

# STaR Division Newsletter

*Small Town and Rural Planning Division — December, 2007*



A Division of the  
American Planning  
Association

# APA

## *In This Issue:*

- \* *STaR Liaisons*  
pg. 3
- \* *Sm. Grant Report*  
pg. 4
- \* *Award Nominations*  
pg. 7
- \* *Tale of Two Hurricanes*  
pg. 9

*This newsletter is published electronically by the STaR Division.*

## Rural Transportation & NADO

**By: Carrie Kissel, National Assoc. of Dev. Organizations & Joni Graves, AICP, SW Wisconsin Reg. Planning Comm.**

When Rural Planning Organizations of America (RPO) was established in 2006, Congressman James Oberstar, Chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, hailed it as "important, not only for the coordination, management and planning of our nation's rural transportation infrastructure and systems, but also for linking our rural communities' economic development initiatives with state and local transportation programs." RPO America is a program affiliate of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO).

Small town and rural planners have long known that transportation is an important aspect of their work because of its important relationship with land use, economic development, and housing. Although long considered the provenance of MPOs, the recognition of its importance at the regional and national level has been a recent, but quickly growing, trend across the United States.

Like STaR, most NADO members work in areas that are predominantly rural or a mix of rural and small urban. A 2003 survey showed that regional development organizations serve, on average, about 6 counties and 35 cities or towns. The counties served tend to have populations between 10,000 and 25,000 residents, and the largest city had a population of 34,000.

Beginning in the early 1990s, increasing numbers of states have contracted with regional organizations to conduct transportation planning activities and satisfy federal requirements for consulting with rural local officials on the development of the statewide transportation plan. These rural planning organizations (whether they're called RPOs, RPCs, RPAs, or other names) can provide a forum for local input on transportation issues impacting non-metropolitan communities with a population below 50,000. RPOs serve as a link between state transportation agencies, local elected officials, and citizens to ensure their involvement in the transportation planning and decision-making process.

RPOs are often managed and coordinated by regional planning and economic development organizations. Responsibilities vary according to local needs and contracts with state agencies, but their activities may include identifying regional priorities for building or maintaining infrastructure and facilities, transportation planning, collecting traffic data, mapping local features or coordinating public transit for rural areas. With their close relationship to regional development organizations, RPOs can also help to coordinate transportation investments with economic development strategies.

*CONTINUED NEXT PAGE*

**CONTINUED FROM COVER PAGE**

On the national level, NADO and the NADO Research Foundation provide advocacy, education, networking and research for regional development organizations primarily serving small metropolitan and rural regions. The NADO Research Foundation, NADO's 501(c)(3) affiliate, identifies and promotes best practices, analyzes the impact of federal policies and programs on regional development organizations and local communities, and examines the latest trends in the field of regional community and economic development.

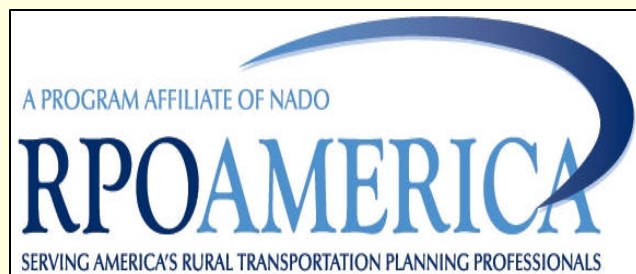
Because rural regional transportation planning is still an emerging field, small town and rural planners benefit from access to resources and training and the opportunity to share best practices and lessons learned with their peers. Since 2006, NADO has strived to fill that need through RPO America and the NADO Research Foundation's Center for Transportation Advancement and Regional Development (Research Center).

RPO America serves as the national professional association for rural transportation planning professionals, practitioners, and other interested stakeholders. It is also a national clearinghouse and forum for exchange of information on transportation issues affecting rural regions. The Research Center, funded under cooperative agreement with the Federal Highway Administration, also offers resources for rural planners and economic development professionals through its research on the relationship between transportation and the economies of rural regions.

The Research Center and RPO America organize and sponsor training and networking events, including regional multi-state events and the National Rural Transportation Peer Learning Conference – an annual event attracting some 175 rural planners. The most recent took place in Chattanooga, TN. The next will be in Duluth, MN, August 25-27, 2008. NADO has recently registered with APA to become a provider of AICP Certification Maintenance credits. APA will decide on a case-by-case basis whether events submitted qualify for CM credit.

The *Rural Transportation Newsletter*, a free publication distributed via email and online, and the Web site [www.RuralTransportation.org](http://www.RuralTransportation.org) provide ready access to resources on a variety of transportation planning issues, as well as a calendar of training events, a peer exchange listserv, and information about job opportunities.

For more information on regional approaches to economic development and transportation planning in rural and small metropolitan areas, visit [www.nado.org](http://www.nado.org) and [www.ruraltransportation.org](http://www.ruraltransportation.org). To sign up to receive the *Rural Transportation Newsletter* and participate in the peer exchange listserv, visit <http://www.ruraltransportation.org/peer-info-exchange>.



Conferees discuss local economic development projects during walking tour of Chattanooga's revitalized riverfront at 2007 National Rural Transportation Peer Learning Conference.

STaR is one of 21 Divisions within APA. To better serve our STaR members and to share information with the other Divisions, STaR has recruited liaisons from most Divisions. These liaisons will act as our conduit to share information with and about STaR members and activities. Our thanks to the following APA members for their willingness to act as our Division liaisons. Please feel free to contact them on issues related to the STaR Division and planning issues.

APA DIVISION	LIAISON	E-MAIL
CITY PLANNING & MANAGEMENT	Thomas Dabereiner, AICP, Village of Downers Grove, IL	tdabereiner@downers.us
COUNTY PLANNING	Nicki VanVonno, Martin County, Florida	nikkiv@martinfl.us
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Michael Stumpf, AICP CEcD R.A. Smith & Assoc., Brookfield, WI	Michael.stumpf@rasmith.com
ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES & ENERGY	Rita Shade, Town of Newport, DE	rshade@snip.net
FEDERAL PLANNING	Jane Brattain, URS-Norfolk, VA	Jane_brattain@urscorp.com
GAYS & LESBIANS IN PLANNING (GALIP)	Steve Johnson, HUD, Washington, DC	Steve_johnson@hud.gov
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	Open	
INDIGENOUS PLANNING	William Mrdeza, Saginaw Chippewa Tribe Mt. Pleasant, MI	bmrdeza@sagchip.org
INTERNATIONAL	Bill Steiner, Playce Consulting, Columbia, SC	Bsteiner@playce.biz
LATINOS & PLANNING	Kent Anderson, AICP City of Ridgefield, WA	Kent.anderson@ci.ridgefield.wa.us
NEW URBANISM	Paul Bednar, Paul Bednar Planning & Design, Elgin, IL	paul@paulbednar.com
PLANNING AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY	Open	
PLANNING & LAW	Rod Proffitt, JD, AICP, Archuleta County, CO	planatlaw@yahoo.com
PLANNING & WOMEN	Leanne Harter, AICP, Story County, Iowa	lharter@storycounty.com
PRIVATE PRACTICE	Joanne Garnett, FAICP, Worthington, Lenhart, Carpenter, Pinedale, WY	joanneg@wlcwyo.com
REGIONAL AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL PLANNING	Open	
RESORT & TOURISM	Anne Krieg, Town of Bar Harbor, ME	planner@barharbormaine.gov
TECHNOLOGY	Jennifer Evans -Cowley, Ph.D., AICP Ohio State University	Cowley.11@osu.edu
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING	Jennifer Carver, FL Dept. of Community Affairs, Tallahassee, FL	Jennifer.carver@dca.state.fl.us
URBAN DESIGN & PRESERVATION	Mary Ann Holton, AICP, City of Trinidad, CO	mholton@historict Trinidad.com

## Washington D.C.

# Federal Policy & Program Briefing

By: Allison R. Barker, Eastern Maine Development Corp.

I thank the Small Town and Rural Planning Division for the recent opportunity to attend the Federal Policy & Program Briefing and Planners' Day in Washington, D.C. I went as an emissary of Maine, a state with one of the oldest and poorest populations in the country, most of whom live in rural areas. We have only three cities with populations over 25,000; 26% of our municipalities have fewer than 500 residents and 60% have fewer than 1,500 residents. Our population density is 41.3 people per square mile, roughly half the national average. Too much of that population lives in poverty.

Maine's economy has always been tied to its geography. Its forests have built navies and homes. Its waterways powered mills and water sports. Its coastline has fed the world and hosted vacationers. For the people who live and recreate there, Maine as a "natural state" is the way life ought to be.

It is ironic that the small New England village is the model after which contemporary communities are re-designing themselves. True, the traditional mixed-use, human-scale villages fostered community. However, the historic reality is that many Maine towns were built around single industries: frequently either the making of shoes or the processing of wood. As those jobs went abroad, what the rest of the world considered "quaint" was left to become "decrepit." Our rural areas struggle to re-ignite vibrancy. Our State searches for the formulae to expand internet capabilities and broaden the economic base. Meanwhile, our infrastructure ages and the affordable housing challenge is keen here. There is an ongoing tension between in-state and out-of-state interests and between conservation versus economic development. As a major tourist destination, many of the goods and services that need to be produced and maintained here will be used by people who don't live here. Nonetheless, the locals need to provide them.

We Yankees have a reputation for being staunchly independent, so you're not likely to hear a one of us reveal the extent to which this state looks to federal funding for support. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that chasing federal funding is an active pursuit. I suspect that we are not so different from many other rural areas in that regard. One nugget I picked up in D.C. is that, nationally, about 20% of rural dollars come from the transfer of Federal funds: social security, Medicaid/Medicare, subsidies, etc.

*CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE*

## **STaR Small Grants Program**

This article by Alison Barker is an example of the STaR Small Grant program in action. STaR support for Barker's participation in Planners' Day shows how STaR dues circulate back to our members to support innovation and the sharing of good ideas. For more information on STaR Small Grants please visit STaR's website at [www.starplanning.org](http://www.starplanning.org).

*CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE*

And so it was helpful to be invited into the corridors of Washington for a briefing on federal policy and high finance. The following were among the gems I brought back for my communities:

1. The need to plan for sustainability and climate change is now. As we increasingly encourage “green” buildings and neighborhoods, we need to also promote that these techniques and materials represent new industries for growth. Point out the opportunities for emerging “green collar jobs.”
2. Emphasize that sustainability is inherently attractive for the long run. This translates to re-sale values.
3. We’re learning to design “green” by, for example, maximizing solar exposure in our increasingly dense subdivisions. Watch to make sure that homeowner association rules don’t cross purposes by prohibiting clotheslines or solar panels.
4. Watch for discussion of “feebates.” Originally designed as programs that imposed disincentives on the purchasing of gas-guzzling vehicles, a similar mechanism could assess fees for construction that uses conventional versus environmentally sound methods or materials. Proceeds could offset the additional costs of some more costly but more sustainable alternatives.
5. Watch, also, for the development of EEBG’s: Energy and Environmental Block Grants. Coming out of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, this program would follow the CDBG model but would offer funding and technical assistance to states and localities to sustainability and energy efficiencies.
6. The next generation of funding from the SAFETEA-LU lineage is being dubbed “Green TEA.” Could the expression “Burn calories – not carbon” really catch on? Plan for strategic connections in promoting “active transportation”: health, air quality, land use, climate change, energy efficiencies, transportation. They’re all related. Remember that for funding.

Washington is a fascinating place. I was reminded while I was there that planners write and speak for a living. I was able to articulate to my elected officials that professional planners bring a multi-disciplinary perspective to projects that will impact entire communities. Without fail, they asked that I, as one on the ground, keep them apprised of the specifics in the communities they are charged to serve. It was time well spent.

*Alison R. Barker is a planner in Bangor, Maine, working for the Eastern Maine Development Corporation, a non-profit agency established by the State of Maine to advance economic opportunities in the six eastern counties of the state.*

# STaR

## Executive Committee

### Chair, Dale Powers, AICP

Pine County, MN  
DRPowers@co.pine.mn.us  
800 450-7463 x 6707  
320 493-8930 cell

### Vice Chair – Programs, David Gattis, AICP

City of Benbrook, TX  
dgattis@cityofbenbrook.com

### Acting Vice Chair – Communications & Immediate Past Chair, STaR Division

**J. Ernest Jutte, AICP**  
National Park Service  
ernest\_jutte@nps.gov

### Secretary/Treasurer, Roxann Read

County of Port Charlotte, FL  
Roxann.Read@charlottefl.com

### STaR Newsletter Editor, Tim Katers, AICP

Katers & Assoc., LLC  
tkaters@msn.com

### Photos in this issue by:

Laura Katers  
Tim Katers  
Carrie Kissel  
Cari Varner

## STaR Financial Statement

Beginning Balance:	\$	22,410.33
Revenue:		2,409.75
Expenses:		187.46
Ending Balance:	\$	24,713.62

As of December, 2007

## WANTED

**Original articles and photos  
for STaR newsletter. Must be  
in electronic format. Please  
send to: Tkaters@msn.com**

## ATTENTION ADVERTISERS

**This newsletter reaches more than  
700 planning professionals each  
quarter.**

**Readership includes members in 9  
countries. For advertising rates and  
terms please contact Tim Katers at  
(970)635-9974 or tkaters@msn.com**



## NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR STaR AWARDS

The Small Town and Rural (STAR) Planning Division invites nominations for STAR's Planning Awards to recognize outstanding individuals and projects for their contribution to planning excellence in small town and rural communities. The program is open to any individual, organization, or consulting firm involved in planning for small town and rural areas. Members of the Awards Committee (and their organizations) are not eligible for an award. Nominated plans, projects, programs and studies must have been completed within two years of the nomination submittal date. For Comprehensive Plans and Special Project Plans prepared by consultants, the award recipient shall be the client for whom the planning activity was conducted. The categories are:

**Outstanding Small Town and Rural Planner** Given to an individual in public service, academia or the private sector that has made an outstanding contribution to planning in their community.

**Outstanding Comprehensive Plan or Special Project Plan** Given to an outstanding comprehensive plan or special project plan that addressed the development of a neighborhood, community, county or region.

**Outstanding Planning Initiative** Given to an outstanding initiative or program in public education, workshops, ordinances, or enforcement that promotes planning in small towns and rural areas.

**Outstanding Student Project** Given to an outstanding project by a graduate or undergraduate class or individual that addresses a planning issue facing small town or rural areas.

Award recipients will receive the award, a one-year membership in the STaR Division, and up to \$700 reimbursement for travel, lodging and/or registration expenses for public sector or academic employees to attend the National APA Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada in April 2008. Additional copies of the award may be ordered for support staff and consultants at a nominal cost.

### **Awards Committee**

A four-member Awards Committee is responsible for evaluating nominees. All awards will be made at the sole discretion of the Awards Committee. The Committee may grant more than one award in each category. The Awards Committee will use the following criteria in its consideration of award nominees: Innovation, Transferability, Quality, Collaboration/public involvement, Measurable results and implementation, Role of elected officials, Long-term sustainability and/or use of Smart Growth Principles.

### **Nomination Procedures**

Anyone may place a nomination for any of the awards categories before the Awards Committee. Nominations must be submitted according to the following rules. A complete nomination package must be **submitted (postmarked) no later than Friday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008** using the Entry Form. All submissions are non-returnable and each application package must include:

- Four (4) copies of the award nomination Entry Form;
- Four copies of a 300 to 500 word summary statement indicating why the nominee merits the award;
- Four copies of the plan or project report being nominated, or a resume or biography for an individual being nominated;
- Four copies of letters in support of the nomination;
- Four copies of any supporting reports, plans, articles, newsletters or other supporting documentation (CD-ROM is an acceptable format); and
- A check for the nomination fee made payable to APA STAR Division (\$25 if nomination is made by STAR member, \$100 if nomination is made by someone who is not a member of the STAR Division)

Awards recipients will be notified as soon as possible and invited to receive their award at the STAR reception on the evening of Tuesday, April 29, 2008, at the 2008 APA National Planning Conference in Las Vegas. As a public sector or academic award recipient, STAR will pay up to \$700 for reimbursement of travel, lodging and/or registration expenses to attend the STAR reception. STAR will make other arrangements to present awards to recipients who are unable to attend the Las Vegas Conference.

***For further information, contact Dave Gattis at (817) 249-6005 or [gattis@cityofbenbrook.com](mailto:gattis@cityofbenbrook.com).***

# STAR Planning Award Entry Form—2008

Award Category (check one – complete a separate entry form for each nomination)

- Small Town and Rural Planner**
 **Planning Initiative**  
 **Comprehensive Plan/Special Project Plan**
 **Student Project**

Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Population of Jurisdiction \_\_\_\_\_

Person Making Nomination: \_\_\_\_\_

STAR Division Member? Yes or No (Circle one)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Application Checklist – Complete application packages should include the following documents: (All submittals are non-returnable)

- Entry Form – Four copies
- Nomination Summary Statement (300-500 words) – Four copies
- Plan or Program Document (Resume or Biography for Planner) – Four copies
- Letters of recommendation – Four copies
- Supporting Materials (reports, news articles, or other materials) – Four copies

(It is important that four copies are received. Copies on a CD-ROM are acceptable in lieu of large documents.)

- Video tape or other media (optional) – Four copies
- Application Fee (payable to APA Star Division) – (\$25.00 for STAR members, \$100.00 for non-STAR members)

Submit Completed Entry Packets to

**David R. Gattis, AICP**  
**STAR Awards Committee**  
**City of Benbrook**  
**911 Winscott Road**  
**Benbrook, TX 76126**



**ENTRIES MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN JANUARY 11, 2008**

## Picayune, Mississippi:

# A Tale of Two Hurricanes

By: *Cari Varner, Community Development Research Associate, Carl Small Town Center*

*The following article is adapted from a presentation made at the 2007 Planners' Network Conference in New Orleans, LA.*

Picayune, Mississippi is a small, typical Mississippi town located in Pearl River County, about forty-five minutes north of New Orleans. It is the first exit in Mississippi off Interstate 59, and is considered to be the first high ground north from the Gulf Coast. Picayune began in the same way as many Mississippi towns. The area was originally settled by the Choctaw Indians, and was first claimed for France in the mid 1600's. The area transferred to U.S. control slowly and contentiously over the next centuries. A trading post was established in the area in the early 1800s. The real growth of Picayune took place after it was established as a switching yard for the many railroads which crisscrossed through the region and Picayune was incorporated in 1904.

In the early half of the 20th century, Picayune and Pearl River County were considered the Tung Tree Capital of the world. Tung trees which are native to China flourished in Picayune, as it located at almost the same latitude. Tung nuts are pressed for their oil to be used in paints and pain thinner, furniture polish, but are poisonous to consume.

In August of 1969, Hurricane Camille hit the Mississippi Gulf Coast. It was a Category Five hurricane and was one of the strongest storms to make landfall ever recorded, stronger than Hurricane Katrina. Camille hit landfall in about the same place as Katrina and moved through Mississippi. The storm killed about 259 people and caused about \$10 billion in damage (2005 dollars).

Following Camille, Picayune faced a great challenge. Approximately 100,000 acres of tung trees were destroyed and the economy took a plunge. However, cattle had long grazed in between the tung trees in the orchards to maintain the fields. Following Camille, this overlooked part of the economy took on new importance and beef cattle farming surged. Today, beef production is a significant component of Mississippi agriculture. The total value of production of cattle and calves in Mississippi exceeded \$216 million in 2006, ranking sixth among the state's agricultural commodities. Today Picayune's economy has diversified, with approximately 35-40% of residents commuting to New Orleans, many people working in at the Stennis Space Center, and robust concrete and plastics industries. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Picayune's downtown flourished. Economic development brought new buildings and businesses. However, with the rising dominance of the car, state investment in highway infrastructure and the rise of big box retail, among other reasons, Picayune's downtown saw disinvestment and vacancies. During the period of 1970 - 2000 the population of Picayune stabilized at about 10,000 people, but residents began moving out of the central city core.



**Renovated Picayune streetscape**

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 10**

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9**

In August of 2005 Hurricane Katrina hit. Because of its location and relatively high ground, Picayune did not suffer as badly as its neighbors closer to the coast. Winds caused the most damage, but the main result of the storm experienced by Picayune was the vast migration into the community of those displaced by the storm. Along with the FEMA trailers that were set up all over the town, the FEMA headquarters was also put into the community. The local paper, The Sun Herald, reported on Picayune's population growth throughout late 2005 and early 2006. Headlines like "Population Doubles to more than 32,000" and "Picayune is packed full, traffic jams the worst part" were commonplace. Estimates of the population of Picayune now put it anywhere between 22,500 and 40,000 residents.

**Post-Katrina commercial**

Pre-Katrina, eight of the top 10 counties with the fastest rate of population loss were in Louisiana and Mississippi. Today, Pearl River County is one the nation's fastest growing counties, and was in the top ten for the period between July 2005 - 2006. Picayune officials describe the city as having grown 25 years in the last two.

**Same location—restored**

This kind of growth does not come without problems. City services and infrastructure are stressed and proposals to expand the sewer system are being discussed. New roadways and residential development has sprung up all over the town and in the adjacent county. As with many other Mississippi communities, Picayune is dealing with increased traffic, accidents, overcrowded schools and more demand for community services. Following Katrina, property values increased by as much as 30% overnight. New developments sold out faster than they could be built and in December 2005, every house that was on the market was bought, often with multiple bids for each house. Residents were cold called and asked if they would sell their homes, even when the home was not on the market. One subdivision, Heritage Oaks, is almost 100% occupied by new residents from the Gulf Coast, Bay St. Louis and New Orleans areas. The real estate market continues to be robust, but is now slowing down.

However, with the new residents comes a re-investment into the downtown business district and local economy. Many new businesses were relocated, along with the residents, from New Orleans and Picayune has seen a doubling in their sales tax revenue. The local Super Wal-Mart is one of the top grossing in the country. Estimates have put that sales tax revenue increase at \$100,000 per month above normal levels. But the local newspaper has noted that some businesses are struggling to keep up with this fast growth and some businesses could not hire enough staff to serve all the new customers. But work by the Carl Small Town Center, partnered with the NEA Your Town: Citizen's Institute for Rural Design and Mississippi Main Street, has helped to firmly re-establish the downtown. The city applied for grants to put their utilities underground to prevent future damage and electricity loss due to storm damage. They also have a renewed interest how their downtown looks, and have recently made steps to improve downtown with signage, sidewalk improvements and decorated waste bins which improved the aesthetics of downtown.

What makes this story all the more remarkable is that these people have stayed and worked in the community. Picayune is once again adapting to the changes brought on by a natural disaster and is reinventing itself. Integration between new and old residents and substantial reinvestment are helping to re-establish Picayune as a thriving small town. Picayune has seen an increase in ethnic and racial diversity and in the median household income. The community is still recovering from the changes brought on by Hurricane Katrina; but like many years ago when new and old residents successfully recovered from Hurricane Camille, city leaders have confidence that Picayune will bounce back from the most recent hurricane and adapt to the current set of challenges with strong community spirit.