

Land of Sky Regional Council
April 26, 2023
Regular Meeting at MAHEC Biltmore
Campus or via WebEx



When joining the virtual meeting, Delegates are requested to mute themselves and to un-mute for discussion or moving on orders of business.

Delegates are requested to state their names when moving on orders of business. Thank you!

AGENDA

I. Call to Order (12:30pm)

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

IV. Consent Agenda

- A. Modification/Approval of Agenda
- B. Approval of the Previous Minutes (March 2023)

V. Comments by the Chair and Delegates Roundtable (This month's topic is the FY23-24 budget. What are your plans for staff salary increases, tax rate changes, fund balance, or any other budget items?)

VI. Public Comment

VII. Special Recognition

Kim West honored as Transit Advocate of the Year by the NC Public Transportation Association

VIII. Presentations

- A. Dr. Bill Hathaway, CEO, MAHEC
- B. Dr. Kelli Brown, Chancellor, Western Carolina University
- C. Great Smoky Mountains National Park

IX. Executive Director's Report

X. Important Dates

- A. Next regularly scheduled Board meeting is planned for May 24, 2023 at the Land of Sky Regional Council office, 339 New Leicester Hwy., Suite 140, Asheville, NC 28806 or remote via Zoom.

XI. Adjournment

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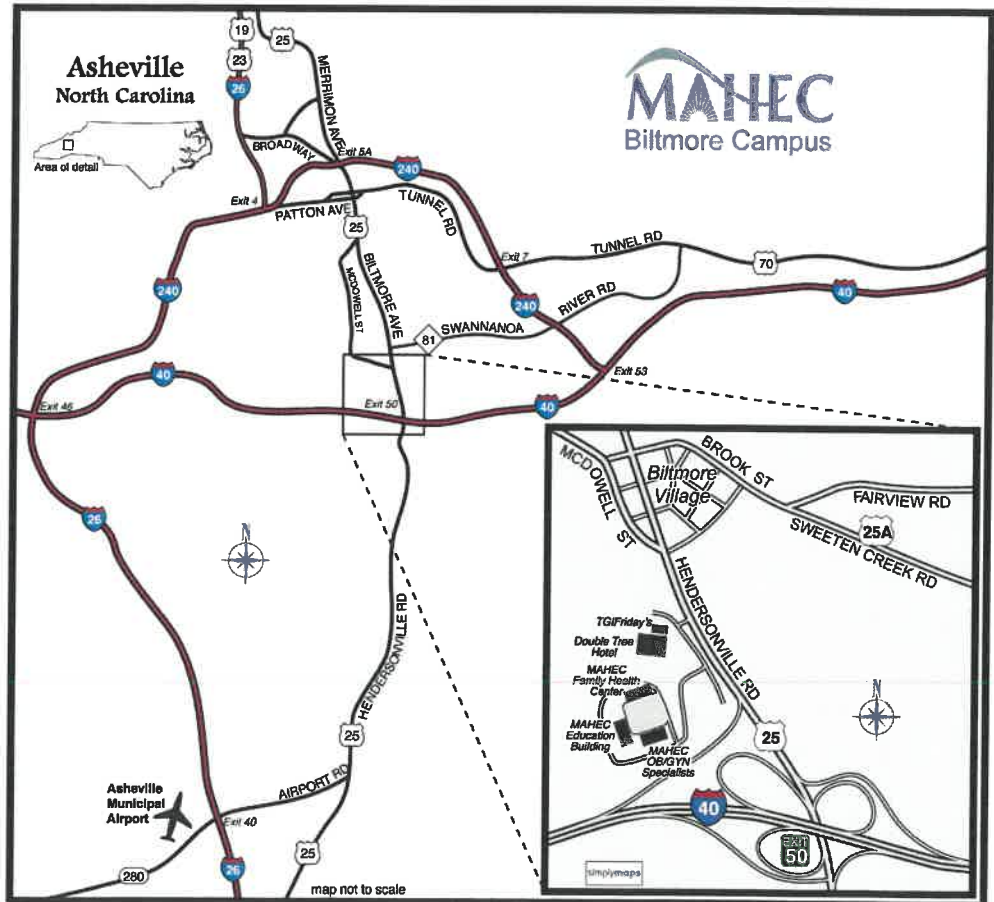
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BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

- Subject:** Consent Agenda
- Item Number:** IV. Consent Agenda:
A. Modification/Approval of the Board's Agenda for March 22, 2023
B. Approval of Minutes from the February 22, 2023, Regular Meeting and Annual Awards Presentation.
- Responsible Party:** Zia Rifkin, Administrative Services
- Attachment(s):** Minutes from the February 2023 Regular Meeting
- Background:** Item B. March 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes Recap:
Quorum was present to conduct business at the March 2023 Board of Delegates meeting and the minutes provide a recap recognition of George Morosani as the longest servicing LOSRC Council members and his receipt of the Order of the Longleaf Pine. The Delegates Roundtable focused on Member Governments' use of ARPA allocations, and the Evergreen closure was discussed by Mayor Zeb Smathers and David Garrett. Assistant Commerce Secretary Chet Mottershead and Governor Cooper's Western Region Director, Drew Christy outlined aid available in response to the Evergreen announcement. Nathan Ramsey presented the LOSRC Legislative Priorities, which were adopted by the Board of Delegates.
- Staff Recommendation:** Recommend approval of the Consent Agenda
- Suggested Motion(s):** Move to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented.

**Land of Sky Regional Council
Board of Delegates
Regular Meeting**

March 22, 2023

Minutes

- I. Call to Order – Chair Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order at approximately 12:30pm.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance – Chair Fitzsimmons led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- III. Presentation by Drew Christy, Western Representative, NC Governor Roy Cooper – Drew Christy recognized George Morosani as the longest serving board member of Land of Sky Regional Council (LOSRC), and he presented him with the Order of the Longleaf Pine. Mr. Morsani graciously accepted his recognition and shared that he loved his time with LOSRC, and it has been a treat not only to serve the region but it is gratifying to see the growth and all of the positive things happening including the uptick in the workforce and he thanked everyone for making this moment possible.
- IV. Roll Call – Nathan Ramsey called the roll. The following members were present: Terri Wells, Tim Love, Rebecca McCall, Jason Chappell, Sandra Kilgore, Jonathan Kanipe, Pam King, Archie Pertiller, Maureen Copelof, Barbara Jeter, Preston Blakely, Barbara Volk, Deb Bridges, Forrest Gilliam, Jeff Young, Daniel Cobb, Mason Blake, Patrick Fitzsimmons, Elisabeth Ervin, Shannon Tuch, Justin Tyler, Burton Hodges, and Bob Tomasulo
Guests Present – George Morosani, Assistant Secretary Chet Mottershead, Mayor Zeb Smathers, David Garrett, Ivry Cheeks, Kirby Rash (NCDOT), Robin Ramsey, David Francis, Dr. Arthur Salido, T. Laughter, Karen Sanders, Drew Christy, and Shawn Slome
- V. Consent Agenda – The consent agenda, consisting of the Board's March agenda, and the minutes of the February 22, 2023 meeting was presented for approval.

A motion was made and seconded by Barbara Volk to approve the consent agenda including the February 22, 2023 minutes and today's agenda as modified to allow the presentation of the Order of the Longleaf Pine to George Morosani. The motion was carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

Quorum was established by the roll call for the vote.

- VI. Chair's Comments and Delegates Roundtable - Chair Fitzsimmons encouraged Delegates to share information of interest from their jurisdictions focused on the topic of what each jurisdiction has done with their ARPA monies.

Delegates Roundtable –

Commissioner Terri Wells – Shared that Buncombe County allocated the majority of ARPA funding to address the common issues of infrastructure, affordable housing, road projects, early childhood education, and small business development.

Commission Chair Rebecca McCall – Shared that Henderson County's ARPA funding was allocated to refurbishment of the VFW building to allow that to become the Veterans Services Facility, housing VFW and others, a new sports complex, a new cellphone tower in Mills River. Additionally a large allocation of that funding was utilized by EMS. ARPA funding was also allocated for a water/sewer project for Edneyville, and affordable housing.

Commission Chair Jason Chappell – Shared that Transylvania County used its ARPA funding for medical claims charged against the County's health insurance. The rest was allocated to revenue replacement that could include water/sewer projects. He shared that the County is advertising for a new finance director and to ask qualified applicants to apply.

Vice Mayor Sandra Kilgore – Shared that the City of Asheville allocated ARPA funding for local nonprofits with projects focusing on affordable housing, aging projects, homeless services, business recovery, food assistance, domestic violence prevention and workforce development. The City funded 24 external nonprofits along with three City-funded projects. The City also allocated funding to their Community Engagement Department. The City also received funding from HUD that is allocated for affordable housing and homeless issues. Also, the City voted to approve funding for McCormick Field upgrades.

Town Manager Jonathan Kanipe – Shared that the Town of Biltmore Forest allocated its ARPA funding for facility upgrades and parking improvements.

Town Commissioner Pam King – Shared that the Town of Black Mountain allocated ARPA funding for revenue replacement and Lake Tomahawk dam replacement, water/sewer projects, recreational facility renovation. Also, there's a meeting today to discuss allocation process of 1.5 million in ARPA funding.

Mayor Maureen Copelof – Shared that the City of Brevard used its ARPA funding for utility upgrades and stormwater management projects, and to upgrade water lines in a residential area that is becoming mixed-use. Funding was also used for stream restoration.

Council Member Barbara Jeter – Shared that the Village of Flat Rock utilized its ARPA funding for supplementary pay for Village staff, stream remediation, and the Fire Departments, who had unique challenges with everyone working from home during the pandemic.

Mayor Preston Blakely – Shared that the Town of Fletcher used ARPA funding for revenue replacement and infrastructure projects.

Mayor Barbara Volk – Shared that the City of Hendersonville received NCDOT funding for greenways and \$3.5 million in stormwater funding for flood plain restoration, and a flood plain master plan. She expressed appreciation to LOSRC for the assistance with applying for this funding. ARPA funding was allocated internally for revenue replacement and \$2 million to local nonprofits, funding for the Connection Center that is a one-stop for nonprofits providing services in the community. Additionally, the Interfaith Assistance Ministry was provided funding for food assistance, utility assistance and other needs. ARPA funding was also allocated for home repairs and low income/affordable housing. Other nonprofits receiving funding included Children and Family Resource Center, Safelight (domestic violence phoenix program), and support for translation services and other support for the Spanish speaking community.

Town Commissioner Deb Bridges – Shared that the Town of Laurel Park allocated ARPA funding for a major stormwater project. Also, \$2 million allocated this year for a stormwater and roads improvement project. The goal is to leave the community y better poised to address future needs in the jurisdiction. Stormwater is a major issue.

Town Administrator Forrest Gilliam – Shared that the Town of Marshall used its ARPA funding for revenue placement including purchase of wells that were previously leased. Additionally, the General Assembly provided \$12 million in ARPA funding for water/sewer projects.

Council Member Jeff Young – Shared that the Town of Mills River allocated ARPA funding for Fire Department for premium pay, farmers market for SNAP program, land preservation, funding provided to local nonprofits. The Town is accepting proposals from nonprofits to award remaining ARPA funds.

Town Commissioner Mason Blake – Shared that the Town of Montreat is pleased to announce that Jason Burrell is joining the Town as the new Manager. ARPA funding earmarked for financial software for Town operations.

Mayor Patrick Fitzsimmons – Shared that the Town of Weaverville allocated its ARPA funding to double the size of the water treatment plant.

Council Member Elisabeth Ervin – Shared that the Town of Woodfin utilized ARPA funding for revenue replacement.

VII. Public Comment -

Chair Fitzsimmons called for public comments. No one made any public comments.

VIII. Presentations -

A. Economic Effects of the Evergreen Closure –

Mayor Smathers of the Town of Canton shared appreciation to Nathan Ramsey for providing this platform. Mayor Smathers noted that the impending closure of Evergreen feels like a death in the family- shock, grief, anger. This announcement brings a \$3.2 million hole in the revenue for the Town. Recovery includes economic development strategies to replace the lost revenue. This is a statewide crisis, not just for the Town. This is different than a flood. Additionally, this is a crisis and opportunity for this time. The current focus is on helping the workers. There is hope watching the millworkers come into recent job fairs, reaching out for mental health services. Going forward, the river plays a major role in economic development. The Town wants to be a mill town without a mill- it's about character and grit, that blue collar background. Being a blue-collar town puts something in the DNA. Addressing needs head-on: education, industry, commercial, outdoor recreation, and innovation. These are all components in the next chapter of the Town. This crisis gives everyone in this room an opportunity. Shared appreciation for all of the thoughts and prayers. It's not about just the Town trying to rebuild, its about showing how the Town can come back stronger.

Sandra Kilgore shared that one of the major issues is the homeowners who are affected by this closure. She wondered whether there was anything that could be done to provide financial assistance to homeowners to avoid foreclosure and Mayor Smathers shared that along with the stress of the closure, if displaced workers can find employment that allows them to stay in their homes, the Town will look for the help to support them. The expectation is that property values will go up in the town. The Town wants to bring in new ideas and people while maintaining the character of the Town. It's a double-edged sword around housing redevelopment.

Discussion occurred regarding resources for mental health services and it was shared that currently, there is really a push to break the stigma of seeking help for mental health issues. Mayor Smathers shared that there are employment opportunities and opportunities for mental health support. The religious community is important in the Town. He shared that there a many in the room with different views and it is important to see everyone come together without regard for partisanship. People need to hear that the work is being done because it matters. It will be a comeback story.

Drew Christy shared on behalf of Governor Cooper; this is an opportunity to come together. The governor and the General Assembly are working together to bring a package for the Town. The governor is also demanding that Evergreen pay back \$12 million since they will not meet their obligation to keep the workers employed through 2024. Regarding mental health services, its necessary to provide resources for the workers and their families and others.

B. NC Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions -

Assistant Secretary Chet Mottershead shared that the Division appreciates LOSRC and SWCOG for the great work being done to serve the western region. He gave a shout out to Tim Mathis for his efforts to support the western region. The State is applying for a National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) from USDOL. Waiting on the WARN Notice in order to move forward with processing that grant application. USDOL is committed to expediting processing of the request for that funding. Planning to designate supportive services funding for SWCOG. He mentioned the WNC Career Expo coming up tomorrow at the WNC Ag Center. Working to get data from Evergreen on skills analysis of the workers to see the transferable skills that the workers have in order to move forward with finding relevant employment.

C. Southwestern Workforce Development Board –

David Garrett, Workforce Development Director, shared that it has been an agonizing and amazing time since the announcement. It's about the workers right now and meetings are set up onsite for rapid response for the

displaced workers. Looking at the first release date after the first week of June. Rapid response meetings provide workers the opportunity to learn about the services that are available to them regarding employment and training and resources. Haywood Community College is hosting an employment and resource fair. The goal is to provide a helping hand. He shared appreciation to the State for being proactive and making resources available. He shared appreciation to Nathan Ramsey for his immediate outreach.

IX. New Business –

A. Land of Sky Regional Council Annual Meeting –

The LOSRC Nominating Committee was appointed pursuant to the Bylaws & Charter at the February meeting. Nominating Committee members are Rebecca McCall, Commission Chairman, Henderson County, Terri Wells, Commissioner, Buncombe County and Elisabeth Ervin, Council Member, Town of Woodfin. The Nominating Committee submitted the following report for the term of service ending June 30, 2024. The Nominating Committee provided the following slate of Officers and Executive Committee members for consideration.

Chair: Patrick Fitzsimmons, Mayor, Town of Weaverville (Buncombe)

Vice-Chair: Maureen Copelof, Mayor, Brevard (Transylvania)

Secretary: Preston Blakely, Mayor, Fletcher (Henderson)

Treasurer: Matthew Wechtel, Commission Chair, Madison County (Madison)

County Delegate: Jason Chappell, Commission Chair, Transylvania County (Transylvania)

Municipal Delegate: Sandra Kilgore, Vice Mayor, Asheville (Buncombe)

Past Chair Delegate: Barbara Volk, Mayor, City of Hendersonville (Henderson)

Minority Representative Delegate: Burton Hodges, Exec Director, Transylvania Alliance (Transylvania)

Aging Representative: Bob Tomasulo, Chair, Regional Aging Advisory Committee

Nathan Ramsey shared that nominations from the floor could also be considered and he requested those be brought forth.

Commissioner Terri Wells shared that those serving are doing a great job and the hope is they continue to serve.

Terri wells moved to accept the Nominating Committee's Slate of Officers and Executive Committee members as presented for a term of service beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024. Sandra Kilgore seconded, and the motion was carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

B. Land of Sky Regional Council Legislative Priorities –

Nathan Ramsey shared that the current LOSRC Strategic Plan recommends the Council take a more active role in relationship building and advocacy efforts at the state and federal levels (Goal 2.3).

Draft LOSRC Legislative Priorities

1. Affordable and Workforce Housing: The average price of a home in our region is approaching and in some cases has exceeded \$500,000. Rental vacancy rates are below 5% which is not considered a healthy rental market. Local employers have consistently cited housing as a top barrier in their efforts to recruit and retain employees. Local governments and other employers are dealing with historic workforce shortages and housing accessibility is one of the greatest barriers for their talent recruitment and retention efforts. The Council supports additional funding for affordable and workforce housing including expansion of tax credit projects and the NC Housing Trust Fund. The Council requests that local government authority be preserved to regulate short-term rentals which reduce the housing supply.

2. Water/sewer and broadband infrastructure: Water and sewer infrastructure is key to job creation and expanding the supply of affordable and workforce housing. The Council is grateful for the funding of broadband and water/sewer infrastructure during the previous legislative session, and we request ongoing support for these critical infrastructure needs.

3. Additional Revenue Options for Local Governments: Local Governments currently have limited revenue options beyond property taxes. The Council also requests that the existing sales tax authority be more flexible to meet the needs of local government but that the additional sales tax flexibility be subject to voter approval from voters within the respective local government jurisdiction.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft Legislative Priorities. The motion was carried upon a roll call vote, and without further discussion.

X. Executive Director's Report

Delegates and guests were encouraged to reach out to Nathan Ramsey with any questions or comments regarding the report, which is available in the meeting packet.

Nathan Ramsey introduced a new staff member – Jon Barsanti, who is assuming the role of Transportation Demand Management Coordinator. The role encourages multi-modal transportation.

Nathan Ramsey shared that the WNC Career Expo is happening tomorrow from 11am to 5pm. Prior to the opening to the public at 11, local high school students will be attending. This is a great opportunity for Evergreen workers to find employment.

Nathan Ramsey gave a shoutout to Christina Giles for her work to bring the Land of Sky Annual Report for FY2022 to fruition. Copies are available at this meeting and online.

XI. Important Dates –

A. The next LOSRC Board of Delegates meeting is planned for April 26, 2023 at Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC), Mary Nesbitt Campus, 121 Hendersonville Road, Asheville, NC

XII. Adjournment –

The meeting adjourned as there was no further business.

Respectfully submitted by Zia Rifkin



BOARD OF DELEGATES AGENDA ITEM

- Subject:** Executive Director's Report
- Item Number:** IX. Executive Director's Report
- Responsible Party:** Nathan Ramsey, Executive Director
- Attachment(s):** Executive Director's Report for April 26, 2023
- Background:** The Executive Director's Report provides updates and relevant information regarding projects and initiatives for LOSRC Departments/Agencies.
- Staff Recommendation:** N/A.
- Suggested Motion(s):** N/A

Land of Sky Regional Council
Executive Director's Report
Respectfully submitted by Nathan Ramsey
April 26, 2023

1. Finance

- Work is underway on the FY23-24 budget
- Finance staff will participate in training conference on our finance system

2. Economic and Community Development

Kudos!

- Congratulations to the NC Apple Festival Board of Directors in Hendersonville for being recognized as a Main Street Champion by the NC Main Street Conference!

Announcements

- The Racial Disparity Analysis has been updated with current data: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/34c9390316874caeab288d332dac3b12>
- We are assisting residents sign up for discounted internet service (ACP) in Buncombe County. Please contact ian@landofsky.org for more information.

Upcoming Events

- 4/30 - Asheville Earth Day EV car show at Asheville Outlets
- 4/26 - 28 NCAMPO Conference *Transforming Transportation* in Greenville, NC
<https://www.ncampo.org/ncampo-state-conference/>
- 4/26 - *THINKING BIG, BUILDING SMALL TO RESPOND TO TODAY'S HOUSING CRISIS*, a presentation on Missing Middle Housing, as part of the Building Our City urban design speaker series. (NOTE: This is also kick-off for City of Asheville's Missing Middle Housing study.)
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/building-our-city-ashevelles-urban-design-speaker-series-tickets-580645715967?aff=erelexpmlt>
- 5/18 - COG Day at Legislature
- 7/14 - Housing Forum – Save the Date!

Grants

Rural Transformation Grant Fund Round 3

The Rural Transformation Grant Fund provides local governments with grants and expert guidance to improve economic vitality and overcome the unique challenges many rural communities face. The fund is open to local governments in the state's Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties, as well as qualified census tracts in Tier 3 counties, you may review a map with eligible areas here. The fund opened for the third round of applications on Wednesday, **March 22, 2023**.

EDA Published Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Notice of Funding Opportunity

EDA has published a new Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance (PWEAA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). The FY23 PWEAA NOFO outlines application submission requirements and review procedures for applications received under EDA's Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) programs.

Funding Opportunity: Appalachia Digital Equity Accelerator Grants

To accelerate broadband access across the region, Connect Humanity has partnered with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to work with 50 of Appalachia's least-connected communities, preparing them to build next-generation broadband networks. These communities will receive a Connect Humanity Digital Equity

Planning Grant to create a holistic plan for achieving their digital equity goals. To learn more about who can apply and how the project works read the FAQs.

New Publication from Main Street America: A Housing Guidebook for Local Leaders

The Guidebook is a practical and easily digestible report that incorporates the stories and expertise of Main Street Coordinators, local directors, and partners who have experience with housing. Click here to read more and download the report.

USDA Rural Development's Resource Guide for Rural Entrepreneurs

USDA Rural Development has a new resource out for rural entrepreneurs that is full of insights, with excellent case studies and information for rural entrepreneurs on starting and growing their business. CLICK HERE to download the guide and share with your business community.

U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Energy to Communities (C2C) Program Now Accepting Applications

The U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Energy to Communities (C2C) program is now accepting applications for its next set of peer-learning cohorts. Applicants may apply to one (or more) of three cohort topic areas: electric vehicle infrastructure planning, municipal clean energy procurement strategy, and community inclusion in clean energy planning. Applications are due Monday, May 8 and selected participants will begin their engagement in July 2023. Find additional cohort descriptions, eligibility details, and the online application on the C2C peer-learning cohorts website.

DOT Opens Port, Transit, and Other Funding Opportunities

A number of FY2023 grant programs and funding opportunities geared toward rural transportation practitioners are currently accepting applicants. These programs include modernizing port infrastructure (MARAD), training in operating commercial vehicles (FMCSA), funding buses and bus facilities (FTA), funding low-emission buses and bus facilities (FTA). Further information is available on grants for Areas of Persistent Poverty (AoPP) and the RAISE Grants. To read about these grants and how to apply, review this post on NADO's Rural Transportation site.

The AIEI Releases an Investment Playbook for Rural Areas

The Appalachian Investment Ecosystem Initiative (AIEI) released a resource playbook on investments and economic development opportunities in rural areas. The playbook focuses on Appalachia.

COGWorks: Please visit <https://www.landofsky.org/cogworks.html> for more information and registration links. Courses are added as details become available.

- May - North Carolina's Transportation Prioritization Process
- May - Housing and Accessory Dwelling Units in North Carolina
- May - Transportation Grants
- May - Information on Transportation Grants
- June - TIPs and STIPs
- July - Green Growth Toolbox, Wildlife Crossings, and Related Planning Efforts
- August - Ethics Cases of the Year
- October - Rural Road Safety

Transportation

1. MPO & RPO staff continue to work with local partners and NCDOT on project design and development.
2. Staff is assisting in TAB, STIP and CTP development and Board meetings.
3. RPO, MPO and ECD staff are assisting several communities write grants for transportation projects, including RAISE, FLAP, and the IIJA Discretionary Funds.
4. MPO and RPO staff are serving on the state's Prioritization Workgroup with other representatives from MPOs, RPOs, and NCDOT.

5. The MPO is providing funding to several special studies in the region getting ready to begin in FY 2024: The Woodfin-Weaverville Trail Connection Study and the Fletcher Cane Creek Greenway Study.
6. Haywood County adopted their Greenway Master Plan at their February 6th meeting
7. The MPO is providing funding for on-going studies at the City of Asheville, including the purchase of bicycle and pedestrian counters, the Reed Creek Greenway Extension Study, and the East Patton Avenue Corridor Study.
8. MPO & RPO staff are serving on a Locally Administered Projects Program committee with NCDOT to provide policy recommendations to achieve better success rates and more on-time delivery of LAPP projects.
9. MPO & RPO staff continue to update local governments on NCDOT's financial situation and the Draft 2024-2033 STIP. A public survey is planned to be distributed by the MPO in November.
10. The MPO & RPO were awarded a Safe Streets for All Planning Grant from USDOT to cover Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties
11. The City of Hendersonville was awarded a feasibility study grant through the NCDOT Paved Trail Study program for the Above the Mud project.
12. The City of Brevard was awarded a feasibility study grant through NCDOT Paved Trail Study Program for the Old Hendersonville Hwy Shared Use Path.
13. The MPO was awarded a feasibility study grant through the NCDOT Paved Trail Study program for a small section of the Swannanoa Greenway near Meadow Road
14. RPO staff assisted local partners in applying for NCDOT's first rural Carbon Reduction program CRP, call for projects. The Carbon Reduction program is a new formula program in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021. RPO staff submitted three projects for local partners, totaling approximately \$1.2 million, with additional projects being developed for future calls.

Broadband

1. LOS partnered with NC DIT and the Division of Rural Health to distribute hotspots with 12 months service and digital literacy training for telehealth programs in WNC. To date 146 hotspots have been distributed to programs in three counties.
2. LOS is partnering with the Institute of Emerging Issues and Dogwood Health Trust to assist development and implement Digital Inclusion Plans in WNC with COGS across the region.
3. LOS received funding from Buncombe County to provide Wi-Fi in several Housing Authority of the City of Asheville (HACA) residential buildings. Staff received an update from the sub-consultant, Elawuit, that installation is proceeding as scheduled.
4. LOS is working with NEMAC to develop a broadband planning tool. The tool is aimed to consolidate many of the various data sources into a project planning catalyst for future broadband projects in the region.
5. LOS staff worked to set up public WIFI in the Broad River area of Buncombe County. Staff partnered with fire department and Skyrunner to implement this project.
6. LOS staff supported providers in the region with GREAT grant assistance leading to 21 applications across the region. To date award announcements in Madison, Transylvania, Buncombe, and Henderson have been made. We are hopeful to gain additional awards in the coming weeks. If your community wants to start working on CAB, please get in touch with Sara Nichols.

Community Development/Water, Sewer, Stormwater Infrastructure

1. Submitted a GoldenLEAF grant for Brevard for Times Arcade Alley stormwater drainage improvements, and developing a second application for a stormwater masterplan update.
2. Developing a riparian area management plan with Hendersonville.
3. Supported a community rain garden workshop in Black Mountain at Lake Tomahawk Park. Also, put the TOBM Public Works bioretention project out to bid, and updating the Upper Swannanoa Rivery Watershed Restoration Plan.

4. Updating the WNC Stormwater Partnership website and working with partners on a regional stormwater-focused public education media campaign.
5. Completed the stormwater infrastructure inventory for Weaverville, and started working on concept designs for green infrastructure improvements in the Nature Park and at the Community Center.
6. Completed the environmental review for the ARC-funded water/sewer extension in Mars Hill.

Housing

1. Staff submitted two pre-applications to Dogwood Health Trust for housing programs. One was invited for a full application, and one was deferred to the next round.
2. Staff continues to lead the 15-county Housing Asset Inventory project and has begun reaching out to Local Governments and Housing nonprofit providers to gather information. The project is a multi-COG effort funded through the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Dogwood Health Trust.
3. LOSRC was awarded a grant from Cares at the UNC-CH School of Social Work in partnership with North Carolina Money Follows the Person (MFP), for the initiative titled Building Capacity for Home and Community Based Services through Collective Impact. The project is called Remain at Home - Accessibility Assessment Program, in partnership with the Institute for Preventative Care and Advocacy, Mountain Area Health Education Center, RL Mace Universal Design Institute.
4. Staff is researching best-practices in consideration of formation of a regional housing trust fund.
5. Staff is continuing to book speakers and a venue for an all-day LOSRC Housing Forum - July 14, 2023
6. Staff is updating the Housing page on the website.

Economic Development/Workforce

1. Staff are working with several jurisdictions to develop and submit applications for economic development projects.
2. Staff is developing an ARISE application for the WNC Innovation Park in collaboration with Upstate South Carolina's Appalachian COG and Southwestern Commission.
3. Staff submitted the I26 Interchange/Access Road application to EDA to request \$2 million in funding on behalf of NCDOT. Staff assisted NCDOT receive \$2.5 million from ARC's Access Road fund.
4. The Creative Manufacturing Sector Development plan is final! Please contact us for a copy of the plan.
5. The reports for the Regional Economic Collaboration and Analysis led by the Region's Chambers of Commerce and business sector are complete:
 - a. Regional Resiliency and Strategic Plan Alignment Presentation
 - b. Regional Resiliency and Strategic Plan Alignment Report
 - c. Labor Shed and Target Industry Analysis
6. We continue to partner with the Chambers of Commerce, Small Business Support Agencies, nonprofits, and economic developers to assist small businesses through COVID-19 impacts.
7. The TDM Coordinator is working with Workforce, Inspire, and employers to develop a vanpool for under-resourced individuals to access job sites.
8. LOSRC's Waste Reduction Partners program is providing free water-use management assessments for large customers of the City of Asheville's Water Resources Department. These on-site assessments help identify utility costs savings for the City.

Resilience/Hazard Mitigation

1. Supported Pew Charitable Trust in the organization of the WNC Resilience Symposium and presented LOS Regional Resilience Program to community and state representatives.
2. Completed an introductory webinar tutorial for AccelAdapt, and testing new tool features. Also organizing a summer AccelAdapt User Group meeting.

3. Continuing to develop the DPR9 THIRA/SPR with Buncombe County.

Clean Cities/Clean Vehicles

1. Clean Cities Program is assisting local governments prepare for VW Settlement projects. During the first round of settlement funding released in 2020, the Land of Sky Clean Vehicles Coalition helped the region bring in more than \$4.1 million in grant funding to support purchases of new clean vehicles and EV infrastructure. During the second round of funding, all of the applications that LOS staff assisted with under the Level 2 Public Access Program were funded. Staff also assisted with applications for the DC Fast Chargers and Level 2 Multi-Unit Dwelling programs. Please contact Sara Nichols with questions on how to apply for more than \$68 million in state funding available for clean fleets: sara@landofsky.org
2. LOS received CMAQ funding to continue support of air quality outreach initiatives in WNC.
3. Staff supported applications for the EPA school bus rebate for Buncombe and Madison County Schools.
4. Staff are partnering with the Blue Ridge Electric Vehicle Club to host an electric vehicle car shows on April 22nd in Hendersonville, and April 30th in Asheville.
5. Staff are working on developing a EV planning map for the region.
6. Staff are working on their annual clean cities report for the region. This report quantifies the grant funding, public engagement, and greenhouse gas emission reductions in the region for 2022. Please contact Sara Nichols (sara@landofsky.org) and Ian Baillie (ian@landofsky.org) if your municipality or organization use an alternative fuel vehicle or equipment, replaced any diesel vehicle or equipment, implemented any idle reduction technology, and/or have a work from home policy.

Waste Reduction Partners

1. WRP staff is assisting Buncombe County Schools to submit a full application for a \$3.8 million grant through the US Department of Energy Renew Americal School program to upgrade HVAC systems at 4 elementary schools. (Initial Concept Paper was approved February.)
2. WRP staff is assisting Tri-Hishtil an industrial greenhouse in Mills River with energy use analysis to support Duke Energy's incentive programs.
3. WRP staff performed a "greening assessment" for Wicked Weed Brewing's Brewpub in support of two state environmental recognition programs.
4. WRP staff complete energy assessment report for Congregation Beth Ha Tephila in Asheville.
5. WRP engineers complete an energy assessment for White Labs in Asheville.

Planning Services

1. Staff continue to work with area communities providing land use planning and zoning assistance. Towns include Hot Springs, Mars Hill, Marshall, Montreat, Woodfin, Flat Rock, Maggie Valley, Montreat, Clyde, Canton, and Andrews. Note that we are partnering with Southwestern Commission, Region A staff to assist with communities in their region as well.
2. Staff will begin working with Rosman on a Parks and Recreation Plan and Pedestrian Bridge to connect their school with the town park and downtown.
3. Staff are assisting Madison County identify Parks and Recreation priorities with their P&R Board.

Grants & Project Development

1. Staff are working with several jurisdictions to support ARPA projects and administration. Please connect with Erica if you would like to learn more: erica@landofsky.org ARPA information can be found here: <https://www.nc.gov/agencies/pandemic-recovery-office/american-rescue-plan-act-information-and-resources>
2. Staff have been working with Sister Councils of Government on ARPA, Resilience and Multi-regional projects. Partnerships include sharing ARP policies, ordinances, and guidance; grant development; developing scopes of work and project delivery for ARPA State funds; budgeting and project development for housing, transportation and broadband tech assistance.

3. Staff continues working with several local governments and partners on applications for economic development, community development, transportation, and infrastructure implementation with BRIC/FEMA, EDA, and foundations. These projects will support transportation connections, resilience, job growth, industry expansion, and place-based development.

4. The NCGS 160D requires all Comprehensive Plans be updated to meet the new guidelines by July 1, 2022. (i.e. Municipalities and Counties must have a “reasonably-maintained” [updated within last 5-10 years] Comprehensive Plan in effect in order to legally continue having local zoning/development regulations. At minimum, a reasonably updated Land Use Plan must be in place by July 1, 2022 as a rational nexus to zoning/development regulations. (see Town of Canton’s phased-approach, Phase 1: Land Use Plan by July 1, 2022; Phase 2: Other Comprehensive Plan elements to be included after July 1, 2022)

Please contact erica@landofsky.org if you have questions or would like assistance updating your plans.

3. Aging

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

- Administrative Letter 22-09 gave Aging Specialists guidance on the monitoring of ARPA funding. The letter states that if the new ARPA programs were implemented prior to January 1, 2023 then monitoring should occur in the current fiscal year. If services were rendered after January 1, 2023 then a monitoring can occur in the first quarter of FY2024.
- The Aging Specialist is developing a plan to ensure that this Administrative Letter guidance is implemented in the current fiscal year and plans to send out self assessment monitoring documents to providers within the coming weeks.

Family Caregiver Support Program

- Staff helped facilitate in-person caregivers and care receiver support groups in Hendersonville. There were 3 caregivers and 2 care receivers who participated in 1 meeting.
- Staff continue to offer \$500 Respite Vouchers to family caregivers in Transylvania County. So far there are 13 caregivers who have received a total of \$12,000 in vouchers.
- Staff are working with AARP, MountainCare, and others on developing a presentation to give to employers on how they can assist their employees who are caregivers.
- Staff are working with Care Yaya, a program that helps family caregivers hire college students for help with respite, to bring the program to our region.
- Staff completed certification training to lead Matter of Balance classes in our region.

Foster Grandparent Program

- Beginning April 1, the volunteer stipend was raised to \$4.00 an hour.
- Number of active volunteers: 32 volunteers are working one-on-one with children ages infant to 8 years old.
- Number of volunteers waiting on paperwork, placement, etc.: 1 new volunteer is currently completing orientation and will begin service following; 4 volunteers are waiting for their school to reopen to volunteers so that they can return to service.
- Number of active stations (schools, day cares, etc.): 11
- Number of stations waiting to sign MOU, volunteer placement, etc.: 1 of childcare centers have not yet allowed volunteers to return to service.
- Recruitment efforts (press releases, presentations, etc.): Volunteer recruitment efforts are beginning now that the majority of Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) stations have reopened. Recruitment efforts include: 1) a recruitment bonus offered for FGP volunteers that refer someone and 2) staff

running weekly PSAs and ads in local media and 3) updating and printing promotional materials for recruitment.

- In-service/training update: On April 18, Foster Grandparent volunteers attended in-person in-service training at Land of Sky Regional Council. WNC Falls Prevention Coalition presented on Fall Prevention. Volunteers were also honored for National Volunteer week. Upcoming in-services topics will be as follows:
- Beginning April 20, ten Foster Grandparent volunteers will participate in the Circle of Security Parenting Training program, an 8 week training held for 1.5 hours each week for 8 weeks. This training program helps improve the developmental pathway of children through their parents and helps strengthen a caregivers' abilities to observe and improve their caregiving skills as well as discover new ways to help children connect, restore and grow.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

- Staff delivered *A Matter of Balance* coach training classes at Land of Sky, successfully certifying 12 individuals for program delivery in the region.
- The end of March and early April saw the start of multiple in-person health programs including three *A Matter of Balance* classes, at Deerfield Retirement Community, Asheville Community Yoga, and St Barnabas Catholic Church. Walk with Ease Class continues at Givens Gerber Park in partnership with Western Carolina University, and Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls began at the Linwood Crump Shiloh Community Center. Additionally, staff continue to facilitate Tai Chi monthly Tai Chi drop-in sessions for participants.
- Staff completed Living Healthy with Chronic Conditions training and will deliver a program at the Mars Hill Library in May.
- Staff is working with Buncombe County Council on Aging to maximize volunteer resources for health program delivery.
- Staff facilitated a Tai Chi Lunch and Learn for Blue Ridge Pride/Generations Plus.
- Staff presented an educational program at the Quarterly meeting of The WNC Fall Prevention Coalition.
- Staff is serving on the Buncombe County CARE Planning team for the Older Americans Month Celebration event for professionals in Buncombe County.
- Staff is facilitating CPR/First Aid/AED Training for Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers, volunteers, and resident support.
- Staff continues planning for May Older Americans Month "Aging Unbound" Spring event for Asheville Terrace Residents on May 25.
- Staff and Asheville Terrace Community Health Workers continue to partner with MANNA, Trader Joe's, and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) volunteers to bring nutrition to residents. In January, 85 bags of groceries were distributed to residents. Additionally, 589 "Neighbor Knock" visits were conducted in March.

Home and Community Care Block Grant: March 2023 Report of Services Provided

- Adult Day Care/Health Days = 2,240
- Meals – delivered/congregate = 149,020
- In-home Aide hours = 11,592
- Legal Services hours = 1,364
- Transportation trips = 33,764
- Home Improvement Projects = 56

Money Follows the Person (MFP) Community Inclusion (serves 37 Western Counties):

- Staff completed in-person skilled nursing facilities providing training and materials as needed. Counties completed include Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Gaston, Madison, Polk, Henderson, Transylvania, Wilkes, Rutherford.
- Webinar training for Money Follows the Person completed with 48 attendees including Skilled Nursing social workers and Long-Term Care Medicaid social workers from 6 county DSS offices.
- Staff participated in the 2023 World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Walk planning meeting.
- Staff hosted the monthly Professional Social Workers in Long-term Care organization (PSWLTC) meeting.
- Staff participated in the 2023 Pisgah Legal Community Input Forum providing feedback and relaying information from LOSRC.
- Staff provided education on Area on Aging programs to attendees at the NC Baptist Aging Ministry Conference.

Money Follows the Person Transition Coordinator: Central counties: Forsyth, Davidson, Surry, Davie, Stokes, Yadkin.

- The central region has a caseload of 13; 2 of whom are in the follow along stage, having transitioned in the past month.
- Two more are preparing to transition at the end of April, beginning of May. It has been quite a journey for both of them. One client only was able to secure housing because of a truly patient and kind landlord who held the apartment for her as we waited for section 8's approval of the apartment.
- One client struggles to return home because there is not a facility capable of handling his medical needs closer to his home, and his income is over the Medicaid limit. Fortunately, the PACE program, which offers a better payment arrangement for income over the Medicaid limit, does operate in his home area, but we have to determine how to figure out transportation in an ambulance for enrollment assessments.
- Two clients have been unable to secure housing because they are still attempting to ascertain personal identification documents.
- Unfortunately, two clients have had to withdraw from the program due to not having enough informal supports available to assist.
- Several other continue to be on waiting lists for targeted housing but without financial assistance will not be able to secure housing.
- Staff visited clients for a second time in early April. Some are doing very well, as the MFP program has given them hope that they might leave the facility, which has bolstered their efforts in their treatment plans. Others struggle with the previously mentioned obstacles.

Money Follows the Person Transition Coordinator: Western counties: Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, Madison, McDowell, Rutherford, Mitchell, Yancey

- The western region has a caseload of 12.
- One person transitioned 3/30/23.
- Currently, 10 clients are waiting for housing, and some have been on the caseload for at least one year waiting for affordable, safe housing.
- One client has secured housing through the Targeting Housing Program and will transition 5/2023.

Ombudsman Program

- Ombudsmen are working with LOSRC volunteer Dr. Jim Meyer on Excel in order to streamline the paperwork process. This will allow the Ombudsmen to keep track of both facility visits and the Community Advisory Committee visits.

- Ombudsman joined the CARE Planning Committee which is creating an event for Older Americans Month.
- Ombudsman is Co-Chair for the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Committee.
- Ombudsmen celebrated Volunteer Appreciation Week by highlighting Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members on Facebook. Gifts were also bought for the CAC members.

Outreach and Assistance

- Staff highlighted National Volunteer Month with multiple Facebook posts highlighting each program and thanking volunteers.
- Staff continued to work on regular communication through Facebook post and WNC Aging Newsletter.
- Staff attended a Health Fair at Mars Hill University and continues to look for other outreach and tabling events for the AAA.
- Staff have assisted with phone calls and emails asking for help with things like housing, tax help, and other aging resources.
- Staff prepares for Older Americans Month which is May. This includes activities and events around Older Americans Month.

Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty)

- Since July 1 staff has distributed \$42,854 budgeted by the State for its fifteen-county western Project C.A.R.E. region. Fifty-four family caregivers who care for a family member with a dementia diagnosis received these funds for respite care services and 91% of the funds have been utilized.
- Of the fifty-four caregivers receiving State respite funds, twenty-four are in the Land of Sky region (12 in Buncombe, 6 in Henderson, 3 in Madison and 3 in Transylvania).
- A secondary source of respite care funds for Land of Sky region dementia caregivers is available this year because of The American Rescue Plan Act. Project C.A.R.E. staff has a budget of \$26,000 for this purpose this fiscal year (and next), all of which save for \$2,000 has been distributed among thirty caregivers. The balance will be distributed soon.
- Project C.A.R.E. staff and Family Caregiver Support Program staff are partnering with Care Yaya <https://www.careyaya.org/> to expand its services to Buncombe County. Care Yaya is an online caregiver registry that matches university students who are pursuing health care-related careers with families who have elder care needs. Students earn money and credits and valuable experience while families receive a high level of care for their loved ones at a reasonable rate while supporting the doctors and nurses of tomorrow.

Senior Companion Program: AmeriCorps Seniors has raised the stipend rate, as of April 1, 2023, to \$4.00 an hour. The program received American Rescue Plan monies to support mileage reimbursement for volunteers who transport their clients. Volunteers will receive \$0.58 per mile.

- There are currently 58 volunteers: 3 are on hold due to medical issues.
- Four new volunteers will be in place by May 15, 2023.
- The programs received approval for a temporary project manager to overhaul the referral process for the Senior Companion Program. This position will end June 30, 2023.
- In-service meetings for March, April, May and July is a deep focus on dementia with Cindy Keehn teaching best practices, signs and understanding about dementia.

4. Administration

- Nathan has been out of work for nine days for the two-week period from Monday, March 27 to Friday, April 7 due to pneumonia, including a few days in the hospital. Staff did an outstanding job keeping everything moving forward during his absence
- Mandatory staff strategic planning meeting was held on March 30
- Monthly staff meeting held on April 19
- Several staff attended the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Spring Legislative Update
- Nathan and Erica attended the WNC meeting of the NC Economic Developers Association (NCEDA)
- Many WNC House members signed a letter of support for \$2.5 million in funding to the Asheville Regional Airport to establish the airport as the port-of-entry to house US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) staff. This will allow more counties in WNC to be served by a Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) and will support the airport so they can clear flights originating outside of the United States
- We are working closely with Southwestern Commission to support 1,100 Evergreen workers, Town of Canton, Haywood County and our region in response to the notice of closure
- LOSRC office will host Congressman Chuck Edwards staff meeting on July 21
- Nathan attended the P-20 Council meeting at Blue Ridge Community College
- Nathan is scheduled to make a presentation on behalf of LOSRC to the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners on May 16
- Planning is underway for the French Broad River tour

5. Workforce

- Region's unemployment rate of 3.1% for January 2023 was released by NC Department of Commerce on Friday, March 17. Asheville metro continues to have the #1 lowest unemployment rate in NC, tied this month with the Raleigh metro. 2,834 more people are employed in our region compared to January 2022. All counties in our region have an unemployment rate lower than NC at 3.8%.
- Staff are responding to the notice of the closure of Evergreen Packaging in Haywood County. We are working closely in partnership with the Southwestern WDB and the NC Department of Commerce to support rapid response activities. MAWDB submitted a \$500,000 grant request to the NC Department of Commerce for funding to support Evergreen workers.
- WNC Career Expo in partnership with the Asheville Chamber of Commerce was held March 23 at the WNC Ag Center in Fletcher. Over 750 job seekers attended, including many Evergreen workers. This turnout was the highest number of job seekers to attend a hiring event in WNC since 2019. Employers indicated they were satisfied with the number and quality of the candidates. Prior to the job fair we hosted high school students from Asheville City, Henderson County, Madison County, Polk County and Transylvania County Schools for career exploration with over 120 employers. The board has increased our funding support to expand outreach in light of the impending Evergreen closure.
- WNC Construction Career Day was held on March 28 and 29 in Haywood County at the Smoky Mountain Event Center. Over 20 school systems will be participated with almost 800 students. Vannoy Construction was our presenting sponsor. We have raised about \$30,000 in private funding to support this event.
- Mountain Area WDB board member Steve Newman with ERC Broadband made a presentation at the Southeast Employment and Training Association (SETA) in Memphis TN to share our region's IT career pathways and our partnership with Guided Compass.
- Our region's IT career pathway will be endorsed by the NCWorks Commission at their May 10 meeting.
- We are working to implement grant awards for small business training, re-entry, and substance use recovery
- Dr. Wendy Mason, former Assistant Superintendent of Henderson County Schools has joined the MAWDB as a part-time staff.

- NC Department of Commerce recently notified MAWDB that our process for supporting on-the-job-training (OJT) contracts is not consistent with federal law and the board will be required to release a has released a RFP for an OJT provider.
- MAWDB is in the process of competitively procuring outreach services for the Construction/Skilled Trades and Tech/IT sectors. This outreach will promote career awareness of the career opportunities available in these sectors and this outreach will be integrated into Mountain Area Careers at mountainareacareers.org. This procurement is contingent on approval by the NC Department of Commerce and the Land of Sky Regional Council Executive Committee.
- P-20 Council submitted a NCWorks Innovation Grant application in partnership with AB Tech and Buncombe County Early College.

6. Strategic Initiatives

- **Mountain Mobility** – Mountain Mobility has experienced its largest ridership totals since February of 2020, meaning March had the largest total of trips since prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Trips totaled 9,976 for the month. March also brought the highest number of riders of our Enka-Candler Trailblazer service with 1,357. This was the highest month in FY23. RIDE, our taxi-voucher program, sold 2050 vouchers in Q3, which is the highest quarter YTD. The 2050 vouchers translates to \$20,500 in cab fares paid to local providers.
- **Healthy Opportunities** – Healthy Opportunities has seen a large increase in referrals since Land of Sky began accepting referrals for car repair services. Under our contract, we can provide payment for members who need car repair services by working with a local mechanic/repair shop. We received more than 10 referrals for car repair services in March.
- **INspire** – Our Certified Peer Support Specialists (CPSS) have worked with 36 new participants – 28 participants in Substance Use Disorder treatment and 8 in Reentry. Additionally, our CPSS have secured housing for 23 people in sober living, paying a total of \$11,080 in housing fees in March. We also provided 19 pairs of work shoes/boots totaling \$1964.87. INspire also has several success stories to share: Nathan Colczak, once a client of INspire, completed his CPSS training and is now employed by the RHA Peer Living Room. He is also a house manager at one of our sober living partners. We are extremely proud of Nathan moving from participant to referral partner! Amanda Layton, one of our CPSS, has also been successful working with clients to have driver's licenses reinstated and fines dropped for participants. Another success story – Andrew Bennett, had his license reinstated and is now employed with Biltmore Estate!
- **Accelerate Buncombe** – Halston Fisher, AB Coordinator, continues to work with 15 clients, supporting them with education and skills training and work readiness.
- **NEMT** - For February 2023 (March 2023 data isn't available yet) Active cases 1248, Clients Utilized Services 677, Total Number of Trips 5341