

**Meeting of the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization**  
**RGVMPO POLICY BOARD MEETING**  
**Wednesday, August 28, 2024 – 1:30 PM**  
**MINUTES**

**Presiding: Vice-Chairman Mayor John Cowen (City of Brownsville)**

**I) Call to Order**

Vice-Chairman City of Brownsville Mayor John Cowen called the Transportation Policy Board meeting to order at 1:30 P.M., and a quorum was established. The Meeting was held in person with members present.

**II) Roll Call**

**RGVMPO Transportation Policy Board Representatives in attendance were as follows:**

<b>Members Present:</b>	
<b>Entity</b>	<b>Individual</b>
Hidalgo County	Comm. David L. Fuentes (Chairman) – ABSENT Comm. Everardo Villarreal (Proxy) -
City of Brownsville	Mayor John Cowen (Vice-Chairman) – PRESENT (VIRTUAL) Helen Ramirez (Proxy)
Cameron County	Judge Eddie Treviño, Jr. - PRESENT Com. Sofia C. Benavides
City of McAllen	Mayor Javier Villalobos (Designee) City Manager 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 Asst. City Manager Juan Pablo “JP” Terrazas (Alternate)
City of Harlingen	Mayor Norma Sepulveda (Designee) Gabriel Gonzalez (Alternate) - PRESENT
City of Pharr	Mayor Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez (Designee) Maria Rangel (Proxy) - PRESENT
Starr County	Judge Eloy Vera (Designee) - ABSENT Reyna Guerra Proxy
City of San Benito	Mayor Ricardo “Rick” Guerra (Designee) Tom Goodman (PROXY)
Cameron County RMA	Frank Parker, Jr. (Designee) - PRESENT Arturo A. Nelson (Alternate)
Hidalgo County RMA	S. David Deanda Jr. (Designee) Ruben Alfaro (PROXY) - PRESENT
Valley Metro	Tom Logan (Designee) - PRESENT Nancy Sanchez (Alternate)
TxDOT Pharr District	Pedro “Pete” Alvarez (Designee) - PRESENT Rex A. Costley (Alternate)
<b>EX-OFFICIO</b>	
LRGVDC	Manuel Cruz
<b>Others Present:</b>	
RGVMPO	Luis Diaz
RGVMPO	Staff

**III) PUBLIC COMMENT**  
**NONE**

#### IV) ACTION & DISCUSSION ITEMS

**A. Approval of Minute(s).** Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of July 31, 2024.

**Motion to approve correction by Pedro “Pete” Alvarez from TxDOT. Approval was seconded by Frank Parker from Cameron County RMA. The item was unanimously approved.**

#### **B. Discussion and Action Federal Functional Classification of Nolana Loop**

Luis Diaz provided an overview of the request for the federal functional classification of Nolana Loop. The request originates from Hidalgo County Precinct 1. The project is divided into two phases, with the overall limits from Victoria Road to FM 88. The request is for Nolana Loop to be classified as a "major collector."

A map showing the project scope, including the two phases, was included in the agenda packet. Phase 4A ends at FM 88, and the project starts at Victoria Road, represented by a pink dashed line on the map.

Luis Diaz highlighted the process for moving forward:

- Submission to TxDOT Pharr District for approval and review.
- Coordination with TxDOT Pharr District after receiving comments.
- Subsequent submission to TxDOT Austin (TPMP) and the Federal Highway Administration for final approval.

**Frank Parker from Cameron County RMA made a motion to approve. Approval was seconded by Mayor Norie Gonzalez-Garza from the City of Mission. The item was unanimously approved.**

#### **C. Discussion and Action for Clean Cities Coalition**

Javier Dominguez Executive Analyst with LRGVDC presented a proposal for a Clean Cities Coalition.

- The LRGVDC is working to form the South Texas Clean Cities & Communities Coalition, covering areas within three development councils: South Texas, Coastal Bend, and Lower Rio Grande Valley.
- The Department of Energy desires one entity to host this coalition for the region south of San Antonio.
- LRGVDC aims to recruit 9-15 stakeholders for the apprenticeship application.
- The coalition will focus on education, webinars, and technical grant assistance.
- The MPO can use the coalition as a platform for updates and potentially help.
- Letters of commitment have been received from some stakeholders and outreach to others is ongoing.
- A draft letter of commitment is available for review.

Javier Dominguez also advised the board about the background and goals of the South Texas Clean Cities & Communities Coalition. He explained the role of the LRGVDC and the need for stakeholder involvement. He highlighted potential benefits for the MPO and other stakeholders and addressed the status of stakeholder engagement and the next steps.

Mr. Dominguez asked the board to review the draft letter of commitment and consider joining the coalition as a stakeholder.

No comments or questions for item.

**A motion was made by Pedro “Pete” Alvarez from TxDOT Pharr District to approve the coalition. The motion was seconded by Mayor Ramiro Garza Jr. from the City of Edinburg.**

#### V) PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

##### **A. National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program Phase II Update**

Klarissa Gonzalez presented on the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program.

- **NEVI Program Overview:**

The National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program provides funding to states to develop electric vehicle charging infrastructure, covering electricity, hydrogen, propane, and natural gas.

- **Texas EV Infrastructure Plan:**  
Developed by TxDOT and approved by the FHWA to access formula funding. It includes timelines, scoring methodologies, equity considerations, and federal standards for Phases I and II.
- **Phase I Recap:**  
Focused on placing fast-charging stations every 50 miles along interstate highways. Projects were funded through an 80/20 federal-state funding split, with the private sector providing the 20% match.
- **Phase II Overview:**  
Aims to ensure at least one charging station in Metropolitan Planning Areas (MPA). The MPO will propose study areas and power levels, leading to a competitive grant process managed by TxDOT. Preliminary funding for the RGVMPO is \$6.3 million, with an additional \$1.5 million for operations and maintenance.
- **Charger Specifications:**  
DC fast chargers cost \$150,000 per port and charge in less than 45 minutes. Level 2 chargers cost \$7,542 per charger and take up to 8 hours for a full charge.
- **Project Considerations:**  
Projects must include 4 to 8 charging ports per location. Study areas will focus on a 1-mile buffer along interstate routes and ensuring equity across counties.
- **Environmental and Equity Factors:**  
Proximity to electrical substations and disadvantaged areas will be considered. Cross-jurisdictional collaboration and working groups will be formed to ensure regional connectivity.

Klarissa also advised the board that staff will facilitate working groups to ensure regional connectivity and address the complexities of the task. Furthermore, staff will continue working on the implementation plan and facilitate working group meetings.

Vice-Chairman inquired about the anticipated date of TxDOT's approval. Klarissa Gonzalez advised that she does not have the information available, but she would do the research and provide it.

Pete Alvarez asked if any of the entities have been reached out regarding forming the workgroup. Klarissa advised that she would be reaching out to TAC and Policy members right after the meeting.

**Informational item, no action required.**

## **B. Presentation of RGVMPO CAT 7 Utilization Report**

Luis Diaz presented on the RGVMPO CAT 7 Utilization Report

### **Overview:**

This is the first of several updates on CAT 7 funding and project readiness. The UTP (Unified Transportation Program) was approved on the 22nd, with a table showing allocations from 2024 to 2034.

### **Funding Status:**

Current CAT 7 allocations range from \$32 million to \$33 million. By 2028, projected numbers indicate a negative balance based on project programming and carryover, meaning no new funds until 2032. This situation can change if programmed projects do not let as scheduled, potentially creating more carryover. Projections are high-level estimates and subject to change based on the actual readiness of projects. A more detailed update will follow next month, including specific project readiness and AFAs (Advance Funding Agreements).

### **Program Challenges:**

CAT 7 funds may be reallocated to CAT 12 (Safety) projects if not spent in time. Coordination is ongoing with TxDOT and local governments to ensure projects are shovel-ready and funds are utilized.

**Next Steps:**

Luis Diaz will send a follow-up email with more information on project allocations. The MPO will continue to work on getting projects shovel-ready and spending the allocated CAT 7 funds. The public involvement process for the amendment process will begin on September 9th.

The City Manager from the City of McAllen Roy Rodriguez asked if there was excess money available and inquired about how to secure funding for a project on Taylor Road. He further explained that that project is ready but is facing delays due to a funding shortfall.

Luis Diaz clarified that there is available funding in the form of assigned CAT 7 funds that need to be utilized. He added that funding for a project on Taylor Road could potentially be obtained through swapping with another existing project within the same fiscal year in the TIP. Mr. Diaz suggested prioritizing projects that are shovel-ready for potential swaps. He also assured the board that RGVMP staff would investigate potential funding swaps specifically during the Project Readiness workshops.

Pedro "Pete" Alvarez from TxDOT Pharr District, City of Edinburg Mayor Ramiro Garza, Judge Eddie Treviño and Frank Parker joined the discussion to further explore CAT 7 funds. The discussion revolved around the availability and allocation of CAT 7 funds, with a specific focus on addressing potential project swaps and letting of projects.

**Informational item, no action required.****C. Update on RGVMP Executive Director's Selection Process**

Manuel Cruz reported that process is nearing the final stages of hiring a new Executive Director. He provided an overview of the timeline of the process.

Genius Roads, the contracted search firm, presented four candidates to the hiring committee in mid-August. After further review, the hiring committee selected two candidates for interviews. The interviews will be held on September 5th at 2:00 PM at the LRGDVC offices in Weslaco, TX. The process should be complete by the October deadline.

No questions or comments were raised by the committee members.

**D. RGVMP Executive Director's Report and Updates**

Luis Diaz provided updates on various aspects of the RGVMP's operations, including:

- **Budget**
  - The total adjusted budget is \$4,249,000.42.
  - The total spent is \$1,366,822.00.
  - The projected expenditure is \$1,770,434.00.
  - The remaining balance is \$403,611.00.
  - The MPO is in good shape financially as it approaches the new budget year starting in October.
- **House Bill 397**
  - This bill amends the Texas Local Government Code regarding changes to county regulations on subdivisions, plat approvals, and thoroughfares.
  - The MPO collects amendments from local governments, supports the county, and approves a resolution that is taken to the county government for final approval.
  - A new form will be required for making changes to subdivision plats. The form and additional information are available in the agenda packet.
- **PM 2.5 Public Involvement:**
  - The PM 2.5 measure has decreased from 12 to 9, potentially putting the region in jeopardy of nonattainment.
  - Informal public involvement is ongoing until the end of the month.
  - The MPO will submit a formal public involvement in the next session.
  - The LRGVDC is leading an initiative to address the location of air monitors and has chosen a consultant to move forward with the plan.

- Gabriel Gonzalez asked about addressing the issue of air monitor locations that came up during the Technical Advisory Committee discussion. Luis Diaz responded that the LRGVDC is leading an initiative to address this and has chosen a consultant to move forward with the plan.
- John Cowen requested to see the public comment that will be sent out. Luis Diaz stated that it will be brought to the Technical Advisory Committee for information and guidance before being submitted and brought to the board.
- Gabriel Gonzalez asked if the public comment period is over at the end of the month. Luis Diaz clarified that it is over informally and that there will be another opportunity to submit public comments formally.
- **RGVMPO Federal Certification:**
  - The MPO staff is working on the federal certification process.
  - The desk audit from the Federal Highway Administration returned with four questions out of 18 criteria.
  - The MPO staff has a plan to address these questions and is in good shape for the upcoming certification on December 5th and 6th.

**Informational item, no action required.**

**E. TxDOT Project Status Report**

TxDOT Pharr Area Staff provided updates on the following projects. Detailed information within the agenda packet.

**Hidalgo County**

- US 83 Relief Route Phase I
- FM 1015 (North & South)

**Cameron County**

- IH 69E Ramp Reversal
- SH 4 (Concrete Pavement)

**TxDOT Project Design Updates**

- FM 508 Cameron County
- Fm 907, Hidalgo County

**No other questions or comments. Informational item, no action required.**

**VI) OTHER BUSINESS (OLD OR NEW)**

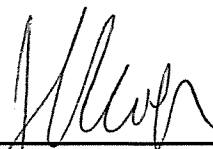
- City of Mission Mayor Norie Gonzalez-Garza informed the board about the ribbon cutting of Taylor Rd PH 1-September 12, 2024, at 10AM.
- Vice-Chairman John Cowen mayor of the City of Brownsville encourage everyone attend the TxDOT meetings in Austin whenever possible and advocate our region. He talked about his experience and believed that it is very powerful to speak in front of the board in person.

**Farewell to Roy Rodriguez:**

The Vice-Chairman extended a warm farewell to Roy Rodriguez, the city of McAllen manager, as this was his last Policy meeting before retirement. Roy Rodriguez expressed his gratitude. Pedro Alvarez from TxDOT also shared a few words of appreciation for Mr. Rodriguez's service.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business to come before the RGVMPO TPB Members, Vice-Chairman Mayor John Cowen called the meeting adjourned at 2:48pm.*

ATTEST:   
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**RGVMPO POLICY COMMITTEE**  
**(TPB) VICE CHAIRMAN**