

WEST ALABAMA REGIONAL COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT



2020

WWW.WARC.INFO

WARC Board of Directors, 2020-2021

Arthur Crawford
Chairman

Rob Robertson
Vice-Chairman

Dennis Stripling
Secretary

Bibb County

Rodney Stabler
County Commission

Bobbie White
Mayor of Brent

Fayette County

Mike Freeman
County Commission

Rod Northam
Mayor of Fayette

Greene County

Latasha Johnson
Mayor of Eutaw

Hale County

Arthur Crawford
County Commission Chair and Probate Judge

Tony Lester
Mayor of Moundville

Lamar County

Stanley Allred
Mayor of Millport

Pickens County

Craig Patterson
Mayor of Gordo

Mickey Walker
Mayor of Carrollton

Tuscaloosa County

Stan Acker
County Commission

Cynthia Lee Almond
Tuscaloosa City Council

Joe Barger
Mayor of Brookwood

Lee Busby
Tuscaloosa City Council

Bobby Herndon
Mayor of Northport

Raevan Howard
Tuscaloosa City Council

Walt Maddox
Mayor of Tuscaloosa

Brenda Morrison
Mayor of Vance

Reginald Murray
County Commission

Mark C. Nelson
County Commission

Phyllis W. Odom
Tuscaloosa City Council

Edwin (Eddie) Pugh
Tuscaloosa City Council

Rob Robertson
County Commission Chair and Probate Judge

Jerry Tingle
County Commission

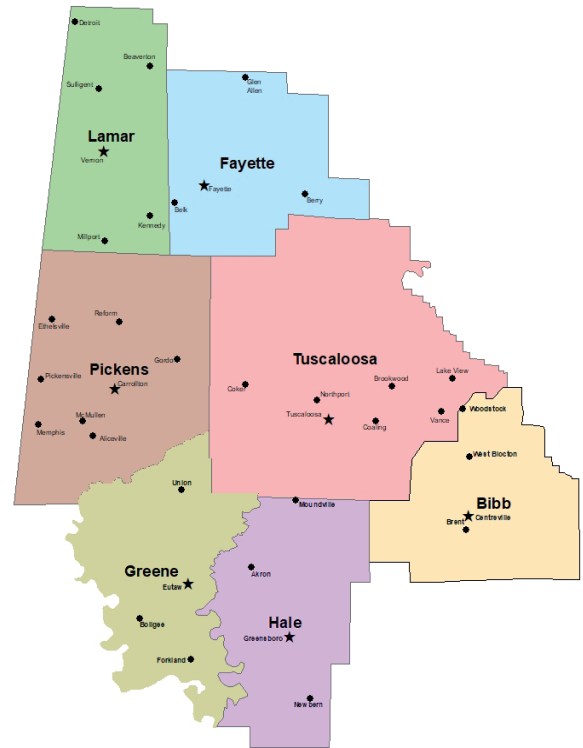
West Alabama at Large

Allen J. Dunavant
Mayor of Glen Allen

Mike Fields
Shelton State Community College

Jimmy Madison
Mayor of Berry

Sharon Nethery
County Commission Chair and Probate Judge



Local Government Membership

Bibb County

City of Brent
City of Centreville
Town of West Blocton
Town of Woodstock

Fayette County

Town of Belk
Town of Berry
City of Fayetteville
Town of Glen Allen

Greene County

Town of Boligee
City of Eutaw
Town of Forkland
Town of Union

Hale County

Town of Akron
City of Greensboro
City of Moundville
Town of Newbern

Lamar County

Town of Detroit
Town of Kennedy
Town of Millport
City of Sulligent
City of Vernon

Pickens County

City of Aliceville
Town of Carrollton
Town of Ethelsville
Town of Gordo
Town of McMullen
Town of Memphis
Town of Pickensville
Town of Reform

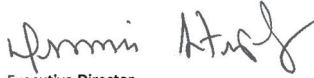
Tuscaloosa County

Town of Brookwood
Town of Coaling
Town of Coker
Town of Lake View
Town of Vance
City of Northport
City of Tuscaloosa

From Our Director



The year 2020 has been one of the most intense and unpredictable years we have experienced to date. We're also facing a great deal of uncertainty as we head into 2021. While many organizations, agencies and businesses have been forced to take a step back due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our staff continues to work nonstop to ensure the programs we administer at the West Alabama Regional Commission are kept running to successfully *Improve the Quality of Life in West Alabama*. Doing this has required patience, flexibility and creativity. We have learned to navigate meetings and conferences virtually this year and our Aging staff has worked hard to combat social isolation in our elderly and disabled clients while properly adhering to new safety protocols. Though no one knows for sure what the future holds, the certainty I have is that WARC, our clients and local member governments will continue to receive unparalleled service by our employees who have proven just how much heart they have for their work when faced with the unprecedented challenges of 2020.


Executive Director
Dennis Stripling

Who We Are

The West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) is one of the 12 regional councils in the State of Alabama. The councils serve local governments and citizens by coordinating region-wide projects and services, promoting cooperation among the local governments and carrying out state and federal programs on a regional basis. The West Alabama area is designated Planning District 2, or Region 2.

The WARC covers Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens and Tuscaloosa Counties. The commission is governed by an executive committee and a Board of Directors, made up of representatives from each of these seven counties and 35 municipalities, who annually elect a chairman and a vice-chairman. The Board is composed of citizens and policy-making elected officials from the member governments. It is with the Board's participation the WARC staff are enabled to carry out WARC's mission of improving the quality of life in West Alabama.



Area Agency on Aging (AAA)



During FY20, the AAA reached 8,449 older adults and caregivers in the West Alabama region

- **The Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)** assisted more than 2,400 individuals. Assistance includes screening, follow-up and enrollment into programs offered through the AAA and other providers in the region. Additionally, more than 3,000 “quick calls” were handled through ADRC. Marketing and outreach efforts reached more than 50,000 individuals.
- **The Alabama Cares Program** assisted more than 1,000 caregivers throughout the region
- **The Medicaid Waiver Program** served its highest number of clients to date - 898.
- **The Nutrition/Senior Activity Program** continued to serve clients despite numerous hardships caused by the pandemic. Centers were closed to on-site gatherings however centers served more than 126,000 meals to congregate clients and delivered more than 130,000 meals to home bound clients.
- **The State Health Insurance and Assistance Program (SHIP)** has assisted more than 3,600 Medicare beneficiaries with their coverage questions and options. During the FY20 Open Enrollment Period (OEP), more than 1,700 clients visited the AAA for unbiased counseling. Staff worked remotely from March through May. Upon return to in-office work, new safety protocols were developed and clients are assisted in person, by appointment. Staff also developed COVID-19 compliant Open Enrollment practices for the upcoming period.

Community and Economic Development

- **The Community & Economic Development Department** assisted local municipalities in the West Alabama region to receive and carry out grants totaling \$5,789,830. The department has submitted additional requests during FY20 totaling \$353,960 that are under review and pending approval.
- **FY20 impacts include** 336 new jobs to be created from economic development projects; and an additional 40 new, and 55 retained, jobs generated from WARC's Revolving Loan Fund program.
- **New regional Hazard Mitigation plans** have been approved for funding by FEMA. WARC is assisting the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission with the preparation of the 10-county Division C plan which includes Bibb, Greene, Hale, Pickens and Tuscaloosa Counties. WARC is also assisting the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments with the 7-county Division E plan that includes Lamar county.
- **The Town of Millport** was awarded \$230,031 from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) Community Block Development Grant (CDBG) Community Enhancement fund to repair and paint the County Road 3 water tank, one of three tanks in the Millport water system.
- **The City of Greensboro** will undertake substantial improvements to its sewer collection system. Funds totaling \$350,000 from the ADECA CDBG program will address rehabilitation of the West trunk sewer main and the Centreville Street sewer line.
- **The Town of Reform** received ADECA CDBG assistance of \$350,000 to perform repairs to the sewer collection system in the southern part of the town. Lines and manholes will be cleaned and repaired and slip-lined to eliminate inflow and infiltration into the treatment plant.
- **The Town of Reform** was also awarded Appalachia Regional Commission (ARC) funds in the amount of \$61,348 to replace and upgrade two pumps in the sewer system's primary lift station.



Over 7,648 people in the West Alabama region will benefit from Community Development grants assisted by WARC in FY20

Transportation Planning



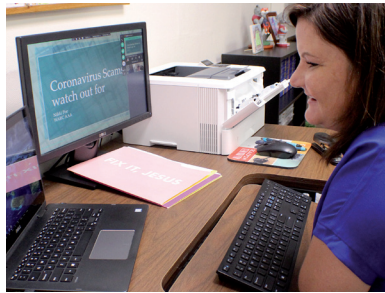
Transportation Planning prepared three Federal Transit Administration grant applications for the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority totaling \$10,370,800

- **The WARC Transportation Planning Department** prepared the *Tuscaloosa Area Bicycle and Pedestrian 2020 Plan*. The plan, adopted by the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, as well as an interactive map of the projects can be found on the WARC website at www.warc.info/mpo-documents.
- **The WARC Transportation Planning Department** assisted the counties and municipalities in the region with voting district verification for the 2020 elections.
- **A new Public Involvement Plan** was prepared by the WARC Transportation Planning Department and approved by the West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO).
- **For the second year**, the WARC Transportation Planning Department provided contract-GIS service for the City of Northport.
- **The WARC Transportation Planning Department** submitted Tuscaloosa County changes to the Census Bureau Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP).
- **The Tuscaloosa County 2020 Base-Year Traffic Model Network** was developed by the WARC Transportation Planning Department.

WARC COVID-19 Response

When COVID-19 flipped the world upside down, the staff at WARC stepped up to keep serving the community and ensure we would continue to *Improve the Quality of Life in West Alabama*.

In addition to providing respite for caregivers, custodial supplies, PPE and other supplies, and needed resources were provided to those requesting assistance through the Alabama Cares Program. A weekly electronic newsletter was developed and distributed to caregivers and an online support group was started so that caregivers could continue to have the support needed during the pandemic.

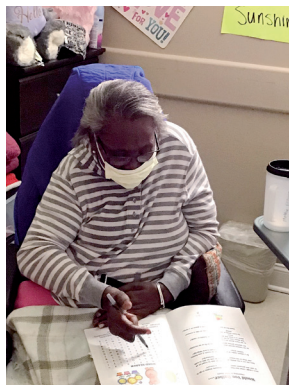


Staff developed a monthly newsletter to distribute to Nutrition/Senior Center Directors with helpful tips and ideas on how to keep their clients engaged and connected during their time away from the center and each other. BINGO games, both

online and drive up, have been held, goodie bags have been put together for clients to pick up when they pick up their meals, and regular telephone calls to check on each other, have all been popular engagement activities this year.

Since visitation has been impossible during the pandemic, the Local Ombudsman Program created a customized Quarantine Activity Booklet for residents' entertainment. The booklets contain coloring pages, word searches, mazes, and activity ideas. The cover identifies who their local ombudsman representative is and reminds them that our advocacy is just a phone call away.

The Area Agency on Aging teamed up with several local partners to fight Social Isolation of the elderly and disabled



population through the #LoveLetters2Elders initiative. The project features coloring pages for the community to complete and include messages of hope and love. The cards are returned to the Agency and distributed to clients in need of a 'pick me up' from a safe distance. In less than six months, we have already collected nearly 2,000 "Love Letters"!



The 55 retained jobs generated from WARC's Revolving Loan Fund program were saved as a result of WARC offering a special COVID-19 Emergency Fund to assist small businesses during the pandemic. WARC is

assisting eight local small businesses through the COVID-19 Emergency Fund.



WARC received a \$400,000 Economic Development Association CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant to respond to the COVID-19

pandemic by evaluating the pandemic's impact on the region's economy; increasing leadership capacity and response; and helping to implement strategies, programs, and projects that support pandemic resilience and recovery.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the WARC Transportation Planning Department successfully transitioned the Tuscaloosa Area MPO and the West Alabama RPO to online meetings. From April 2020 through September 2020, the department hosted 28 virtual meetings. The new format increased public participation in both organizations.

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

-Fred Rogers



West Alabama Regional Commission

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