

# Regional Mobility Authorities

Act 389 of 2007 allows regions to establish Regional Mobility Authorities to help address transportation needs throughout the state.

**RMA's are regional governmental agencies that can be formed among contiguous counties to build, operate, maintain, expand or fund transportation projects.**

In March, 2008, Washington and Benton Counties approved the creation of the Northwest Arkansas Regional Mobility Authority (NWA RMA). Since that time, 14 cities in the region have joined as members.

**RMA's are not intended to be a substitute for current State and Federal highway funding.**

By state law, any significant, locally-generated sources of funding for projects must be approved by voters.



Although RMA's are authorized to work on a broad range of transportation projects, the mission statement adopted by the NWA RMA's Board of Directors says that they will limit

their focus to "regionally significant" highway and transit projects.

Projects undertaken by RMA's must be consistent with long-range transportation plans. In NWA, the 2030 Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan that was published in 2006 sets forth several regional priority projects on which the RMA can work.

RMA's may choose to work on projects in partnership with other public agencies. RMA's may also receive projects transferred from another public agency.

In Arkansas RMA's are authorized to receive funding from:

- Tolls - *if approved by voters*
- County and/or city sales taxes (which can be levied and bonded on behalf of the RMA) - *if approved by voters*
- Motor vehicle fees - *if approved by voters*
- Turnback funds - from member cities & counties
- Bus and parking fares
- State funding
- Federal funding

The challenges that regional mobility authorities have to overcome under Act 389 of 2009 include:

- lack of resources for start-up activities;
- difficult to balance competing local interests with the need to act regionally;
- ensuring any new funding generated does not become a substitute for current existing funding;
- multiple taxing jurisdictions will require multiple, simultaneous referendums if questions are referred to voters; and,
- resources are not sufficient to build large-scale projects solely at the regional level - partnership agreements with the state will be essential.

**RMA's can be an effective option for meeting transportation needs but some changes are needed to make them more viable and useful to regions around the State of Arkansas.**

## Recommended Improvements to Arkansas' Regional Mobility Authority Legislation

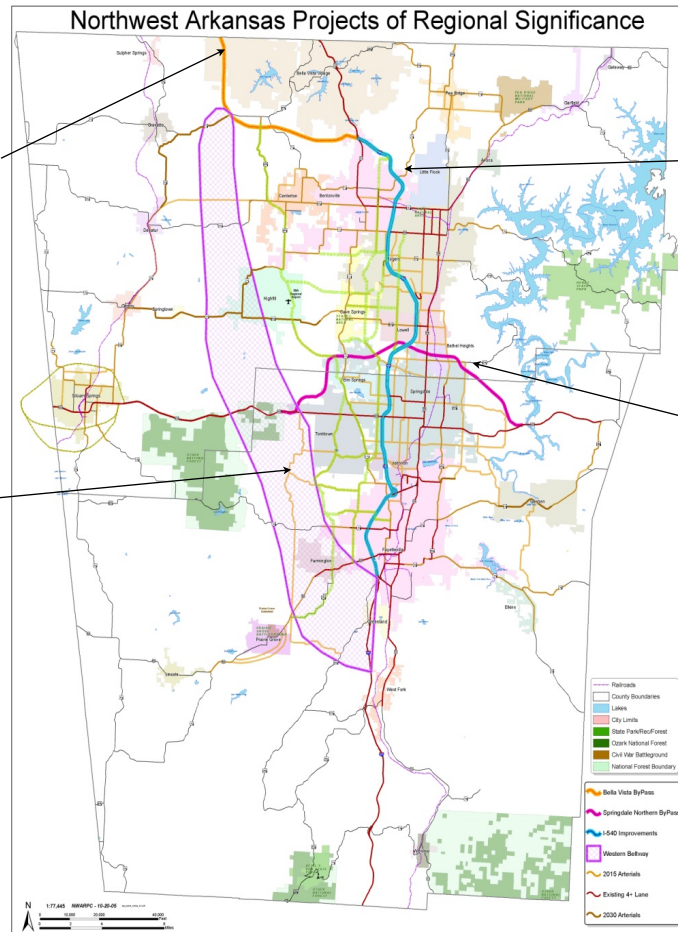
1. RMA's need seed or start-up funding to incentivize regions to set them up and to help fledgling organizations get off the ground;
2. RMA's will need partnering agreements from the state to accomplish big-ticket projects;
3. RMA's need the ability to collect and expend voter-approved taxes at the regional level; and,
4. RMA's need the ability to refer regional tax questions to voters directly -- we shouldn't expect them to have to borrow city or county taxing authority for regional projects.

# Northwest Arkansas Projects of Regional Significance

*The price tag of key regional projects is projected at over \$2 billion while traditional funding sources are only projected to cover about 25% of the overall needs.*

**Bella Vista Bypass** – \$250 M overall projected cost in Arkansas; first construction dollars (\$52M) committed by AHTD and Federal TIGER grant awarded; *significant funding shortfall remains*

**Western Beltway** – 30-35 mile alternative to I-540; feasibility study underway; *no planning or construction funds identified by AHTD*



**I-540** – \$380 M of identified needs - *approximately \$15 M of interchange improvements funded through 2010*

**Springdale Northern Bypass** – \$495 M of identified needs – right-of-way for west of I-540 under acquisition – *no construction funds identified*



## ABOUT THE NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COUNCIL:

The Northwest Arkansas Council is a private, non-profit organization comprised of business and civic leaders throughout the region. Established in 1990, the Council works to identify regional challenges and serves as a proponent for regional solutions. Our goal is to make Northwest Arkansas an even greater place to live, work and raise families.

The Council is currently working on a number of projects and initiatives aimed at keeping Northwest

Arkansas economically competitive and ensuring it remains a great place to live, work and raise families. Key Council initiatives include:

- Regional economic development strategic planning
- Securing funding for key transportation projects
- Maintaining the quality of our water resources

