hired by Metroplan. She was welcomed by the council.

3. Summary of Previous Meeting

Mayor Herrmann made a motion to approve the summary of the May 27, 2026, meeting. Mayor Chamberlain seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Local Transportation Plan (LTP) Updated Context Sensitive Street Sections

Mr. Jambhale took the opportunity to showcase the updated version of the Local Transportation Plan (LTP) which was discussed in the previous SCC meeting. The emphasis of this update was that Metroplan acknowledged the opinions given by the council and made edits that reflected the suggested inputs. The new version has provision for preferred as well as optional road sections. This is a nod to the LTP being flexible according to the needs of the city its implemented in, just like the Uniform Development Ordinance (UDO). Another major edit to the road section options was the addition of drainage ditches. It was an important input suggested by various members of the SCC that many small cities do not have curbs and gutter for their utilities. Thus, ditches were introduced in the newly designed road sections further adding to the 'plug and play' idea of the LTP. Ms. Rhodes reiterated that LTP is a guide which intends to help cities in developing streets sections for new roads which will be built for new development opportunities happening in cities. Mayor Gastineau added that this was a goof effort by the team at Metroplan and that small cities will benefit from this document.

Mayor Rainey raised a question to understand how arterials and higher road classifications which are generally state owned can be updated. Mr. Covington answered that there are two ways to look at it. If the state decides to opt for an overlay, they will look at these plans, and add basic edits to the streets like a shoulder. But if they decide to rebuild a state owned road, then they will consider and make it look like the street sections mentioned in the LTP. They are designed to mirror the road sections that the state department is happy with. But, if they decide that the street sections mentioned in the plan goes beyond what their requirements are, they will ask the local jurisdiction to contribute to the cost of the new road. Mayor Herrmann asked a question about who is responsible for the repair of a 50 odd year old sidewalk that is next to a state-owned road. Mr. Covington replied that it depends on the Right of Way (ROW) line which often

warries from city to city. He advised Mayor Herrmann to get in touch with ARDOT and understand the actual sidewalks. Mr. Covington also informed the council that Metroplan may help in fixing such sidewalks with the help of the Transportation Alternatives Program as well as other grants. He also mentioned about a possible Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan in the future. It will help in cases where the sidewalks or other infrastructure is not up to the ADA standards. He also mentioned that Metroplan's planning funds can be used for helping in correcting sidewalks and making them ADA compliant.

County Transportation Report

Mr. Covington wanted to share with the council the County Transportation Reports. They were created by Metroplan and are intended to give a snapshot to the people of the MSA region of Metroplan of how things currently stand in their respective counties. Metroplan has worked on Faulkner, Lonoke, and Saline Counties already. These reports are ready and can be shared upon request. Pulaski County Transportation Report is currently in the making. Mr. Haustein gave the council some information about them. The council was informed that these plans are shared with their respective county judges. The cities can contact their county judges to receive a copy of these reports. They are intended to be used by cities and counties alike as they are an exhaustive resource to understand population related data, transportation related data, and much more. Mr. Covington and Mayor Kemp took a moment to congratulate and recognized the efforts they put in these reports.

5. Upcoming Grants & Capital Improvement Opportunities:

Ms. Rhodes led this section and informed the council about the following grant opportunities:

- ***Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism's FUN Parks Grant:***

The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism's FUN Park Grant Program provides funding for outdoor recreation projects in incorporated municipalities with populations under 7,500. The program supports the construction, renovation, or replacement of recreational facilities, with priority given to projects such as playgrounds, multi-use trails and trailheads, river access improvements, and other community recreation amenities. Grants are available for up to \$100,000 with no local match required. Unincorporated communities may participate by applying through their county government. Applications for the 2026 funding cycle are due August 21, 2026. Link: <https://adpht.arkansas.gov/office-of-outdoor-recreation/arkansas-outdoor-grants/fun-park-grants/>

Mayor Kemp encouraged the council to apply for this as well as the trails for life grant program. He mentioned that the trails program was less competitive and championed trails as an important part of any city. He also mentioned the State Aid Street grant program which gives grant money on a first come first serve basis, specially if a municipality has not applied for the grant before. The State Aid Street grant has a maximum of \$300,000 for overlay projects and \$400,000 for design projects.

Link to Trails for Life Grant: <https://adpht.arkansas.gov/office-of-outdoor-recreation/arkansas-outdoor-grants/trails-grants/>

Link to State Aid Street Program: <https://citystreet.arkansas.gov/>

- **Railway Crossing Elimination Grant Program:**

The Notice of Funding Opportunity has been made available for the railway crossing elimination federal grant program. The deadline for application is June 08, 2026. The total award amount available is \$1,146,528,000. Link: <https://railroads.dot.gov/elibrary/fy25-26-NOFO-RCE-crossing-safety>

- **Arkansas Water and Wastewater Rates Dashboard:**

The Arkansas Water & Wastewater Rates Dashboard, developed by the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission and the UNC School of Government Environmental Finance Center, provides water and wastewater rate information for communities across Arkansas. The dashboard allows local governments and utility providers to compare rates with median household income levels, benchmark against similarly sized communities, and evaluate rates relative to nearby systems. It is also used by the Water & Wastewater Advisory Committee to determine eligibility for principal forgiveness and grant funding for water and wastewater infrastructure projects. The tool can help communities track funding opportunities and communicate utility rate decisions more effectively to residents.

Mayor Kemp shared that this was a valuable resource which helps municipalities check their water rates and compare them with similar cities. This can help them make a conscious decision regarding their water and wastewater costs and rates.

Six County Tree Planting Program:

Ms. Rhodes informed the council that Metroplan, in partnership with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, is leading a regional initiative to plant 166,000 native trees across Central Arkansas over the next three years. Funded through an EPA grant, the program provides free trees to residents, farms, businesses, schools, nonprofit organizations, religious institutions, municipalities, and other entities located in Pulaski, Saline, Perry, Grant, Faulkner, and Lonoke counties. Participants must provide the planting location and make reasonable efforts to ensure tree survival. Trees can be requested through an online application and distributed at designated pickup events, with delivery available for larger orders when timely planting can be ensured. The program aims to expand tree canopy coverage, improve environmental quality, and enhance community resilience throughout the region. Link: <https://www.uaex.uada.edu/environment-nature/water/central-ar-tree-project/>

6. Member Q&A

Mayor Herrmann shared with the council that the City of Alexander held a tree distribution event where they used the above-mentioned tree program and distributed about 100 trees. Mr. Zweifel asked about the timelines for the delivery of the trees and was advised that the UAEX page has contact information of people who can help to understand when they can receive the ordered trees.

7. Preview of Upcoming Meetings

- Wed, June 24, 2026
 - 9:00 am: Small Cities Council Meeting
 - 10:00 am: Board of Directors Meeting

8. **Adjourn**

Mayor Kemp made a motion to adjourn, Mayor Rainey seconded it, Mayor Kemp adjourned the Small Cities Council meeting at 9:55 AM.