

**MINUTES OF
THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL MEETING
9:00 AM, THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 2025
TEAMS ONLINE MEETING**

OFFICERS PRESENT: Steve Pauken, Chair, Cochise County
Derek Rapier, Vice-Chair, Greenlee County (Phone)
Jesus Valdez, Secretary, Santa Cruz County
Heath Brown, Treasurer, Graham Count

MEMBERS PRESENT ONLINE: Greg Volker, Benson
Jeff Pregler, Sierra Vista
Terry Hinton, Duncan
Joel Kramer, Nogales
Luis Pedroza, Douglas
Ana Urquijo, Douglas
Barney Bigman, San Carlos Apache Tribe
Stephanie Fulton, Huachuca City
Joe Casey, Cochise County

STAFF PRESENT: Chris Vertrees, Executive Director/Transport Prog Manager
John Merideth, IT Manager
Celeste Vasquez, AAA Program Director
Heather Glenn, Administrative Assistant
Carrie Gibbons, AAA Deputy Program Director - Virtual

GUESTS PRESENT: Justin Harris, ADEQ

I. CALL TO ORDER/ESTABLISH QUORUM

Chair Pauken called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

II. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Justin Harris introduced himself as the new Manager who is replacing Aaron Tews as the ADEQ liaison in Graham and Greenlee Counties. He stated he is excited to help in those two counties and is particularly interested in any community events happening. His contact information: harris.justin@azdeq.gov (602) 791-1739.

III. MEMBER ENTITIES' DISCUSSION

Stephanie Fulton, Huachuca City Library and Community Services Manager, stated that there dedication ceremony for the highway pedestrian traffic crossing, July 4th and Back to School events were well attended. The Cochise Mobile Market from McNeal made a stop in Huachuca City offering fresh produce which could be purchased with EBT, SNAP and the Double-Up programs. **Steve Pauken, Bisbee**, advised that Camp Naco site work is finishing up and building renovations will be completed next month; they will be busy through December 2026. The

Executive Director for the project answers to a non-profit organization, not the City. He advised road and pedestrian improvements will be starting soon. **Greg Volker, Benson**, shared that individuals are not happy with various political policies. **Derek Rapier, Greenlee County**, shared that they are working on the fairgrounds as they gear up for the County Fair. **Terry Hinton, Duncan**, advised that they are applying for grants for playground equipment and pickleball courts. **Ana Urquijo, Douglas**, announced that they will be breaking ground in September for the new Point of Entry. They are working on pipelines for water/wastewater lines; planning to repave streets and are annexing 60 parcels in the Sunnyside neighborhood to extend the Douglas city limits to the west. **Joe Casey, Cochise County**, announced that Sharon Gilman had been named the new County Administrator, and he and Sharon are in the learning stages. **Barney Bigman, San Carlos Apache Tribe**, stated that they are working on passing lanes on Highway 70, Yellow Jacket Road; Cutter Airport and Highway 80; ADOT projects which include streetlights and street striping. **Jeff Pregler, Sierra Vista**, stated that ADOT completed their pavement improvements through the city; they are working on connecting the multi-use paths along Highway 90 and Buffalo Soldier and working to complete the bike loop; also adding a Department of Energy electronic charging station.

VI. ACTION ITEMS

1. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of the May 1, 2025, Minutes

MOTION: Derek Rapier
SECOND: Ana Urquijo
ACTION: Unanimous

2. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Advisory Council On Aging (ACOA) Nominations

Celeste Vasquez reviewed the ACOA bylaws requirements regarding representation on the ACOA board and advised that there are currently 5 vacancies:

- **Cochise County:** (3): One (1) seat for Huachuca City; One (1) seat for the City of Willcox; One (1) seat for County Unincorporated. No representatives for these three openings have stepped forward and remain unfilled.
- **Greenlee County:** One (1) seat for the Town of Clifton. Mr. Frank Montoya's second term representing the Town of Clifton expired on March 14, 2025. To date, we have not received any interest from other potential members in filling this seat. Mr. Montoya is willing to serve on the Council if reappointed, as this seat has been vacant for 90 days.
- **Santa Cruz County:** (1): One (1) seat for the City of Nogales. The current representative is NOT willing to serve on the Council and there has been any interest from other potential members in filling this seat, so she is recruiting for this seat.

Additionally, there are currently two (2) members whose successful first three-year term is due to expire on August 19, 2025. The following members may be reappointed for a second three-year term if they wish to continue:

Nominated representatives will commence their term on the date approved and appointed by the SEAGO Executive Board, which is scheduled for August 15, 2025.

- **Graham County:** Mr. Robert Rivera, representing the Town of Thatcher. Mr. Rivera is willing to continue to serve on the Council if reappointed. Ms. Lisa Lane, representing Graham County Unincorporated. Ms. Lane is willing to continue to serve on the Council if reappointed.

Motion: Ana Urquijo
Second: Stephanie Fulton
Action: Unanimous

3. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Title VI Plan and Consideration of Resolution 2025-02

Mr. Vertrees advised that in response to the requirements of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and ADOT, SEAGO developed a Title VI Plan in July 2011. The purpose of the Plan is to describe how SEAGO intends to ensure that underserved individuals are provided meaningful opportunities to become involved in the transportation planning process within the SEAGO region. At the time this iteration of the Plan was developed, there was no federal requirement that such a plan be approved by an agency's governing board. Since that time, the FTA has revised its Circular 4702.1 B, which, among other things, now requires approval of Title VI plans by an agency's governing board.

While ADOT will accept the minutes of a meeting as evidence of governing board approval, the minutes do not become official until approved at a subsequent meeting. Because meetings of the SEAGO Executive Board occur quarterly, approval of the August 19th meeting minutes will not be considered until November – well after the deadline for ADOT to submit our Title VI plan to FTA. Therefore, I have prepared a Resolution for your consideration which, if adopted, will provide immediate evidence of the Executive Board's approval of SEAGO's Title VI Implementation and Public Participation Plan dated August 1, 2025.

Derek Rapier thanked SEAGO staff and made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-02.

Motion: Derek Rapier
Second: Ana Urquijo
Action: Unanimous

4. Discussion and Possible Action SEAGO Bylaws Revision Request

Mr. Vertrees explained that he received a request to amend the SEAGO bylaws which require the Secretary of the Executive Board to submit the proposed amendment to each Executive Board official representative at least 15 days prior to the next meeting.

The recommendation is to eliminate the Joint Administrative Committee (AC)/Executive Committee (EC) meetings as identified in Section E. The feeling is that it is an unnecessary and cumbersome layer to approve simple program related time-sensitive business. A significant majority of the business is TIP Amendments and AAA subaward approvals that were approved and vetted by other SEAGO standing committees (Transportation Advisory Committee or Area Council on Aging). It is often difficult to get a

quorum for the Administrative Committee due to the members' very busy schedules. We routinely proceed without the AC recommendation anyway. It is believed that EC members can reach out to their Administrative Council Member Entity Representative for input as needed.

He stated that this does not prevent us from holding a stand-alone Administrative Committee meeting if we have funding issues (use of fund balance) or potentially controversial concerns such as removing a project from the TIP in which a recommendation from the AC is needed and preferred.

He reviewed the Bylaws of the other Council of Governments (WACOG, CAG, and NACOG). Joint Advisory and Executive Committee meetings are not discussed in their Bylaws.

To reflect these changes above, the responsibilities of the Joint AC/EC meeting have been moved to the Executive Committee (Section D) of our Bylaws and highlighted in yellow. Section E (Joint AC/EC Meetings) has been struck from our Bylaws.

Additionally, he recommended an additional line item in our Executive Board Election of Officers (Section C). He explained that we have very strict requirements involving election and rotation of officers, and there is no flexibility. When Keith Dennis resigned as Executive Director immediately prior to our annual election of officers, SEAGO was potentially looking at an extended recruitment and selection process for a new Executive Director. He received a recommendation that SEAGO postpone the election of officers in order to provide experience and consistency through the process. A review of the bylaws found that it was not feasible. To provide some flexibility during exceptional circumstances, the following paragraph was added to Section C of our Bylaws:

“In the event of an exceptional circumstance such as the termination/resignation of the Executive Director or financial emergency, the Executive Board may pause the election of officers until the August meeting to allow time for the exceptional circumstance to be resolved.”

Mr. Vertrees shared that since his memo was distributed, he received only 1 comment back that they agreed with the revisions.

Derek Rapier stated that he was the instigator of the request to remove the Administrative Council/Executive Board Joint Committee and appreciated Chris' work to streamline the process. Derek stated when he attended the Joint meetings, it was confusing and even comical, at times, when voting. He believes it is streamlining the process, eliminating redundancy, and being much more efficient with everyone's time.

Steve Pauken has sat in on some of the meetings and agrees that it is an awkward process for everyone. He stated he would be in favor of the change.

Mr. Vertrees stated that when the recruitment of a new Executive Director for SEAGO occurred, there was nothing in the by-laws that addressed special circumstances. Keeping knowledge and experience is the focus. The by-laws say “shall” and that does not leave any wiggle room for circumstances, such as termination, resignation of Executive Director, or a financial situation such as a government shutdown where decisions need to be made to proceed with SEAGO business. Mr. Vertrees stated he added a paragraph to allow time to do recruitment, if necessary. Steve Pauken commented that six months is a long time. Mr. Vertrees responded that the last recruitment for Executive Director took seven months;

however, he is open to shortening the time period. Mr. Pauken recommended shortening the process. Derek Rapier suggested changing the wording to indicate May with the understanding it could go longer, if necessary. Mr. Pauken suggested not prolonging the recruitment process, saying that the Executive Board can address the procedure if it takes longer. Mr. Vertrees is fine with changing the by-laws to May and appreciates the input. Ana Urquijo recommended changing the wording so that it is not so restrictive. Mr. Vertrees said he would change it to “pause election of officers to allow time for the circumstances to be resolved.” Mr. Vertrees also noted that he changed the word “teleconference” to “virtual” in the by-laws.

Ana Urquijo made a motion to approve the August 2025 Bylaws Revision as presented, with the modification on the exceptional circumstance paragraph to remove the language ‘until the August meeting’.

Motion: Ana Urquijo
Second: Terry Hinton
Action: Unanimous

5. Discussion and Possible Action Regional Transportation Coordination Plan Approval

Chris Vertrees explained that beginning in 2007, to receive funding under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 program, agencies applying for funding must be included in a locally developed, Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (i.e., transportation coordination plan). The FTA also requires Section 5311 projects to be included in these plans. The coordination plan identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and people with low incomes; provides strategies for meeting those local needs; and prioritizes transportation services and projects for funding and implementation.

In response to the requirements of the FTA and ADOT, SEAGO develops a Regional Transportation Coordination Plan. Each January, SEAGO invites human, health, social, and transit service providers and members of the general public to come together to form our Regional Coordination Council. It is at these meetings that short-term planning strategies and priorities are developed to address the transit needs of the Region. This group reviews and provides updates to the Coordination Plan. New members are added to the Plan, and organizations no longer active are removed from the Plan. Each organization is given an opportunity to update their own efforts, and the combined efforts of the group are recorded in the Plan. The process includes an update of the regional needs assessment, a review of and update of regional transit goals, capacity building and gap filling strategies, and the establishment of Regional Funding Priorities for the 5310-grant cycle.

While Federal legislation requires the preparation of a locally developed plan, it does not provide directions on Executive Board approval requirements. However, many transit grant applications now require projects to be identified in a locally approved planning document. Executive Board approval would allow SEAGO and our public transit providers to be more competitive in our efforts to pursue transit funding.

Greg Volker made a motion to approve the Regional Transportation Plan.

Motion: Greg Volker

Second: Ana Urquijo
Action: Unanimous

6. Discussion and Possible Action of FY27 RTAC Priority Project List

Chris Vertrees stated that the last several years, the Rural Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC) has requested that Greater Arizona COGs and MPOs develop a list of regional priorities consisting of the top projects to be put forward by all the COGs/MPOs in Greater Arizona to the State Legislature for funding. The SEAGO Region was very successful during the FY24 budget cycle. We secured almost \$30 million in projects. Last year we developed a FY25 Priority Project List that included \$36,102,142 in projects. Unfortunately, due to significant budget deficits, the State Legislature did not fund any projects from the RTAC list.

This year, we were once again successful in seeing some projects on our list to get funded. The following projects were funded:

- Frank Reed Road Improvements – City of Nogales - \$1.5 million
- Industrial Park Road Improvements – City of Nogales - \$2.9 million
- La Quinta Road Improvements – City of Nogales - \$1.8 million

RTAC has again requested that each Greater Arizona COG/MPO develop a list of Regional Transportation Priority Projects be submitted to the State Legislature for funding in the FY27 budget cycle. SEAGO had a total of \$43,322,570 for programming. Unfunded projects from our FY26 list were carried over for FY27. This left us approximately \$10.2 million to include in our FY27 list.

On May 16, 2025, SEAGO issued a Call for Projects. The call closed on June 20, 2025. SEAGO received 4 applications with 3 which were able to be included in our FY27 RTAC list. Those projects were:

- 8th Street Improvement Project – Graham County - \$2.535 million
- Western Avenue/Target Range Road Paving Project – City of Nogales - \$6,927,573
- SR 80/Washington Avenue Turn Lane Improvements – City of Douglas - \$1.5 million

A second Nogales application (Commercial Roads Paving Project) could not be included in this year's list. This does not preclude Nogales or any other member agency pursuing direct legislative awards. The Western Avenue/Target Range Road Paving Project was the top priority for Nogales.

As we have done in past years, construction contingency line items were not included in the funding recommendations. He directed members to our FY27 programming plan and stated that we do not rank these projects in priority order. Historically, project ranking has not played a role in project selection as legislatures prioritize and select projects based upon the needs of their district. It is incumbent on each applicant to reach out to your state legislature and get their support for your project.

Ana Urquijo asked if non-funded projects will be rolled over and approved next time or if there is a gap. Mr. Vertrees responded that there is a rollover option, and he gives the TAC members the opportunity to roll the unfunded projects over or create a new list. He added that over the past several years, the Committee has unanimously agreed to rollover the list of projects which have already been vetted and identified, especially since some of the projects have already been put into the legislator's agenda for consideration.

Derek Rapier made a motion to approve the SEAGO Region’s Priority Transportation Projects List.

Motion: Derek Rapier
Second: Stephanie Fulton
Action: Unanimous

7. Discussion and possible action Administrative Council Meeting Schedule

The Administrative Council normally meets at 9:00 a.m. on the first Thursday of February, May, August and November at the Cochise College Benson Center. All meetings have a virtual option. I have reviewed in-person attendance of our last 8 meetings. We had a total of 13 member-entity representatives attending in-person for an average of about 1.6 people per meeting. Each meeting costs SEAGO approximately \$1,000 per meeting in room rental fees, mileage, travel time, and breakfast meal. I understand that you are extremely busy. I respect your time and would like to accommodate your busy schedules. As briefly discussed at our last meeting, it may be time to shift from hybrid to virtual meetings. Below are 4 options for your consideration:

Option A – Keep Current Schedule all Hybrid Meetings

Option B – All Virtual Meetings

Option C - 2 Hybrid Meetings Per Year: February Virtual/May Hybrid/August Virtual/November Hybrid

Option D – 1 In-person Meeting Per Year: February Virtual/May In-person/August Virtual/November Virtual. May has been selected as the in-person meeting due to Election of Officers being a primary activity.

Mr. Vertrees stressed that he wants to accommodate members. Stephanie Fulton stated she likes to see people at least once a year, and she prefers Option D, but C would work for her also. Ana Urquijo prefers Option B, but Option C works, too. She prefers virtual meetings, but it would be ok to meet in person once a year, so Option B or D would work. Greg Volker stated he prefers Option B.

Ana Urquijo made a motion to adopt Option B of the SEAGO Administrative Council Meeting Schedule.

Motion: Ana Urquijo
Second: Greg Volker
Action: Unanimous

8. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Updated Travel Policy Update

Mr. Vertrees explained that as a condition of receiving federal transportation funds, recipients must comply with the current Federal General Services Administration (GSA) travel requirements identified in Title 41 of the Federal Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 300.

SEAGO strictly follows the State of Arizona Accounting Manual (SAAM) Travel Policy which aligns with the GSA travel requirements. A review by ADOT and the State of Arizona General Accounting Office (GAO) who develops and oversees the State Travel Policy found that to be eligible for reimbursement of travel

expenses a traveler must be in travel status. The GAO defines travel status as being more than fifty (50) miles from both the traveler’s residence and the regular duty post. Travel expenses that are subject to the 50-mile rule include lodging, meals, and mileage reimbursement. I have attached the memo from ADOT clarifying the 50-mile rule for travel status requirement.

The Arizona Department of Transportation has required all COGs and MPOs to develop a travel policy that adheres to the 50-mile travel status in order receive federal transportation funding. Since all our programs follow the SAAM Travel Policy, the GAO interpretation of the 50-mile rule impacts all our programs.

Mr. Vertrees highlighted that this will have a significant impact on some of SEAGO’s lowest paid employees, especially our case managers who must drive significant miles within the 50-mile boundary to visit their clients. To address this issue, SEAGO has worked with the Department of Economic Security Division of Aging and Adult Services to secure funding for case management vehicles with no SEAGO matching costs. As mileage reimbursement climbed to .67 cents per mile, it is estimated that we will save over \$10,000 annually. We are developing a fleet management policy for review and approval at our November meeting.

Ana Urquijo asked what impact the travel policy will have on SEAGO. Mr. Vertrees stated that in order to be reimbursed, employees must be 50 miles or more from the destination. This means that employees won’t get reimbursed for trips to Tombstone, Douglas, Sierra Vista, and other locations within that 50-mile radius shown on the map.

Ana Urquijo made a motion to approve the SEAGO Travel Policy update.

Motion: Ana Urquijo
Second: Stephanie Fulton
Action: Unanimous

V. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Future Meeting Dates

Chris Vertrees advised the members that the next Board Meeting is scheduled for November 6, 2025 in Greenlee County.

B. Quarterly Finance Report

Dina Curtiss gave an update on the quarterly finance report and answered questions.

C. Community Development Report

William Osbourne gave an update on community development and answered questions.

D. Community Development Block Grant Updates

William Osbourne gave an update on community development block grant projects and answered questions.

E. SEAGO Economic Development District Report

Kevin Fowler gave an update on economic development and answered questions.

F. AAA Program Updates

Celeste Vasquez gave an update on AAA updates and answered questions.

G. AAA Legislative Update

Celeste Vasquez gave an update on legislation affecting AAA and answered questions.

H. IT Updates

John Merideth gave an update on IT and answered.

I. Transportation Program Updates

Chris Vertrees advised that the date on page 74 of the memo says June 13, but it should be June 12. He then gave an update on Transportation and answered questions.

VI. RTAC REPORT

Kevin Adam was not available to give an update on RTAC. Chris Vertrees advised that his priority is the Rural Transit Summit hosted by Sierra vista MPO which is focused on transit in rural Arizona and geared to let legislators know what's important. He requested that everyone reach out to their legislators to encourage their attendance and participation in the Summit.

VII. STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS/ CURRENT EVENTS

Mr. Vertrees shared that he had just received an email from ADOT that they are rescinding the travel policy which the Administrative Council members just voted on.

VIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Vertrees stated that he had no outstanding items but will reach out before the next meeting.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Pauken called for adjournment of the meeting at 11:43 a.m.