



## EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

February 24, 2025  
100 Park Street South  
Mora, MN 55051

### Commission Members Present:

Tom Anderson – Isanti Co. Townships  
Wallace Bengston – Isanti Co. Public Interest  
Alan Duff – Isanti Co. Commissioner  
Jack Edmonds – Mille Lacs Co. Public Interest  
Robert Hoefert, Mille Lacs Co. Townships  
Shelly Johnson – Southern School Boards  
Scott Moe - Northern School Boards  
Ben Montzka- Chisago Co. Commissioner  
Dave Patenaude -Kanabec Co. Townships  
Genny Reynolds – Mille Lacs Co. Commissioner  
Peter Ripka – Kanabec Co. Commissioner  
Kevin Schieber - City of North Branch  
Brent Switzer – Pine Co. Municipalities  
Sara Treiber – Kanabec Co. Public Interest  
Dave Youngquist – Kanabec Co. Municipalities

### Commission Members Absent:

Dave Dillan – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities  
Bruce Fitzwater – Chisago Co. Townships  
Nate George – Isanti Co. Municipalities  
Jeannette Kester - Pine Co. Public Interest  
JJ Waldhalm, Pine Co. Commissioner  
Dave Waldoch – Chisago Co. Municipalities  
Glen Williamson-Pine Co. Townships

### Staff Present:

Bob Voss - Executive Director  
Nicole Klosner, Regional Dev. & Grant Specialist  
Darcy Rylander – Finance Director  
Trish Rydlund - Office Manager  
Penny Simonsen – Transportation Planner  
Michelle Thomas – Community Development Planner  
Jordan Zeller – Economic Development Planner

### Others Present

Kirsten Kennedy, MN Center for Employee-Owned Businesses

- A. **WELCOME:** Chairman Montzka called the East Central Regional Development Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- B. **AGENDA APPROVAL:** Duff moved to approve the agenda with one amendment: move item 11, Climate/Energy Update, ahead of item 8, Regional Transportation Coordinating Council update. Ripka seconded - motion carried.
- C. **MINUTES APPROVAL:** Hoefert moved to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2024 meeting as presented. Moe seconded - motion carried.
- D. **MN CENTER FOR EMPLOYEE-OWNED BUSINESSES (MNCEO):** Kirsten Kennedy gave an overview of the MNCEO. The primary mission is to educate business owners and their advisors on the benefits of employee ownership. MNCEO provides resources, case studies, articles, and a list of service providers who can assist with employee ownership transitions.
- E. **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Executive Director Voss brought before the Commission the following items:
  1. Chisago County Public Interest Representatives: Notices were distributed to local newspapers and media outlets to advertise the Chisago County Public Interest position. Three applications were received for consideration. The Commissioners then took a 5-minute recess to caucus. Upon reconvening, Scheiber moved to approve Rick Olseen of Harris as the new Chisago County Public Interest Representative. Johnson seconded - motion carried.
  2. RTCC Resolution Authorizing Application and Local Match: Applications for the 2025-2026 Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) funding cycle are due to MnDOT by April 10th. This grant is for one year and requires a 10% local match. The RTCC budget is approximately \$237,000 annually,

which covers 1.5 FTEs. Therefore, the local match would be around \$23,700, which will be included in the ECRDC's FY 2026 budget. Moe motioned to approve the resolution, confirming the ECRDC's commitment to a 10% financial match and authorizing the Chairman and Executive Director to sign any necessary agreements for the Implementation Grant and any amendments. Hoefert seconded -- motion carried.

3. **NLX Letter of Support:** Voss presented a letter of support for the Northern Lights Express. Motioned by Moe to submit the letter of support for the NLX as written. Anderson seconded -- motion carried with two opposed, Duff and Ripka.

**F. TREASURERS REPORT:** The Board reviewed the December 2024 and January 2025 Treasurer's report. Edmonds moved to accept the Treasurer's Report to include the checks written #12045 through #12105 along with ACH payments for December 2024 and January 2025. Scheiber seconded - motion carried. General Journals were reviewed and approved for the period December 2024 and January 2025.

**G. CLIMATE AND ENERGY (C&E):** Nicole Klosner reported on the following:

1. Outreach for the Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant has been paused in accordance with the President's Executive Order.
2. Staff graduated from the *I Like That Academy* (ILTA) and received a \$4,000 stipend for Pine Technical College.
3. Providing technical assistance to City Center Market in Cambridge for refrigeration.

**H. REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION COUNCIL (ECRTCC):** Michelle Thomas reported on the following:

1. Continued conversation and development of Intersystem Transit Connections. Arrowhead Transit in Chisago and Isanti Counties along with Transit Link in Anoka County will be making connections along Hwy 65 and I35.
2. Working with Jefferson Lines in starting a pilot project route from Pine County to St. Cloud.
3. An overview was given regarding RideSmart 2025. This is a comprehensive service redesign project aimed at improving public transit efficiency, accessibility, and reliability. They are working to create a system that works better for everyone—whether a daily rider or considering transit for the first time. They are requesting anyone in Isanti and Chisago Counties to take a survey to give input on the transit system, if you have used it or not. [arrowheadtransit.com/ridesmart-2025/](http://arrowheadtransit.com/ridesmart-2025/)

**I. ECONOMIC RESILIENCY COORDINATOR UPDATE:** Michelle Thomas reported on the following items:

1. The Chisago County Child Care Coalition hosted a Child Care Champions Training on February 1<sup>st</sup>. Two additional trainings are scheduled for May in Mille Lacs County, focusing on accounting for Child Care business owners.
2. Participated in a University of Minnesota Extension Agritourism Planning Workshop to acquire valuable tools and resources aimed at enhancing the success of regional agritourism venture. Agritourism is tourism that involves visiting farms or agricultural sites for leisure, education, or recreation, offering activities like farm tours, crop picking, or staying on a farm. It connects people to agriculture while providing extra income for farmers.

**J. TRANSPORTATION UPDATE:** Penny Simonsen reported on the following:

1. Continued work with Pine City School District on their Safe Routes to School (SRTS) planning grant. At this time there are several school districts that do not have a SRTS plan. They are: Willow River, East Central, Onamia, Milaca, and Nay Ah Shing School Districts.

- K. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE:** Jordan Zeller reported on following items:
  - 1. The Revolving Loan Fund Board closed on two loans – one to Stan’s Radiator in Pine City, and the other to El Jalisco Mexican Restaurant in Milaca.
  - 2. Assisting with one potential grant application to Federal EDA, for the City of Rush City for infrastructure for a new industrial park.
  
- L. **ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Montzka announced the next meeting will be April 28, 2025, at the ECRDC offices. Reynolds moved to adjourn the meeting. Ripka seconded- motion carried.

  
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Robert L. Voss, Executive Director

  
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Ben Montzka, Chairman