



TRI-COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

EST. 1958

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

456 Fulton St. Suite 401

Peoria, IL 61602

CHUCK NAGEL, CHAIRMAN

(Danny Phelan, John Kahl, Greg Menold, Camille Coates,
Russ Crawford, Patrick Urich, Autum Jones)

Monday, January 19, 2026 9:00 a.m.

MINUTES

NO QUORUM

1. **Call to Order**

Chairman Chuck Nagel called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

2. **Roll Call**

Present: Chuck Nagel, John Kahl, Danny Phelan, Autum Jones. Russ Crawford joined on the phone.

Also present were Eric Miller, Ray Lees, Reema Abi-Akar, Debbi La Rue, and Lori Reynolds from TCRPC.

3. **Public Input**

None.

4. **Motion to approve November 17, 2026 minutes**

Motion held over until next meeting due to lack of quorum.

5. **Executive Director report**

Eric Miller reported the following:

Federal reauthorization of the transportation bill is in discussion right now, the ILJA, or the bipartisan infrastructure law ends September 1. There will be a lot of traditional highway items. Issues like bike trails and passenger trains will probably take a backseat this time.

The BUILD grant is large discretionary projects which we've identified 10 projects that we're aware of. One will be Prospect Rd. At the Technical Committee meeting this Wednesday, we will see if two others will apply. They would be Veterans Rd. in Pekin, and Pioneer Park in Peoria. We will be taking appropriate action and looking at letters of support.

Staff are having ongoing discussions with the Chillicothe and IL-29 Viaduct replacement. There will be an informational meeting later this month or early February to continue to educate their council and the community on that project and the process, and the leadership that the City of Chillicothe needs to take to move that forward.

Staff continues to work on the draft UPWP (Unified Planning Work Program), which is basically Tri-County's budget that's due to IDOT by the middle of February. It will go through this committee and the Commission in March-April time frame, and it becomes the basis of our budget. Numbers look encouraging in terms of our transportation dollars. This is the last year of provisional money that IDOT is using as their spendout.

In regards to the Brownfield Assessment grant, Tri-County was told there was no way they would consider a budget amendment, but staff were just told to go ahead and submit the budget amendment and they will process it. So that would be \$50,000 over 4 years.

6. Motion to Recommend to Commission Health Insurance Contract renewal (Resolution 26-32)

Motion held over until next meeting due to lack of quorum.

Eric Miller reported that this was discussed at the Personnel Committee earlier today, and they have recommended to the Commission for approval our health insurance renewal. Employee benefits expire at the end of February. In working with Tim Neuhauser of Envision Insurance, he provided competitive bids and found the best plans that meet Tri-County's needs. His recommendation is to continue with Blue Cross Blue Shield at a 16.4% increase. According to him, with the conditions that are out there in the market, this is a reasonable rate. A change is being recommended in the vision, dental and life insurance for the Commission. Delta Dental is not working out for anybody. Tim has found an alternate with Principal Insurance, combining dental, vision and life. This would give us a 7.5% increase in cost.

7. Motion to Recommend to Commission General Liability Insurance Contract renewal (Resolution 26-33)

Motion held over until next meeting due to lack of quorum.

Eric Miller reported that Tim Neuhauser also provided Tri-County with a general liability renewal rate with an increase of 1%, so he recommends renewing this for the upcoming year.

8. Motion to Recommend to Commission IMRF Resolution for Military Leave Service Credit (Resolution 26-34)

Motion held over until next meeting due to lack of quorum.

Eric Miller reported that this is similar to what Tri-County did last year for another staff member who had out of state credit. This is for a staff member who is currently in the military and wants to bring his service time that he's earned in the military. IMRF

requires Tri-County to pass a resolution for each individual instance, so this has gone through the Personnel Committee, and it is recommended to be approved by the Commission. The cost to the Commission is negligible.

9. Discussion of Employee Handbook Review

Eric Miller stated this was discussed at the Personnel Committee meeting. Tri-County been bringing pieces of the employee handbook for amendments, but at this time, it is being recommended to conduct an annual review of the entire handbook. For the last several weeks, staff have been engaged in an in-house process, looking at benefits and salary structures, comparing them to other MPOs. The Personnel Committee is on board and would like to open it up to any board members who may be interested. This would be a working committee with staff involvement, and the goal to be completed by the end of the fiscal year to have some recommendations for the Commission. Ten years ago Tri-County did a complete overhaul of the handbook, and before that it was another 25 years, so it's time to do an update of policies and language.

Discussion of possible OMA violations if number of committee members is low, so it should be representatives from Personnel, Executive, any other interested Commission members, plus staff.

10. Discussion of New Projects

Eric Miller stated that he wanted to inform Executive of upcoming projects before signing new contracts for funding, in case anyone has issues with anything before moving forward.

a. Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Program Subaward Funding

Debbi La Rue reported that in 2023 Tri-County submitted an application for a technical assistance program through the US DOT. Tri-County was the lead applicant, with Peoria City and County and some other stakeholders to strengthen and build the pipeline of grant-ready transportation projects and to strengthen Tri-County's position for federal discretionary grant programs. Tri-County was awarded the program in 2024. The geographic scope includes parts of Peoria into unincorporated Peoria County. At the same time, consultants submitted grant applications, and once they were awarded, Tri-County was matched to a consultant. The main consultant has been Apt Global, and Charles Brown was brought back into the process. This work will improve the engagement process for construction, design and procurement processes. Tri-County is allowed to receive a \$50,000 subaward that will allow the use of some staff time related to working with the city of developing early action projects. This is a request to enter into a contract with Apt Global to receive that \$50,000 subaward, about \$30,000 of which will go to the City to pay their costs.

Danny Phelan asked how many hours are expected to be billed. Debbi replied that the work would be done by Adam, Gavin, and herself, probably less than 10,000, but there's no way to know at this point, due to unexpected obstacles that always arise.

b. **Comprehensive Planning Services for the Villages of Elmwood and Mackinaw**

Debbi La Rue reported that work on comprehensive plans with about five communities is wrapping up, some have begun implementation on transportation programs and economic development. For the past year, Tri-County has been working with Kathy Brown from GPEDC to identify additional funding opportunities for some other communities that missed out on the SPR grants, focusing on Elmwood and Mackinaw, and Eric has begun communicating with Marquette Heights. Funds will likely be awarded this summer, but the plan is to continue moving forward. Else Hayes has been the project manager for the last couple of plans, so would take on one of these projects. Debbi stated that she would begin training Gavin Hunt as a project manager on another. These projects would be completely covered under the grant, it's CEJA funding and would be about \$50,000 per plan.

Danny Phelan stated that comprehensive plans are huge and are the groundwork for the communities to get funding for their projects, and Tri-County doesn't take the time to pat themselves on the back and thank the staff for the work they do. Thanks to the staff for doing those, and we need make this known at the Commission meeting.

c. **Various GIS Project Work for Non-member Communities**

Eric Miller reported that Tri-County frequently receives requests for GIS work, and it varies depending on the scale and scope of the project, but it's been agreed at a staff level that for non-member communities, we will require an agreement of \$85 an hour. There are already 7-8 communities interested.

11. **Discussion of adding Logan County to Human Services Transportation Plan Region**

Reema Abi-Akar presented the following:

- In December, IDOT approached us about potentially adding Logan County to our Human Services Transportation Plan region.
- Currently, Tri-County is in Region 5, representing seven counties: Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Fulton, Knox, Stark, and Marshall. She hasn't heard of a county being transferred from one region to another, so this is a unique situation.
- Logan County (part of Region 7, the same as Sangamon County) is currently in a transition phase with their rural public transportation system, so IDOT spoke with them and determined that it would make the most sense to move them to Tri-County's region.
 - How will this affect Tri-County and the HSTP program?
 - It'll add several extra tasks to update the program.
 - These will include:
 - Updating the HSTP document to include Logan County (new maps, demographics, documentation about transit options, contacts)

- Restructuring the committee
 - Currently Tri-County has two people from each county on the rural subcommittee, plus an urban subcommittee representing the Peoria-Pekin Urbanized Area. So some thought will have to be given regarding keeping that structure or changing it.
 - Update the bylaws
- Outreach to Logan County and staff time to learn about the new part of the region and form new connections there.
- If this takes place, Tri-County will be compensated an extra \$20,496 in our HSTP contract from IDOT, which ends in June 2027. Currently, the contract is about \$136,000 over two years; if Logan County is added, it will be about \$156,000
- At this time, this is just a tentative and informational piece. Tri-County does not have the contract yet, but we expect it to come down the pipeline soon; we are waiting for the confirmation from IDOT.

Eric Miller stated that he wanted the board to know in case they hear anything from someone else. If there are any red flags, we can push IDOT for answers.

12. **Other**

- a. Danny Phelan stated that there should be an executive summary from the staff investigation by the next week and will likely call a special meeting.
- b. Next Meeting will be February 9, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

13. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:41 a.m.

Submitted by: Eric Miller, Executive Director
 Recorded and transcribed by: Lori Reynolds