

Meeting of the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
RGVMPO POLICY BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, September 27, 2023 – 1:30 PM

MINUTES

Presiding: Chairman Eddie Trevino, Jr. (Cameron County)

I) Call to Order

Chairman Eddie Treviño, Jr. called the Transportation Policy Board meeting to order at 1:30 P.M., and a quorum was established. The TPB Meeting was held in person at the Ken Jones Board Room located at 301 West Railroad Weslaco, Texas with members present.

II) Roll Call

RGVMPO TPB Representatives in attendance were as follows:

Members Present:	
Entity	Individual
Cameron County	Judge Eddie Treviño, Jr. (Chairman) - PRESENT Com. David Garza (Alternate)
Hidalgo County	Comm. David L. Fuentes (Vice-Chairman) – ABSENT Comm. Everardo Villarreal (Proxy) -
City of Brownsville	Mayor John Cowen (Designee) Helen Ramirez (Proxy) – PRESENT
City of McAllen	Mayor Javier Villalobos (Designee) Roel “Roy” Rodriguez (Alternate) – PRESENT
City of Edinburg	Mayor Ramiro Garza (Designee) - PRESENT Comm. Daniel “Dan” Diaz (Alternate)
City of Mission	Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza (Designee) – PRESENT City Manager - Randy Perez (Alternate)
City of Harlingen	Mayor Norma Sepulveda (Designee) Gabriel Gonzalez (Alternate) – PRESENT
City of Pharr	Mayor Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez (Designee) – ABSENT Comm. Daniel Chavez (Alternate)
Starr County	Judge Eloy Vera (Designee) Reyna Guerra Proxy – PRESENT
City of San Benito	Mayor Ricardo “Rick” Guerra (Designee) – ABSENT Manuel De La Rosa (Alternate)
Cameron County RMA	Frank Parker, Jr. (Designee) – PRESENT Arturo A. Nelson (Alternate)
Hidalgo County RMA	S. David Deanda Jr. (Designee) Ramon Navarro, V. (Proxy) – PRESENT
Valley Metro	Tom Logan (Designee) - PRESENT Nancy Sanchez (Alternate)
TxDOT Pharr District	Pedro “Pete” Alvarez (Designee) - PRESENT Rex A. Costley (Alternate)
EX-OFFICIO	
RGV Partnership	
LRGVDC	Manuel Cruz
GUEST	
Others Present:	
RGVMPO	Andrew Canon
RGVMPO	Staff

III) PUBLIC COMMENT

None

IV) CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes

Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of August 30, 2023

Chairman Judge Trevino (Cameron County) asked if there were any corrections to the Policy minutes of August 30, 2023.

No corrections were noted to the minutes of August 30, 2023. Motion to approve by Pedro "Pete" Alvarez from TxDOT Pharr District and it was seconded by Ramon Navarro from Hidalgo County RMA. The item was unanimously approved.

2. Discussion and Action on FY 22-23 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Rudy Zamora addressed the attendees regarding any questions or concerns related to public involvement in the recent revision cycle of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). He encouraged attendees to seek clarification on any aspects of the revision cycle or public involvement process.

Chairman Judge Trevino mentioned that the portal deadline had been changed from October 13th to October 10th for amendments to be submitted.

Rodolfo Zamora confirmed that the deadline of October 6th would be retained for planning partners to ensure timely processing and submission of revisions to supporting documentation by the 10th.

Rodolfo Zamora informed the attendees that he would be sending out a rough draft of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for November later in the afternoon. He explained that he had been collaborating with the TxDOT district to connect their database to provide projected estimates and funding changes as needed. The draft would be shared with everyone to facilitate preparations for the upcoming revision cycle.

No questions or concerns were raised by the attendees.

3. Update on Performance Management Framework project with Alliance Transportation Group

Miguel Arispe representing the RGVMPPO, provided an update on the Performance Management Framework project in collaboration with Alliance Transportation Group. He explained that the project is currently focused on developing a project prioritization process based on federal, state, and regional criteria and performance measures. Miguel Arispe mentioned that a Virtual Workshop was conducted on September 25th, during which the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) had the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed criteria. ATG Group also presented sample project scenarios, and a midpoint survey was conducted to gather additional feedback on the proposed prioritization process. The next steps involve incorporating changes based on the comments and feedback received during the workshop and returning it to the committee for further discussions.

Miguel Arispe mentioned that there are additional deliverables in progress, including the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and methodology for performance reporting. He concluded the update by inviting any questions from the attendees.

Chairman Judge Trevino asked if anyone had questions or comments regarding the Performance Management Framework project.

After no questions were presented, Chairman Judge Trevino proceeded to the next item.

4. Presentation and Discussion regarding Transit Updates

Eva Garcia began her presentation and thanked everyone for attending the meeting to discuss the transit planning update. She emphasized that the entire RGVMPPO has been involved in various transit planning activities across the three counties. Eva Garcia introduced the topic by mentioning the four transit providers and the funding sources that typically support transit activities in the region.

Eva Garcia discussed how they monitor transit projects through revision cycles and highlighted the involvement of the Regional Transportation Advisory panel in coordinating transit efforts. She explained that the five-year coordination plan includes a chapter related to the MPO's role in providing increased transit alternatives to the region's residents. This involves developing a regional map identifying sidewalks, bike trails, bike lanes, bus routes, bus stops, and shelters. She mentioned ongoing meetings with transit agencies, including UTRGV and Brownsville Metro, to improve the quality of data related to routes and bus stops. Eva Garcia shared an early version of the regional map, highlighting the importance of providing trip planning training for the community.

Eva Garcia then introduced Javier Dominguez, who discussed the upcoming passenger rail study. Javier Dominguez mentioned the RFP process, set to start on October 1st, and the study's commencement in January 2024. He explained that the study aimed to expand on the previous commuter feasibility study and adapt it to encompass three counties.

Javier Dominguez touched upon demographic changes, economic shifts, and the need to update information related to at-grade rail crossings. He highlighted the importance of identifying potential ridership, conducting a benefit-cost analysis, and seeking grant opportunities for passenger rail development.

He displayed a map showing the MPO's expanded scope compared to the previous study, emphasizing the need to consider potential grade separation projects due to increased traffic counts and time.

Chairman Judge Trevino inquired about the 11 proposed locations from the previous study, clarifying that they were from 2010-2011.

Javier Dominguez confirmed that the 11 proposed locations were from that time frame.

Eva Garcia expressed her enthusiasm for public transportation's role in managing the region's growth and reducing single-occupancy vehicle traffic. She emphasized the connection between transit and Complete Streets efforts, showcasing examples of well-integrated transit stops in various areas.

Frank Parker Jr. from Cameron County RMA raised concerns about the potential increase in employees associated with LNG plans and the need for transit solutions to manage traffic and parking challenges.

Andrew Canon shared that meetings and discussions were underway to address the transportation needs associated with LNG plans, including carpooling and vanpooling options.

Mayor John Cowen mentioned that the City of Brownsville had been awarded 180,000 to do a study to extend bus service out to support, so that the city is working with Bechtel to make sure that the use of the trend system can be maximized.

Frank Parker commended the ongoing development in the area and emphasized the need for efficient transportation solutions.

Hidalgo County Commission David L. Fuentes asked if abandoned railways would be considered for alternative mobility options.

Javier Dominguez confirmed they would explore the possibility of using abandoned railways and mentioned other legislative changes that could affect transit planning.

Hidalgo County Commission David L. Fuentes suggested considering a railway in the Edcouch-Elsa-La Villa area as a potential hike and bike route.

Eva Garcia thanked everyone for their comments and questions and expressed a commitment to providing annual updates on transit plan activities.

Chairman Judge Trevino concluded Item 4, and the meeting moved on to the next agenda item.

5. Discussion and Possible Action regarding FY2019-2020 and FY2021-2022 Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Projects

Eva Garcia began her presentation, congratulating the team for successfully obligating or submitting FP requests for all TASA projects. She highlighted the importance of this milestone and noted that there were still important steps to be completed.

Eva Garcia explained the process that follows the FP requests, including the release to advertise and the bid opening. She mentioned that planning projects have a different process than construction projects and used the Hidalgo County Mobility Plan as an example.

She proceeded to discuss the projects for fiscal years 2021-2022, noting that many of them had already received their AFA (Agreement for Federal Assistance) and had kickoff meetings. She emphasized the importance of communication and setting project expectations early.

Chairman Judge Trevino asked if there were any questions from the board members.

City of Edinburg Mayor Ramiro Garza Jr. inquired about the timeline for completion of the 2021-2022 projects.

Eva Garcia explained that projects funded in fiscal years 2021-2022 could be obligated in fiscal years 2024 or 2025, with the final submission deadline for FP requests being August 2025. She emphasized the need to encourage early submissions to avoid last-minute stress.

Chairman Judge Trevino asked if there were any further questions or comments and if there was a motion to approve the item.

City of San Benito Mayor Ricardo Guerra made a motion to approve the item, which was seconded by City of Edinburg Mayor Ramiro Garza Jr.

Chairman Judge Trevino confirmed the motion and stated that it had passed.

The meeting proceeded to the next agenda item.

6. Consideration and Action to Approve Resolution 2023-19 Programming FY2023-2024 Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Funds.

Chairman Judge Trevino introduced Item 6, which was the consideration and action to approve Resolution 2023-19 for programming FY2023-2024 Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Funds. Eva Garcia, during her presentation, recommended tabling this item until the next meeting in October.

Chairman Judge Trevino requested a motion to table Item 6, which was made by the City of Mission and seconded by Starr County. The motion to table Item 6 carried.

Chairman Judge Trevino moved on to the next agenda item.

Chairman Judge Trevino asked if there were any questions, after no questions were presented, he confirmed that the item was for information only, and no action was required.

7. Discussion on Annual RGV Thoroughfare/ROW Plan Amendment Process

Luis Diaz presented an overview of the Annual RGV Thoroughfare/ROW Plan Amendment Process. He highlighted the key dates in the process, including the kickoff meeting, the deadline for submitting amendments, and the final approval by County commissioner's court. He emphasized that this process is conducted annually and would be repeated in August 2024.

Chairman Judge Trevino asked if there were any questions, and since there were none, he thanked Luis for the presentation.

8. Discussion and interactive SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis from RGVMPPO Staff

Javier Dominguez Jr. initiated an interactive SWOT analysis, encouraging attendees to participate using their mobile phones. He explained the process and asked participants to provide feedback on the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The responses were collected through an interactive online platform, and attendees submitted their input. Javier Dominguez Jr. then proceeded to present the some responses and comments received during the interactive session.

Chairman Judge Trevino asked if there were any questions or comments. Javier Dominguez Jr. explained that the feedback would be compiled and compared with that from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for future discussions.

V) RGVMPPO Executive Director's Reports and Updates

RGVMPO Executive Director Andrew Canon provided a brief budget update, mentioning that the budget was currently at 81% expended and on track to finish within the budget limits.

Chairman Judge Trevino asked if there were any questions, and since there were none, he moved on to the next item.

VI) Status Reports

A. TxDOT Project Status Report

TxDOT Area Office Staff provided an updated presentation on current projects and activities within Hidalgo and Cameron Counties.

Jose Rodriguez, a project manager/Transportation Engineer for TxDOT, presented updates on two projects.

FM508 Project in Cameron County:

- The project focuses on a nine-mile stretch of rural highway rehabilitation from the city of Combes to the city of Rio Hondo.
- Key intersection improvements include a left-turn lane for westbound traffic at 907 and improvements at the intersection with FM 106.
- Four parcels of right-of-way are being acquired for the project.
- The project is currently in progress, with environmental assessment and right-of-way acquisition ongoing.
- The estimated completion date for this project is July 2026, with 30% PS&E completion and 60% PS&E completion in progress.

FM907 Project:

- This project involves a 2.5-mile stretch of rural highway rehabilitation from the southern edge of the city of Alamo to FM 3072 (Dicker Road).
- Safety and mobility improvements include addressing line-of-sight issues near the floodway.
- Four parcels of right-of-way are being acquired for line-of-sight improvements.
- The project is also in progress, with environmental assessment and right-of-way acquisition ongoing.
- It is expected to reach 95% PS&E completion, with a letting schedule for January 27, 2027.

Chairman Judge Trevino opened the floor for questions and comments. Pedro "Pete" Alvarez emphasized the need to expedite projects and obligate funds promptly to avoid losing funding.

Clemente Mena and Yahaira Marroquin presented updates on ongoing construction projects:

FM 676 (Mile 5) Rehabilitation Project:

- This project involves rehabilitating and widening FM 676 from La Homa Road to Conway (State Highway 107).
- The contractor is Texas Cordia Construction.
- The project is currently 5% complete, with an estimated completion date of February 2025.
- The presentation included images of construction progress.
- **FM 492 (Godwin Road) Bridge Reconstruction Project:**
- This project focuses on the reconstruction of a bridge over an irrigation canal on FM 492 in Palmview.
- The contractor is 75% complete.
- Images showed the completed bridge and ongoing construction of approaches.

Yahaira Marroquin presented the following project:

SH100 Rehabilitation Project (Los Fresnos):

- The project involves the rehabilitation of SH100 from Mesquite Street to 577 feet east of Ebanos Street.
- The project is 93% complete, with work expected to be completed in October 2023.
- A picture of the project's status was shown.

Chairman Judge Trevino sought clarification on the completion date for SH100 in Los Fresno's, and Yahaira Marroquin confirmed it would be completed in October 2023.

Chairman Judge Trevino took a moment to recognize and welcome State Representative Janie Lopez, expressing gratitude for her presence at the meeting and acknowledging her interest in supporting transportation initiatives at the state level.

State Representative Janie Lopez expressed her pleasure at being present at the meeting and learning more about the ongoing transportation initiatives in the Rio Grande Valley. She commended the work done by TxDOT and the importance of enhancing and maintaining the region's roads and infrastructure. Representative Lopez stated her willingness to explore opportunities for support and collaboration at the state level.

Chairman Judge Trevino thanked State Representative Lopez for her presence and willingness to support transportation efforts in the Rio Grande Valley.

There were no further questions or comments from the board.

B. Cameron County RMA

Eric Davila provided updates on various projects:

- Veterans POE Expansion: A change order extending the contract by 166 days was executed, with a new completion date in April 2024. Local participation was emphasized.
- Gap 2 Project: Finalizing environmental clearance and awaiting Union Pacific's approval for Exhibit A.
- East Loop Project: Coordination with IBWC and CBP for levy relocation and border wall placement.
- Flor De Mayo Project: Consultant selected, moving into scoping phase.
- Free Trade Bridge Project: DAP agreement executed, construction imminent.
- Morrison Rd. Project: Working with MPO staff on project classification.
- Old Alice Road Project: Awaiting TASA award, environmental clearance progressing.
- FM509 Extension Project: Preliminary engineering in progress.
- Dana Road Project: Submitted schematic and technical reports to TxDOT.
- North Williams Rd. Project: Ongoing project development.
- SPI Second Access Project: Coordinating with US Fish for preferred alternatives.
- Harlingen Rail Project: Phase one agreement submitted to FRA.
- SPC Phase II Project: 90% completion, phase II consultant selection underway.
- US281 Connector Project: Consultant procurement in progress.
- West Boulevard Project: At 95% design, finalizing environmental aspects.
- Whipple Road Project: Working on schematic and TxDOT coordination.
- FM 1847 Project: Going for a TASA award in October.
- Los Fresnos Hike and Bike Project: CAT 10CRP funded, consultant selected.
- Outer Parkway Project: Procurement underway for consultant selection.
- Stenger Road Project: Going towards a TASA application, consultant selected.
- Primera Sidewalk Project: Consultant selection completed.
- US 77 Funding Plan: Appreciation for TxDOT's commitment in the 2024 UTP.
- Eric Davila responded to questions regarding specific project details.

Chairman Judge Trevino Chairman asked if there were any questions, after no questions were presented, he went ahead and proceeded to Status Report for HCRMA.

C. Hidalgo County RMA

Ramon Navarro discussed development activities for the IBTC project, mentioning its transition to TxDOT project management. The progress of the 365 project was reported, with no major concerns, and permit numbers for bridge crossings were provided. He mentioned archaeological work at the Jackson yesterday overpass site.

Chairman Judge Trevino thanked Ramon Navarro for the updates.

D. Transit Reports

Simon Ortiz presented transit ridership numbers, noting a gradual return to pre-pandemic levels, with 106,000 rides in August. He highlighted increases in ridership for both fixed-route and paratransit services. Other transit-related information was provided in the packet.

VII) **New or Unfinished Business**
NONE

VIII) ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the RGVMPPO TPB Members, Chairman Judge Trevino called the meeting adjourned at 2:35pm.

ATTEST:



RGVMPO POLICY COMMITTEE
(TPB) VICE CHAIRMAN