

**Center Hill and Dale Hollow RPO
Technical Committee and Executive Board Joint Meeting Minutes
Upper Cumberland Development District, Cookeville, TN
November 21, 2024**

Center Hill Committee Members Present:

Greg Mitchel, Allen Foster, Terry Bell, Nolan Ming, Kevin Rush, Alisa Farmer, Laurin Wheaton, David Sullivan, Dean Selby, Stanley Hall, Mark Farley, Holly Montooth, Ty Walker, Tommy Lee, Valerie Hale, Kevin Robinson, Jerry Lowery, Paul Bailey, Michael Hale, and Sean Patten.

Dale Hollow Committee Members Present:

Dale Reagan, Jimmy Johnson, Steve Jones, Tony Day, Steven Barlow, Lori Elder Burnett, Stephen Bilbrey, John Potts, Jack McCall, Kelly Keisling, Ryan Reed, Hope Vargas, Doug Young, Jacob Rosenbaum, Rosalie Mayhan, Charly Lyons, Jim Young, Mark Farley, Tommy Lee, Robert Becker, and Ty Walker

Others Present:

Jeff Mason, Stacy Morrison, Charles Curtis, Jon Storey, Shaun Armstrong, Keith Morrison, Michael Fann, Bob Lynch, Beverly Murphy, Brett Howell, Alex Garcia, Rafferty Cleary, Burton Williams, Mike O'Donnell, Kristi Talley, Tony Day, David Connor, Jeff Harper, Shannon Haynes, Paul Bailey, Danny Holmes, Elisha Hodge, Landon Castleberry, Jack McCall, Michael Hale, Paul Sherrell, Kevin Layne, Warren Neal, Anthony Holt, Marcie Ackerman, Herman Wright, and XXXXXXXX

Mark Farley called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. by recognizing the state representatives and senators as well as other distinguished guests.

After a brief overview of the day, Mr. Farley asked Stacy Morrison from TDOT to come up and provide updates on TDOT's Ten-Year Plan. Mr. Morrison was joined by Jon Storey from Region 3. Mr. Morrison mentioned "Build With Us" on tn.gov. The Ten-Year plan is currently being updated and will be released in the first quarter next year. Mr. Storey mentioned the Statewide Partnership Program did have several proposals from the Upper Cumberland region.

Mr. Farley then discussed what he thought was each community's top priority from TDOT.

- Macon County – State Route 10
- Clay County – State Route 51
- Pickett County – State Route 325 specifically the downtown area
- Fentress County – State Route 28/Highway 127
- Overton County – State Route 52 specifically from Livingston to Clay County
- Cumberland County – Westell Road
- Jackson County – State Route 56 to I-40
- Putnam County – I-40 at Monterey
 - Baxter mentioned help at Exit 280
 - Monterey wants help with curving traffic to help the downtown area and Highway 84

- Smith County – Gordonsville exit
- Van Buren County – Fall Creek Falls traffic flow
- White County – Traffic at the airport and industrial site
 - Dean Selby from the Upper Cumberland Regional Airport is working on a Ten-Year Master Plan
- Warren County – Widen State Route 56 specially from McMinnville to Dekalb County
 - Nolan Ming from McMinnville echoed the statement Executive Bell brought up of the potential of this being a four-lane road.
- Cannon County – Bypass around Woodbury
- Dekalb County – State Route 26
- Trousdale County – State Route 141 and State Route 10 like Macon County.

After this discussion, Charlie Lyons from Tennessee Central mentioned the port was available and is expected to be heavily used in 2025.

Next Mr. Farley called Smith County Mayor Jeff Mason to come and discuss legislative issues.

- Property tax cap
 - Opposed by TCSA in 2024
 - Proposed legislation would cap how much a local government could increase property taxes annually (~2-5%). This was strongly opposed by local government officials who maintained that the law if enacted, would:
 - Hinder ability to respond to fiscal challenges and maintain financial stability
 - Alter essential services, new construction, and maintenance of infrastructure
 - Impair ability to meet contractual obligations, federal requirements, and state maintenance of effort resulting in fiends, loss of revenues, and grant/loan eligibility
 - Fail to keep up with inflation; new revenues required to offset inflation would count against the cap as would some debt service payments
- State-shared revenue sources
 - Plans for the upcoming legislative session include finding new ways to fund county government more efficiently. Three possible sources have been identified that will keep pace with rising costs when the state experiences a windfall in revenue.
 - Dedicate a portion of excess lottery reserves to K-12 capital needs (ACM: an equitable percentage of the state's current lottery sales)
 - Allow a portion of the real estate transfer tax to remain with the counties where it is collected (ACM: half of the current state real estate transfer tax)
 - Enact a privilege tax on the purchase of lottery tickets with the proceeds going to where the ticket is purchased (ACM: 5% privilege tax on existing sales)
- Annexation

- Practical solutions to simplify the annexation process could be explored at the legislative level, facilitating better collaboration between cities and counties for responsible growth.

Next, Mayor Mason discussed specific legislative initiatives.

- Dedicate a portion of lottery reserves to K-12 capital needs
- Allowing for a portion of the real estate tax to remain the county where it is collected
- Enacting a privilege tax on lottery ticket sales with proceeds to the county where the ticket is sold.
- Allow for county commissions to meet virtually again
- Improve TennCare reimbursement rate for ambulance services.

General policy statements:

- Opposition of local mandates
 - Local unfunded mandates and earmarking of local revenue for specific purposes
 - Unfunded mandates are the leading cause of property tax increases;
 - Limit the ability to make yearly budgetary decisions by local government
- Oppose legislation that lessens/diverts funds from public schools.
- Support enacting a new state-shared funding source for county governments that will keep pace with rising costs of service delivery
- Support ongoing funding for county transportation projects
- Support funding that better reflects housing and healthcare costs of state prisoner population in county jails.
- Support assistance in meeting critical staffing concerns in public health/safety and highway/public works
- Support the inclusion of county governments in discussions relative to opioid litigation and settlements and associated uses of funds
- Support making additional resources available to local governments for disaster response and mitigation
- Support funding to expand access to quality, high-speed internet
- Support for assistance for county governments that are keeping pace with population growth

Specific legislative initiatives:

- Support proposal to fully share the state sales tax collections with municipalities
- Support proposal to expand existing law authorizing municipalities to adopt a rental property registry.
- Oppose property tax cap

Representatives Keisling, Hale, and Sherrell thanked TDOT for all they do and everyone that was in attendance. Senator Bailey echoed those sentiments and praised TDOT for already having a portion of Interstate 26 open after Hurricane Helene.

Mr. Farley then introduced Burton Williams and Shannon Haynes from the Ayers Foundation Trust. This organization helps students in “at-risk” or “distressed” counties access to education.

The meeting adjourned at 11:27 a.m.