



## **RPO Council Meeting**

**Marriott Metro Center • Washington, DC**

**Thursday, August 25**

***Immediately following RPO America Annual Business Meeting***

**I. Call to Order**

Amy Kessler, Vice Chair of RPO America and  
Director of Community Development and Regional Planning, North  
Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission

**II. Minutes from the February 2011 RPO Council Meeting**

Ms. Kessler

**III. Guest presentation**

Federal Program Update and Outlook for Surface Transportation  
Reauthorization: Kathy Ruffalo, Ruffalo and Associates

**IV. Discussion of Meeting Schedule**

Ms. Kessler

**V. Other Business**

**National RPO Council of Peers  
February 25, 2011 • Teleconference  
MINUTES**

**Council Members**

John Marshall  
Chris Fetzer  
Laura Lewis Marchino

Randall Embry  
Rick Hunsaker  
Lisa Gehlhausen  
Jake Gilmer  
Amy Kessler  
Len Pavelka  
Gena McCullough  
Craig Markley (for Stu  
Anderson)

Susan Moe  
O.J. Papucci  
Michael Parks  
Fred Rader  
Jim Reed  
Bethany Remmers  
Marlie Sanderson  
Shawn Seager

Ronda Allis  
Don Brown  
Misty Casto  
Allison Beasley  
Kurt Brummett

**NADO Staff and Members**

Bret Allphin  
Deborah Cox

Carrie Kissel  
Kathy Nothstine

Jennifer Walsh

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

John Marshall, Chair of RPO America and Planning Director for the Western Piedmont Council of Governments called the meeting to order and welcomed participants.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Laura Lewis Marchino, Secretary of RPO America and Assistant Director of the Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado, presented the minutes from the October 20, 2010 meeting that occurred in St. Louis, Missouri in conjunction with the National Rural Transportation Peer Learning Conference. Rick Hunsaker, Region XII Council of Governments, made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Gena McCullough, Bi-State Regional Commission, and was unanimously approved.

**III. Policy Update**

Deborah Cox and Jennifer Walsh, NADO Associate Legislative Directors, gave an update on the President's FY2012 request as it related to transportation, as well as an overview of the reauthorization processes of the Federal Aviation Administration bill and the surface transportation bill. Ms. Cox and Ms. Walsh mentioned that the bill introduced in the last session of Congress to authorize regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) had been intended by its sponsors in the House and Senate to be an amendment to a surface transportation bill, but that reauthorization did not occur in time. The RTPO bill may be re-introduced this session, but significant hurdles to surface transportation reauthorization remain, such as identifying mechanisms to fund the proposed programs.

#### **IV. NADO Research Foundation Update**

Carrie Kissel and Kathy Nothstine, NADO Program Managers, provided an update on research projects being undertaken by the NADO Research Foundation under contract to the Federal Highway Administration at present. As part of these research efforts, NADO is collecting information through an online scan, and all RPO Council members are encouraged to respond to the scan and share it with colleagues in their state. Current research activities include rural and small metropolitan approaches to livable and sustainable communities, project prioritization and performance-based planning, and an effort to examine connections between transportation and economic development. The result of these projects will be written reports and guides that are geared toward regional planning and development organizations, including RPOs and MPOs. Ms. Kissel and Ms. Nothstine welcomed feedback and ideas on these issue areas.

#### **V. Peer Scan Event Update**

Ms. Nothstine provided an update on events that several RPO Council members are attending in the coming months. These events include an event at the Sacramento Area Council of Governments in March to learn about their Rural Urban Connections Strategy, an effort to connect transportation and land use that emerged from their award-winning blueprint plan. In May, a group of individuals will attend a peer scan that will visit two regions in North Carolina, the Land-of-Sky Regional Council in Asheville, and the Southwestern Commission in Sylva. Both events are directed at providing on-the-ground information on livability-related initiatives in the two states. RPO Council members volunteered additional topics that would be useful peer scans if funding were available to conduct them. These topics included planning for the impacts of the unconventional natural gas drilling industry, alternative energy, and basic capacity building for new RPOs.

#### **VI. 2011 National Rural Transportation Conference and Web Training**

Ms. Kissel informed the group that the RPO Council and full RPO America membership would be meeting next at the National Rural Transportation Peer Learning Conference, to occur August 24 – 26 in Washington, DC. The conference will include a mixture of plenary sessions, best practice panels and training workshops, and mobile workshop tours. The RPO Council members volunteered several possible session topics, including transit coordination, interjurisdictional cooperation, regional recreational trail planning and linkages between trails and activity centers, local foods movements and regional food/agriculture planning, local and regional sustainability planning, GIS and transportation topics (such as asset management and visualization), 2-1-1 development, what characteristics Census data reveals about rural regions, and other topics.

In addition to the national conference, NADO has also been working on a series of webinars. The next one will occur March 30 and will cover social media and electronic participation. Others that are coming up include freight, transit, GIS, and livability. RPO Council members had previously suggested covering professional development issues, and the group discussed educating local officials on transportation issues when making local decisions, and developing a public participation plan.

#### **VII. Excellence in Regional Transportation Awards**

Ms. Nothstine informed the RPO Council that the application period for NADO's Excellence in Regional Transportation Awards and Innovation Awards was open until April 29 and encouraged members to

submit applications for their projects, to share information with colleagues in their state, and to nominate other organizations that are doing high quality work in transportation. Nothstine mentioned that award winners are honored during the conference, as well as often being featured as case studies in reports and as speakers during the conference. Nothstine also discussed the NADO Trailblazer Award, which was initiated in 2010 to use a judging panel to select the most outstanding projects from among the Excellence in Regional Transportation Award and Innovation Award winners.

#### **VIII. Engaging the Private Sector in Planning and RPO Council Roundtable**

RPO Council members shared their efforts at reaching out to the private sector to engage business leaders in planning efforts.

Rick Hunsaker, Region XII COG (IA)—most private sector involvement tends to be oriented to particular issues, such as intersections or corridors that are of interest to them for the long-term, such as on safety or capacity issues. Periodically employers become interested in transit. Region XII started the JobJet vanpool program in response to employers' fears that their employees would not want to commute so far with high gas prices.

Bethany Remmers, Northwest RPC (VT)—one community in the region is developing a new village center, which includes putting in new sidewalks in many places. The public sector is involved in sidewalk planning and design, and the private sector is responsible for installing the sidewalks. Adjacent developers are involved in the sidewalk committee.

Jake Gilmer, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany RC (VA)—the commission has private sector involvement through having a citizen representative from each locality, who usually happens to be a business owner that also lives within the jurisdiction. In addition, the region has had some success conducting freight surveys and interviews with private sector stakeholders.

Gena McCullough, Bi-State RC (IL/IA)—an air quality task force serves the whole region, including metro and rural areas, and businesses that are air quality sources do participate in and contribute to the task force.

Ronda Allis, Region 9 Development Commission (MN)—the region has active coalitions with private sector involvement on particular issues or corridors. In addition, MnDOT recently completed a statewide freight plan, in which a local rail corridor to the Twin Cities was designated as being of Tier I importance for developing passenger rail. Other commission efforts with notable involvement include addressing renewable energy, including wind projects and a mobile ethanol production unit, and working with a county where communities agree to share tax revenue if a new business locates within the county, to avoid competition among nearby communities.

Fred Rader, Mid-Ohio Valley RC (WV)—alternative transportation has been a key to getting wide public input. It's difficult to get people to public meetings, so the RC has gone to them. For instance, there is a local Halloween bike ride where visit bike shops around the community. The RC has successfully set up stations to share maps and talk to people at the end of their ride.

Rick Hunsaker—enhancements are another area of interest, including beautification and historic preservation. Difficult to do because planning occurs five years in the future.

Laura Lewis Marchino, Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado, Inc.—park and rides or benches for transit have garnered wide private sector and public interest.

Randall Embry, Kentuckiana Planning and Development Agency (KY)—conducted a freight inventory for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. That involved reaching out to 300 freight generators in the region, and got a 50% response rate, which was very positive. The region’s MPO (also staffed by KIPDA) formed a freight workgroup.

Michael Parks, Brazos Valley Council of Governments (TX)—transit coordination has been an opportunity and a challenge. Have found that nothing works but going out to see people and developing relationships, especially if asking for data or information. Have to give people enough information to be interested, otherwise they don’t know they need to be interested in that issue.

RPO Council members also offered updates on some of the planning initiatives they have been involved in as well as noteworthy issues occurring in their state.

Michael Parks—on January 1, the state’s planning rules changed so that TxDOT now recognizes the state’s RPOs in the planning process, and the COG is working well with the DOT to develop a niche to assist with planning. However, the legislature is in session, and the DOT is under sunset review. Another effort is to teach local officials about planning, using the RPO to focus on corridors and routes and diffuse the politics of site-specific projects and emphasize multi-jurisdictional impacts.

Jake Gilmer—commission received a HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant. Also, Virginia DOT began a process to update the state’s long-range transportation plan to include each rural region completing its own plan, and the majority are scheduled to be adopted soon. The process was difficult but worthwhile, since it identifies project needs and priorities over the long-term and will inform the statewide highway plan, multimodal plan, and six-year plan.

Chris Fetzer, Northern Arizona COG—Arizona DOT and the rural regions recently reviewed the state’s rural consultation process. No major changes resulted, just a refinement of roles and responsibilities. But the main benefit of the review was in the extensive outreach process, which was educational for local officials and a reminder for DOT staff of the process to update the STIP.

Jake Gilmer—Virginia DOT also recently completed their rural consultation review.

Ronda Allis—MnDOT recently kicked off a statewide visioning process and formed a working group with diverse perspectives to guide the process. Ronda represents the states regional development commissions. The process started with a quality of life survey and will entail a very quick timeline, looking to be complete within about six months to guide the next statewide multimodal plan to lay out the policies.

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie Kissel, NADO Senior Program Manager, for  
Laura Lewis Marchino, Secretary, National RPO Council of Peers  
and Assistant Director, Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado, Inc

## **National RPO Council of Peers Meeting**

**October 20, 2010 • St. Louis, Missouri**

### **Guest Speaker: Kathy Ruffalo**

**Kathy Ruffalo** is President of Ruffalo and Associates, LLC, a government affairs consulting firm in Washington, D.C. Ruffalo has 20 years of experience in the public policy arena at both federal and state levels of government. She was appointed as a commissioner of the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission, authorized in SAFETEA-LU to develop a roadmap for sweeping reform of the nation's transportation infrastructure funding and finance framework.

From 1989 to 1999, Ruffalo served as a senior advisor to the United States Environment and Public Works Committee—for then Chairman Senator Max Baucus—with the primary responsibility for developing, drafting and negotiating federal transportation policy. From 1999 to 2004, she was a senior policy advisor to Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne. In 2004, she was recruited to return to Capitol Hill where she was a key drafter and negotiator of SAFETEA-LU. She is a 1989 graduate of Northwestern University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences.