

## **Emerald Coast Regional Council**

Meeting Minutes

The Chautauqua Building

95 Circle Drive

DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

February 18, 2026, 11:30am



### **Members Present:**

Kurvin Qualls, Governor Appointee, Chair  
Councilmember April Sutton, Mary Esther, Vice Chair  
Councilmember Jim Bagby, Destin  
Darryl Boudreau, NWFLWMD  
Mayor Ben Boutwell, Century  
Mayor Bob Campbell, DeFuniak Springs  
Councilmember Paul Casto, Panama City Beach (Virtual)  
Mayor Pam Henderson, Callaway  
Councilmember Casey Jones, Pensacola  
Mayor Heather Lindsay, Milton  
Councilmember Bill Schaetzle, Niceville  
Mayor JB Schluter, Gulf Breeze (Virtual)  
Councilmember David Schmidt, Ft. Walton Beach (Virtual)  
Commissioner Kerry Smith, Santa Rosa Co  
J.D. Smith, Governor Appointee  
Commissioner Josh Street, Panama City (Virtual)  
Mayor JB Whitten, Crestview

### **Members Not Present:**

Mayor Tracy Andrews, Chipley  
Commissioner Steven Barry, Escambia Co.  
Tanya Branton, FDOT  
Commissioner Doug Crosby, Bay County  
Commissioner Danny Glidewell, Walton Co  
Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel, Okaloosa Co  
Commissioner Jack Griffis, Springfield  
Elizabeth Orr, FLDEP  
Commissioner Andrew Palmer, Okaloosa Co  
Commissioner Daniel Raffield, Bay County  
Commissioner Earl Stafford, Holmes County  
Commissioner Steve Stroberger, Escambia Co  
Commissioner Colten Wright, Santa Rosa Co

### **Others Present:**

Macy Falcon, Kimley-Horn  
Ben Faust, DRMP  
Cassidy Haney, FL Greenways & Trails  
Donnie Hicks, NWFL WMD  
Lindsay Slutterback, Kimley-Horn  
Deston Taylor, DRMP  
Cory Wilkinson, HDR

Kandase Lee, ECRC  
Dawn Schwartz, ECRC (Virtual)  
Renee Quick, ECRC (Virtual)  
Ada Clark, ECRC  
Tiffany Bates, ECRC  
Eric Christianson, ECRC (Virtual)  
Rae Emary, ECRC  
Gary Kramer, ECRC  
Leandra Meredith, ECRC  
Tammy Neal, ECRC  
Jill Nobles, ECRC  
Jill Strickler, ECRC (Virtual)  
Jessica Walton, ECRC (Virtual)

### **Call to Order**

Chair Qualls called the meeting to order.

### **Call for Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance**

The prayer was led by JD Smith, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Roll Call and Recognition of Virtual Members and Attendees**

Chair Qualls welcomed those in attendance and introductions were made.

### **Public Forum:**

Chair Qualls opened the Public Forum. With no speakers or comments from the public, Chair Qualls closed the public forum.

## **Information Items**

### **Item 1: 2026 Meeting Schedule**

No presentation

### **Item 2: Regional Rural Transportation Program Project Priorities**

Gary Kramer, Planner ECRC, presented the Regional Rural Transportation Program (RRTP) Project Priorities and the schedule for FY 2028–2032. Gary Kramer explained the priorities represent the top 10 projects in each category of the adopted RRTP and further stated that once the Project Priorities are adopted at the May 2026 ECRC Board, they will then be forwarded to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for use as a guide in developing the FDOT FY 2028–2032 Work Program.

## **Action Items:**

### **Item 3: Approval of the November 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

Chair Qualls asked for action on the November 12, 2025 meeting minutes.

*JD Smith moved to approve the November 12, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mayor Henderson and was unanimously approved.*

### **Item 4: Approval of October - December 2025 Financial Statements**

Chair Qualls asked for action on the October - December 2025 financial statements.

*Mayor Henderson moved to approve the October – December 2025 financial statements. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Sutton and was unanimously approved.*

**Item 5: Appointments/Reappointments to the Transportation Advisory Committee for the Regional Rural Transportation Plan**

Kandase Lee, CEO ECRC, presented the proposed members of Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) appointments/reappointments. Of those presented, a recommendation was made to fill the Bay County vacancy. Due to Alex King leaving the Panama City Port and relocating out of state, Cliff Johnson, Bay County Engineering Manager, was recommended to fill the open seat.

Councilmember Schaetzle questioned the lack of ECRC appointments from Okaloosa County.

Kandase Lee explained that each county has two appointments made by the ECRC Board, but currently, both positions are vacant. Since most eligible communities are within the rural northern area of Okaloosa County, identifying candidates proved to be challenging. Kandase Lee further explained that the appointees must be non-elected individuals and encouraged those with potential nominees to share their information.

Councilmember Jones asked for clarification of Escambia County's appointee, Gary "Bubba" Peters, as he is now an elected official.

Tiffany Bates, Strategic Partnership Liaison for ECRC, explained that Bubba Peters was appointed prior to becoming an elected official. Although he expressed interest in continuing to serve, it in line with the bylaws to select a non-elected candidate from the Property Appraiser's Office to fill the position.

Kandase Lee added this appointment comes from Escambia County and that staff would coordinate to secure a replacement.

*Mayor Lindsay moved to approve the appointments and/or reappointments to the Regional Rural Transportation Program (RRTP) Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to include the replacement of Alex King with Cliff Johnson for a two-year (24-month) term with the option of serving multiple terms. The motion was seconded by JD Smith and was unanimously approved.*

**Item 6: Resolution ECRC 2026-01, Amending the Regional Transportation Area Network Map**

Chair Qualls introduced Jill Nobles, ECRC Transportation Planner. Jill Nobles presented two (2) proposed amendments to the Regional Transportation Network Map. The proposed amendments include the Philip Griffiths Sr Parkway, from Clara Avenue to Chip Seal Parkway and Frankfurt Avenue, from Highway 390 to Business 98. Jill Nobles added that the RRTP TAC recommended approval of the proposed amendments.

*Vice Chair Sutton moved to approve Resolution ECRC 2026-01, amending the Regional Transportation Area Network Map. The motion was seconded by JD Smith and was unanimously approved.*

**Item 7: Resolution ECRC 2026-02, Approval and Adoption of the Rural 2026 Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside Rankings for FY2028-2032 Project Priorities**

Jill Nobles presented an update on the Rural Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program, which funds bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Five applications were received by the January 16

deadline, were reviewed using TA criteria, and are recommended for submission to FDOT, though funding is not guaranteed due to the districtwide \$16 million annual allocation.

All five applications are recommended to be forwarded to FDOT in the following order:

1. Town of Century – Complete Streets Master Plan
2. City of Chipley – Westbourne Ave/West Blvd Sidewalk Project
3. Holmes County – County Road 181 Sidewalk Improvements
4. Walton County – Lake Jackson Multi Use Path, Phase 2
5. Town of Century – Freedom Road Safety Enhancement

Jill Nobles stated that the RRTP TAC recommended adjusting the project rankings, moving the Town of Century – Freedom Road Safety Enhancement project down to number five (#5), with all the higher-ranked projects shifting up accordingly.

*Councilmember Schaetzle moved to approve Resolution ECRC 2026-02, adopting the Rural 2026 Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside ranked projects with the modification moving the Freedom Road Safety Enhancement Project to the ranking of Number 5 (#5), based on concerns regarding the project's cost allocation. The motion was seconded by Mayor Henderson and was unanimously approved.*

#### **Item 8: Resolution ECRC 2026-03, Approval and Adoption of the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) Applications & Rankings FY2028-2032**

Jill Nobles provided an overview of the Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP), noting that unlike TA, TRIP focuses on regionally significant projects that support the regional network, benefits the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), and requires a 50% local match unless located in a Rural Area of Opportunity.

Two (2) TRIP applications were received for the seven-county (7) region:

- Bay County – Philip Griffith Sr. Parkway Phase 3 (Right-of-Way)
- Washington County – Hartford Boulevard Paving (Construction)

Jill Nobles stated upon further discussion at the earlier RRTP TAC meeting, the SIS category original scoring was incorrect due to the Bay County project's lack of connection to a Non-SIS segment.. With the scores updated, the RRTP TAC advised reversing the proposed rankings, moving the Washington County project to Number 1 (#1), and the Bay County project to Number 2 (#2).

*Mayor Henderson moved to approve Resolution ECRC 2026-03, adopting the Transportation Regional Rural Incentive Program (TRIP) applications & rankings FY2028-2032 based on the recommendations of the RRTP TAC, moving the Washington County project to Number 1 (#1) and the Bay County project to Number 2 (#2). The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Sutton and was unanimously approved.*

#### **Item 9: Resolution ECRC 2026-04, Approval and Adoption of the FL-AL TPO Fiber Optic/Intelligent Transportation Systems Connection RFP Ranking and Selection**

Ada Clark, Community and Economic Development Director ECRC, explained a Request for Proposal (RFP) was opened in October 2025, but due to insufficient responses, an extension of two weeks was given. The selection committee met to review and rank the shortlisted firms, selecting HDR Engineering as the top ranked firm. Ada Clark stated that FDOT has received and approved the man-hour negotiations, and HDR has since provided the audit package for review.

Mayor Lindsay moved to approve Resolution ECRC 2026-04, accepting the recommendation of the Selection Committee and authorizing the Chief Executive (CEO) to negotiate and execute a contract for professional services for the design of fiber optic cable for intelligent transportation system (ITS) deployment. The motion was seconded by Mayor Campbell and was unanimously approved.

**Item 10: Resolution ECRC 2026-05, Approval of the SS4A Grant Design/Construction RFQ and Planning Task Order**

Kandase Lee, ECRC CEO explained the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Demonstration Grant will soon begin and will focus on developing technologies to reduce crashes along Escambia County's high-risk corridors, Fairfield Drive and Highway 29. These corridors have some of the highest crash and fatality rates in the district. As such, staff is requesting approval to issue a task order to a federally procured consultant to launch the project.

JD Smith moved to approve Resolution ECRC 2026-05, allowing staff to issue an RFQ, establish a Selection Committee, accept the Scope of Work (SOW) from Kimley-Horn, and authorize the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to issue a Notice to Proceed (NTP) to GPC, Kimley-Horn. The motion was seconded by Mayor Henderson and was unanimously approved.

**Item 11: Resolution ECRC 2026-06, Approval of the Information Technology (IT) RFP Process**

Kandase Lee explained that in years past, ECRC previously maintained in-house IT staff but shifted to outsourced services with Bit-Wizards for a broader range of technology professionals. Due to the rising costs and lack of a formal continuing services agreement, Kandase Lee proposed that staff issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) and the establishment of a selection committee.

Kandase Lee said a selection committee has been formed, and the members are as follows:

- Kandase Lee, CEO ECRC
- Dawn Schwartz, CFO ECRC
- Renee Quick, HR Director ECRC
- Jared Cobb, City Manager City of Mary Esther

Kandase Lee noted that the City of Mary Esther recently completed an IT services procurement, during which City Manager Jared Cobb played a significant role, providing him with substantial experience in IT procurement.

Councilmember Schaetzle moved to approve Resolution ECRC 2026-06, approving the issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Information Technology (IT) Managed Services and establishing a Selection Committee tasked with presenting the three (3) highest ranked proposals for board approval at the next ECRC meeting. The motion was seconded by Mayor Lindsay and was unanimously approved.

**Adjournment**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:05pm.

**Duly passed and approved by the Emerald Coast Regional Council on this 20th day of May, 2026.**

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Kurvin Qualls, ECRC Chair

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

20 May 2026