EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
ANNUAL MEETING
June 22, 2026
Sunrise Township Hall
12080 Sunrise Rd.
Harris, MN 55032

Commission Members Present:
Tom Anderson – Isanti Co. Townships
Wallace Bengtson – Isanti Co. Public Interest
Todd Christensen – Isanti Co. Commissioner
Jack Edmonds – Mille Lacs Co. Public Interest
Bruce Fitzwater – Chisago Co. Townships
Scott Moe – Northern School Boards
Ben Montzka – Chisago Co. Commissioner
Rick Olseen – Chisago Co. Public Interest
Julena Rahier – Pine County Municipalities
Genny Reynolds – Mille Lacs Co. Commissioner
Peter Ripka – Kanabec Co. Commissioner
Kevin Schieber – City of North Branch
Sara Treiber – Kanabec Co. Public Interest
Dave Waldoch – Chisago Co. Municipalities
Glen Williamson – Pine Co. Townships
Dave Youngquist – Kanabec Co. Municipalities

Commission Members Absent:
Dave Dillan – Mille Lacs Co. Municipalities
Nate George – Isanti Co. Municipalities
Steve Hallan – Pine County Commissioner
Robert Hoefert – Mille Lacs Co. Townships
Shelly Johnson – Southern School Boards
Jeannette Kester – Pine Co. Public Interest
Dave Patenaude – Kanabec Co. Townships

Staff Present:
Natalie Koerber – Executive Director
Nicole Klosner – Community Development Planner
Karen Onan – East Central Reg. Transp. Coord. Council
Trish Rydlund – Office Administrator
Darcy Rylander – Finance Director
Michelle Thomas – Community Development Planner
Jordan Zeller – Economic Development Planner

A. WELCOME: Chairman Montzka called the East Central Regional Development Commission Annual meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. AGENDA APPROVAL: Williamson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Moe seconded the motion. Motion carried.

C. MINUTES APPROVAL: Olseen moved to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2026 meeting. Christensen seconded the motion. Motion carried.

D. TREASURER'S REPORT: Genny Reynolds presented the Treasurer's Report.

1. April and May 2026 Treasurer's Reports: The Treasurer's Reports were reviewed. Christensen moved to accept the reports, including checks #12399 through #12447 and ACH payments for April and May 2026. Waldoch seconded the motion. Motion carried.

E. PUBLIC HEARING FISCAL YEAR 2027 WORK PROGRAM: Williamson moved to open the Public Hearing 5:45 p.m. Ripka seconded the motion. Motion carried. Executive Director Koerber provided highlights of the Fiscal Year 2027 Work Program, Budget, and Indirect Cost Plan. Bengtson moved to close the Public Hearing at 5:55 p.m. Ripka seconded the motion. Motion carried. Olseen moved to approve the FY 2027 Work Program, Budget and Indirect Cost Plan. Anderson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

F. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Executive Director Koerber reported on the following items:

1. Fiscal Year 2027 Executive Director Objectives: The Executive Director provided an overview of FY 2027 objectives, as shared with the Personnel & Budget Committee and included in the FY 2027 Work Program. She noted that the first six months focused on organizational learning, continuity, staff support, and regional relationship-building. In FY 2027, the focus will shift from transition to strengthening organizational structure, defining strategy, increasing accountability, and building long-term agency capacity. Key areas of emphasis include completion of a strategic planning process, updates to organizational systems and policies, staff development, formalized goal-setting and performance evaluation processes, continued relationship-building with local governments and partners, development of an annual survey, required reporting, major planning efforts, and maintaining a clean audit.

1. Minnesota Association of Development Organizations (MADO) Updates: The Executive Director provided an update on recent MADO discussions, noting the importance of ensuring Regional Development Organizations (RDO) are represented as state and federal programs evolve. Federal Regional Transportation Planning Organization language did not advance this year, but may have stronger opportunities in future transportation funding discussions. MnDOT plans to incorporate RDOs into upcoming Local Transit Coordination Plans, and MADO has formed a smaller work group to clarify RDO roles and value in that process. The 7W Economic Development District designation through the Initiative Foundation is expected to move forward, which would help advance statewide RDO coverage.

2. Letter of Support to Increase MnDOT Transportation Planning Grant Funding: The Executive Director summarized MADO discussions with MnDOT regarding the RDC Planning Grant, noting that current funding of $75,000 per region has not changed since 2013 and no longer reflects the workload or cost of service. Rising staffing and operational cost have significantly reduced the number of hours available to support ATP processes, newly established federal programs and emerging statewide transportation plans and initiatives. Christensen moved to approve the Letter of Support to increase MnDOT Planning Grant Funding. Treiber seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Commission Vacancies: ECRDC Bylaws states, "When any commission member is absent from three (3) consecutive regular meetings or from any four (4) regular meetings during any preceding twelve month period and has not given prior notice of justifiable excuse, the Commission shall notify the absent commission member and the public body represented that the seat of the absent commissioner has been vacated and a successor elected as provided herein."

   Nate George, Isanti County Municipalities Representative, has been absent five times in the past year; therefore, Christensen moved to declare the Isanti County Municipalities seat vacant and to begin the process to fill the vacancy. Bengtson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

G. PERSONNEL & BUDGET COMMITTEE: Glen Williamson reported on the following items:

1. Approve Revised Salary Scale effective July 1, 2025: The Personnel and Budget Committee recommended a 2.8% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) be applied to each step of the Salary Schedule, effective July 1, 2026. Waldoch moved to approve a 2.8% COLA to the salary schedule, along with step increases for eligible staff, effective July 1, 2026. Rahier seconded the motion. Motion carried.

2. ECRDC Contribution Toward Health Insurance Coverage: Waldoch moved to increase the ECRDC's health insurance contribution to cover 100% of the Health Savings Account single coverage premium rate, with no increase to the family coverage contribution at this time. Family coverage contributions will be reviewed during the next fiscal year. Moe seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Designate Financial Depository: Ripka moved to approve First Citizens Bank as the ECRDC's financial depository. Treiber seconded the motion. Motion carried.

4. Inventory Deletions/Additions: In anticipation of the annual audit, Bengtson moved to approve the inventory deletions in the amount of $$3,156.09 and additions totaling $1,849.98. Waldoch seconded the motion. Motion carried.

5. N. Koerber Six-Month Performance Appraisal: Based on a successful performance review, Youngquist moved to approve regular employment status and a one-step salary increase for Natalie Koerber from Pay Grade 9, Step 7 to Pay Grade 9, Step 8 effective July 1, 2026. Bengtson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

H. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. Nominations and Annual Officer Election

   a. Chairperson: Executive Director Koeber announced two nominations were received by mail for Chairperson. The nominations were Ben Montzka and Todd Christensen.

   Koerber then opened the floor for further nominations. Nominations were requested three times. Hearing not further nominations, nominations were closed. Commissioners cast their ballots and Ben Montzka was re-elected as Chairman.

   b. Vice-Chair: Executive Director Koeber announced five nominations were received by mail for Vice-Chair. The nominations included: Glen Williamson, Rick Olseen, Kevin Schieber, Genny Reynolds, and Dave Waldoch. Koerber then opened the floor for further nominations. Nominations were requested for three times. Rick Olseen, Kevin Schieber, Genny Reynolds, and Dave Waldoch declined their nominations. Nominations were closed. Bengtson moved to cast a white ballot for Glen Williamson. Ripka seconded the motion. Motion carried. Glen Williamson was re-elected as Vice-Chairman.

   c. Secretary/Treasurer: Executive Director Koeber announced two nominations were received by mail for Secretary/ Treasurer. Nomination were Genny Reynolds and Peter Ripka. Koerber opened the floor for further nominations. Nominations were requested three times. Peter Ripka declined the nomination. Williamson moved to cast a white ballot for Genny Reynolds. Christensen seconded the motion. Motion carried. Genny Reynolds was re-elected as Secretary/Treasurer.

2. ECRDC Liaison's to Program Committees: The following are the ECRDC advisory committee appointments.

   a. Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC): Nominations were opened from the floor for the TAC. One nomination was received for Genny Reynolds. Christensen moved to re-appoint Genny Reynolds to the TAC. Treiber seconded the motion. Motion carried.

   b. Area Transportation Partnership: The Transportation Advisory Committee met and recommend Genny Reynolds and Chad Gramentz to the ATP Committee. Moe moved to appoint Genny Reynolds and Chad Gramenz to the ATP Committee. Williamson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

   c. Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Board: Nominations were opened from the floor for the Revolving Loan Fund Committee. One nomination was received for Glen Williamson. Olseen moved to appoint Glen Williamson to the RLF Board. Waldoch seconded the motion. Motion carried.

   d. Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC): Nominations were opened from the floor for the RTCC. Nominations were received as follows:

      - Rick Olseen (Chisago County)
      - Tom Anderson (Isanti County)
      - Sara Treiber (Kanabec County)
      - Juliena Rahier (Pine County)
      - Mille Lacs County will remain vacant until the next meeting.

Hearing no further nominations, Williamson moved to approve the RTCC Committee members as nominated. Youngquist seconded the motion. Motion carried.

e. County Caucus for Personnel & Budget (P&B) Committee: Christensen moved to appoint the following to the Personnel and Budget Committee:

- Dave Waldoch (Chisago County)
- Wallace Bengtson (Isanti County)
- Dave Patenaude (Kanabec County)
- Juliena Rahier (Pine County)
- The seat representing Mille Lacs County will remain vacant until the next meeting.

Rahier seconded the motion. Motion carried.

I. CLIMATE AND ENERGY UPDATE: Nicole Klosner reported on the following items:

1. Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG): EECBG has been extended to May 2027.
2. Department of Commerce Reporting: All reports and invoices to the Department of Commerce have been submitted for FY 2026.

J. TRANSPORTATION UPDATE: Nicole Klosner reported on the following items:

1. Bluff Country Scenic Byway (BCSB): The kickoff for the BCSB was held in May in the cities of Rushford and Preston. There were many interested stakeholders in attendance.
2. Hwy 65 Construction: There are many construction projects this summer, and staff are attending the planning committee meetings.
3. Long Range Transportation Plan: Developing a new workplan for FY 2027.

K. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE: Jordan Zeller reported on the following items:

1. Reappointment to the Revolving Loan Fund Board: Motioned by Christensen to reappoint:
   a. Kelby Jennissen – Isanti County (2-year term)
   b. JT Johnson – Mille Lacs County (2-year term)
   c. Kirsten Faurie – Kanabec County (2-year term)

   Waldoch seconded the motion. Motion carried.
2. Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Vacancies: The RLF Board currently has three vacancies: one seat representing Pine County, one seat representing Mille Lacs County, and one seat representing Chisago County. Zeller noted that RLF Board member Bill Hill Jr., representing Mille Lacs County, is leaving the Board after eight years of service due to term limits. The Commission expressed appreciation for Mr. Hill's years of service and contributions to the region.

L. EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION COUNCIL (ECRTCC): Karen Onan reported on the following items:

1. ECRTCC Grant Award: The ECRTCC FY2027 grant was award by the Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) on May 14th. This is a one-year grant with a possible amendment for the remaining award for July 1, 2027, through June 30, 2028.
2. Community Driven Connected and Automated Vehicles (CAV) Program: Staff applied for the Community Driven CAV Program and were selected to participate in the program. Community Driven CAV is a planning

and engagement process that helps community leaders and local agencies explores connected and automated vehicle technology in a way that reflects local needs.

M. COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Michelle Thomas reported on the following items:

1. Rural Entrepreneur Venture (REV): The Isanti County team, of which the ECRDC is a partner, has been selected to be a REV site throughout 2026 to support new and existing businesses.

   The Initiative Foundation and the University of Minnesota Extension's Rural Entrepreneurial Venture program helps rural communities strengthen their economies by supporting local entrepreneurs. The team will receive coaching, planning and practical resources to help grow businesses, create jobs and build economic vitality from within.

2. Entrepreneur Workshop Series: The entrepreneur workshop series hosted by ECRDC, North 65 Chamber and the City of Isanti continue to see interest.

   The next workshop will be held July 21st at the Isanti Community Center from 4:30-6:30 p.m. The topic will be Time Management and Productivity Tools**.**

   This session is dedicated to helping solo founders and small businesses with limited staff cut through the chaos and reclaim their schedules. Speakers will provide an in-depth look at practical productivity tools designed to streamline workflow and automate tasks. Whether a one-person show or managing a small crew, these systems help businesses run smoother so owners can focus on the work they enjoy.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Montzka announced that the next meeting will be **August 24, 2026, at the ECRDC offices in Mora and will begin at 7:00 p.m.**

There will be a P&B meeting prior to this starting at 6:00 p.m.

Christensen moved to adjourn the meeting. Rahier seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

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Natalie Koerbor, Executive Director Ben Montzka, Chairman