

# ARPC BOARD NOTES



## PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE UPDATE

Passenger rail services ran through North Florida until 2005, when Hurricane Katrina blew through, destroying the tracks. Since then, repairs and upgrades to the tracks have been made allowing for freight service, but passenger service standards have not been met.

Momentum from the Southern states to expedite the return of passenger rail led to a congressional inter-local agreement creating the Southern Rail Commission (SRC), uniting Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana in their efforts to resume and expand passenger rail service. Funding has been secured to reestablish the route from New Orleans, LA to Mobile, AL with the intent that the passenger rail service will be up and running by Spring 2025. ARPC is hopeful that the State of Florida will join the SRC, as it would allow Florida to leverage the power of the Gulf states and improve positioning for funding opportunities. Passenger rail service would benefit the Region greatly through increased accessibility, particularly for elderly residents and students.

**AUGUST  
2024**





**AUGUST  
2024**

# AERO

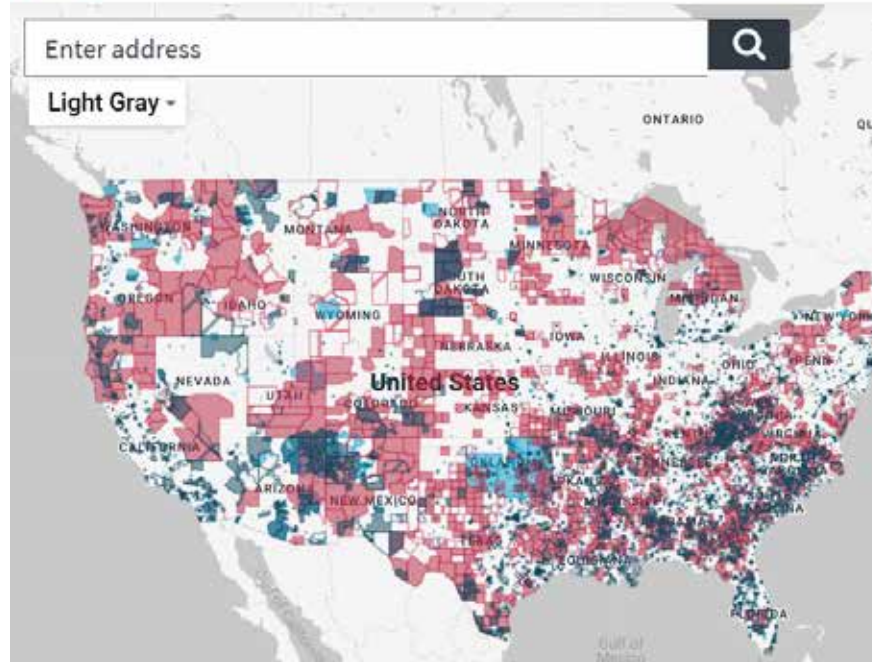
## Alliance of Entrepreneur Resource Organizations

– Bill Lickson, North Florida Innovation Labs

AERO, based in Tallahassee, is a coalition of public agencies and community non-profit organizations united to provide current and new businesses with resources to aid in their success. Any organization or person in the community that supports business in any way is encouraged to get involved. In its essence, AERO is a collection of organizations, communicating and sharing ideas about collaboration. With goals similar to ARPC, AERO seeks to provide the structure and support to turn an idea into a business. There is significant momentum in the Region concerning entrepreneur support, and federal support continues to increase. To find out more about AERO, please visit <http://www.bigbendaero.com>.

**SBA HUBZone Map**

[Click here to access the SBA Hub Zone Map.](#)



*The Historically Underutilized Business Zones (HUBZone) program helps small businesses in urban and rural communities gain preferential access to federal procurement opportunities. The federal government has a goal of awarding at least 3% of all dollars for federal prime contracts to HUBZone certified companies.*

## 2055 Florida Transportation Plan Regional Workshop

**Northwest Florida Region | September 17, 2024**



FloridaFTP.com

## WAKULLA COUNTY SHELTER PLAN

ARPC assisted Wakulla County to secure a grant for a county-wide shelter analysis project, including a final Shelter Plan for the county. The Emergency Planning team has been actively meeting with officials in Wakulla County, and are in the process of verifying buildings in the county that meet sheltering criteria, verifying actual shelter space, and producing materials for special needs and vulnerable population outreach. The project is continuing to progress, and aims to be completed by the end of Fall of 2024.



November 20-22

# 2024 Florida Rural Economic Development Summit

World Equestrian Center | Ocala, FL

**Register early and check out the full agenda online!**

Visit <https://bit.ly/4cwluf6> to learn more.



## ARPC STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT

We are thrilled to be celebrating our 47th year as a visionary force in the Apalachee Region. Under the dedicated leadership of Executive Director Chris Rietow, the organization has more than quadrupled in size, and the services available to our member counties continue to expand. As one might guess, we have experienced some growing pains along the way as we navigate a larger staff and increased capabilities. And so was born the ARPC Strategic Planning Retreat!

Kicking off our inaugural event at the Wakulla Springs Lodge, ARPC Geospatial Planning Manager Divina Lade developed and hosted a phenomenal day-long session, providing the management team an opportunity to discuss challenges and strengths, and define the organization's goals as we move through the next five years. As the day wrapped up, the ARPC management team jumped onto the riverboat to enjoy one of our Region's exceptional treasures.

# LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS REGIONAL IMPACT



## WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

As ARPC continues to grow, our staff exponentially expands upon efforts to improve quality of life throughout the Region. We thrilled to welcome to the team:

Austin Britt – *Transportation Planner*

Isabella Marmanidis – *Housing Coordinator*

Thomas Thompson –  
*Commuter Assistance Coordinator*

Lydia Johnson – *Environmental Planner*

Briana Williams – *Intern*

**Rural Infrastructure Fund applications are due September 16th, 2024. Contact Caroline Smith at [csmith@arpc.org](mailto:csmith@arpc.org) with questions!**



**NEXT ARPC BOARD MEETING: OCTOBER 31ST, 2024**





# HOW CAN WE HELP?

ARPC fosters collaboration and knowledge sharing through forums, workshops, and public meetings, allowing diverse perspectives to be heard and incorporated into regional planning initiatives. By encouraging open dialogue and inclusive participation, the Council ensures that the needs and aspirations of the Apalachee Region's residents remain at the forefront of the decision-making process.

With a strong focus on collaboration and community engagement, ARPC serves as a vital resource for local governments, businesses, and residents, offering comprehensive planning, research, and technical assistance services.

**ARPC works closely with its member local governments to address a wide range of regional issues, such as:**

- **transportation**
- **growth management**
- **economic development**
- **housing & community development**
- **GIS**
- **emergency planning**
- **and environmental planning.**

By facilitating effective communication and cooperation among stakeholders, the Council helps shape long-term strategies and policies that promote balanced growth and preservation of natural resources.

Through its expertise in data analysis, mapping, and regional planning, ARPC provides valuable insights and recommendations to support informed decision-making processes. Whether it's developing transportation networks to improve connectivity, promoting affordable housing options, or advocating for sustainable practices, ARPC plays a crucial role in shaping the Region's future. For more information, call us today!

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**850.488.6211**