

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

Presiding: Chairman Commissioner David Fuentes (Hidalgo County)

I) Call to Order

Chairman Hidalgo County Commissioner David L. Fuentes called the Transportation Policy Board meeting to order at 1:32 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:

Members Present:	
Entity	Individual
Hidalgo County	Comm. David L. Fuentes (Chairman) – PRESENT Comm. Everardo Villarreal (Proxy) -
City of Brownsville	Mayor John Cowen (Vice-Chairman) – PRESENT Helen Ramirez (Proxy)
Cameron County	Judge Eddie Treviño, Jr. - PRESENT Com. Sofia C. Benavides
City of McAllen	Mayor Javier Villalobos (Designee) Assistant City Manager Michelle Rivera (Proxy) - 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) – PRESENT Gabriel Gonzalez (Alternate)
City of Pharr	Mayor Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez (Designee) Commissioner Daniel Chavez (Alternate) - PRESENT
Starr County	Judge Eloy Vera (Designee) Reyna Guerra (Proxy) - PRESENT
City of San Benito	Mayor Ricardo “Rick” Guerra (Designee) – PRESENT Tom Goodman (Proxy)
Cameron County RMA	Frank Parker, Jr. (Designee) - PRESENT Arturo A. Nelson (Alternate)
Hidalgo County RMA	S. David Deanda Jr. (Designee) Ramon Navarro (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	
LRGVDC	Manuel Cruz
Others Present:	
RGVMPO Executive Director	Michael Medina
RGVMPO Director	Luis Diaz
Caso Law Firm	Jose Caso
RGVMPO Staff	

III) PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE

IV) ACTION & DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Approval of Minute(s). Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of September 25, 2024.

TXDOT Pharr District Representation: The minutes will be amended to accurately reflect the TXDOT Pharr District representation as Pedro "Pete" Alvarez and alternate Rex A. Costley. This correction was brought to the Board's attention by Mr. Alvarez and confirmed to be corrected by the RGVMPO Executive Assistant.

Reyna Guerra from Starr County made a motion to approve the minutes with the correction requested. Approval was seconded by Frank Parker, Jr. from Cameron County RMA. The item was unanimously approved.

B. Approval of the 2024 RGVMPO Congestion Management Process.

Klarissa Gonzalez presented an overview of the 2024 CMP

- **Background:**
 - The Congestion Management Process (CMP) is a federal requirement for MPOs with populations over 200,000 (CFR Title 23§450.322).
 - The CMP guides the selection of strategies to improve congestion and integrates performance-based planning.
- **Milestones:**
 - **January 2024:** Staff began drafting the CMP.
 - **Spring 2024:** CMP subcommittee meetings held to gather input.
 - **August 2024:** First draft presented to the TAC and Policy Board.
 - **October 10, 2024:** Final draft presented to and passed by the TAC.
- **Notable Amendments:**
 - **Public Transportation:** Added language promoting public transportation and analyzing ridership trends to understand transit needs.
 - **Implementation Schedules and Project Prioritization:** Identified federally funded projects (Categories 7, 9, 10, and FTA grants) in the TIP that are expected to mitigate congestion.
- **Performance Measures:**
 - PM3 (System Reliability) for more reliable commute times.
 - PM1 (System Safety) to reduce non-recurring congestion caused by collisions.
- **2050 MTP Integration:** The 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) will include information from the CMP and tie in performance measures with project prioritization.
- **Timeline:**
 - **December 5, 2024:** CMP will be discussed during the FTA/FHWA certification review (1 PM - 2 PM).
 - **November 2024:** FHWA has invited RGVMPO to speak at a Texas MPO MTP roundtable discussion.
- **Future Plans:**
 - Continue monitoring the system, maintaining data, and documenting improvements.
 - Incorporate findings into the 2027-2030 TIP and the 2055 MTP.
 - Conduct more robust corridor-level analysis.
 - Learn from best practices for low-cost, low-impact improvements.
 - Identify and address new areas of congestion.

Chairman David Fuentes asked where the certification meeting will take place. Klarissa Gonzalez confirmed the meeting will be held at the LRGVDC Main Campus, 301 W. Railroad Street, Building B, Ken Jones Executive Board Room in Weslaco, TX.

Michael Medina emphasized that the CMP is a crucial planning document for identifying congestion mitigation strategies and securing federal funding.

Pedro Alvarez (TxDOT) made a motion to approve the 2024 RGV MPO Congestion Management Process. Mayor Ramiro Garza (City of Edinburg) seconded the motion.

C. Discussion and Action on November 2024 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Revision Cycle.

Rodolfo Zamora presented the November 2024 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Revision Cycle. He noted that public involvement was completed on October 9, 2024, and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) approved the revisions on October 10, 2024. A summary sheet was included in the agenda packet.

Mr. Zamora highlighted the following:

- **Federal Approval:** Expected no earlier than December 24, 2024, potentially delayed until January 2025 due to holidays.
- **Project Updates:**
 - **City of McAllen Projects:** Bentsen Rd and Nolana Loop submitted for Category 7 funding; anticipated letting in FY 2027, with funding requests within 12-15 months.
 - **Dana Rd:** Cameron County RMA requested addition to the TIP; inclusion requires identifying other projects to defer or funding shortfalls to address.
 - **New Projects:** SH68, SS81, and FM3072 added to replace the International Trade Corridor. These revisions submitted by TxDOT Pharr District.

Key Discussion Points

1. **Recategorization of Funds (2028):**
 - Projects were segmented into three construction phases.
 - TxDOT clarified the process of bringing a project from an off-system to an on-system designation.
2. **Funding Concerns:**
 - Confusion regarding allocation of \$20 million previously approved and the addition of another \$20 million.
 - Explanation from TxDOT (Pedro Alvarez): The funds remain the same, approved previously by the board, and reclassified from off-system to on-system CSJs.
3. **Shift in Allocations for FY 2024-2025:**
 - **Judge Eddie Trevino's Concerns:**
 - \$85 million reduction in the FY 2025 UTP for the I-69 connector project.
 - Assurance sought for regaining funds for projects delayed or deferred to later years.
 - FM1732 funding reduced from \$25.2M to \$7.4M, raising concerns about delays.
 - **TxDOT Response:**
 - Funding constraints required reallocating funds to prioritize shovel-ready projects.
 - Adjustments are temporary; projects can regain funding as allocations permit.
4. **Communication Issues:**
 - Board members raised concerns over insufficient communication about significant revisions.
 - Pedro Alvarez (TxDOT) acknowledged the need for improved communication with elected officials and committed to addressing this moving forward.
5. **Urgency of Decision:**
 - Resolution needed by October 30, 2024, to meet the state's submission deadline.
 - Acknowledgment of the potential for further revisions during the February 2025 revision cycle.

Recommendation and Action

- **Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza:** Recommended approval with the understanding that revisions could be revisited before December.
- **Pete Alvarez (TxDOT):** Supported approval with plans to address changes by February.

A motion was made by Pete Alvarez from TxDOT and seconded by Michelle Rivera from the City of McAllen to approve the November 2024 STIP revisions as presented. The motion passed.

D. Out of State Travel – 2025 Transportation Research Board (TRB) Conference – Washington, DC January 5-9, 2025.

Michael Medina presented a request for approval for staff to attend the Annual Transportation Research Board (TRB) Conference in Washington, D.C. from January 5-9, 2025.

- The conference is part of the 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) under Task 1.6.
- Attendance aligns with TxDOT and TPB requirements.
- The conference provides opportunities for staff to coordinate with other planners and GIS specialists on best practices and innovative initiatives.

Chairman David Fuentes inquired about having the necessary funds to accommodate the expense, Michael Medina confirmed that the funds are available.

A motion was made by Judge Eddie Trevino Jr. from Cameron County and seconded by Ramon Navarro from the HCRMA to approve out of state travel for RGVMP staff. The motion passed.

V) PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Discussion on current RGVMP Chairperson Term

Chairman David Fuentes initiated a discussion regarding the transition of the RGVMP Chairperson position, providing context for his upcoming departure from the role.

- Chairman Fuentes explained that Hidalgo County has an internal rotation agreement for representation on the MPO.
- He had previously requested to extend his term beyond the standard rotation to provide leadership during the transition to a new executive director and budget cycle.
- Due to the approaching end of this extended term, Chairman Fuentes requested clarification on the transition process according to the RGVMP bylaws.

Legal Guidance:

- Pepe Caso, legal counsel from Caso Law Firm, provided guidance based on his review of the RGVMP bylaws.
- He emphasized the guiding principle of alternating the Chair position between Hidalgo County and Cameron County in two-year cycles.
- Mr. Caso outlined the procedure for filling the vacancy created by Chairman Fuentes' departure, referencing sections 2.03 and 2.05 of the bylaws.
- He recommended that Executive Director Michael Medina call a special election at the next board meeting to select a new Chair from Hidalgo County to complete the current term.
- Mr. Caso confirmed that the Vice Chair, Mayor Cowen, would succeed the Chair at the end of the current term, as outlined in section 2.03 of the bylaws.

Discussion:

- Judge Eddie Trevino raised a question about whether the bylaws adequately address this type of mid-term transition and suggested a potential need for amendment.
- Mr. Caso acknowledged the potential for clarification and suggested that the annual meeting would be an appropriate time to gather input on bylaw improvements.
- Chairman Fuentes expressed agreement with the need for clarification.

Next Steps:

Executive Director Medina to officially notify the board of the upcoming vacancy and call for a special election.

- Hidalgo County to submit the required paperwork for their chosen representative to assume the Chair position.
- The Board to review and consider potential bylaw amendments at the annual meeting to address clarity and procedures for Chair transitions.

This item was for informational purposes only. No action was taken

B. Presentation and Discussion regarding the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA; also known as Category 9) Program.

Eva Garcia, provided an update on the status of various projects and presented information on the upcoming call for projects for Category 9 funds.

Ms. Garcia presented an overview of project updates, categorized by funding cycles and phases:

- **2019-2020 (Reimbursement Phase):** These projects have obligated funds and received Federal Project Authorization Agreements (FPAAs). Ms. Garcia noted that the PSJA Tri-City project is pending contract award and faces funding shortfalls, while the Olmitos & Las Palmas project is being re-let for the third time.
- **2021-2022 (Obligation Phase):** Projects are progressing with studies/plans (Elsa and Arroyo Colorado) pending state approval, and construction projects (Edinburg's Freddy Gonzalez trail, Brownsville project, Port Isabel project) at various stages of development. Ms. Garcia expressed concern about the Port Isabel project's timeline.
- **2023-2024 (Program Phase):** Most projects have executed Advanced Funding Agreements (AFAs), with Mission and Edinburg projects pending.

Category 9 Funds:

Ms. Garcia announced the upcoming call for projects for Category 9 funds, highlighting key aspects:

- **Funding Availability:** \$9,288,425 in federal funds.
- **Timeline:**
 - Call opens: November 1, 2024
 - Technical assistance request deadline: December 23, 2024
 - Project proposal deadline: January 31, 2025
- **Eligibility Requirements:** Projects must be related to bicycle, pedestrian, or micro-mobility modes, principally for transportation, with a direct relationship to the surface transportation system and public accessibility.
- **Competitive Process:** Evaluation criteria includes project readiness, resiliency, safety, connectivity, and equity.
- **Workshops:** Two workshops will be held on November 1st and 13th to provide information and assistance with applications.

No questions were raised during or after the presentation.

This item was for informational purposes. No action was taken.

C. Presentation and Discussion regarding the RGVMPPO's Project Prioritization Process for Metro Mobility and Rehab (STP MM; also known as Category 7) Funds

Eva Garcia, RGVMPPO Planner III, provided an update on the 200% threshold issue and discussed findings from recent surveys regarding project prioritization.

Summary:

200% Threshold Update:

- Ms. Garcia reported on the ongoing situation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) 200% threshold rule for unobligated funds.
- A meeting with the FHWA FIN Division was held on September 10th, 2024, and another meeting is scheduled for December 10th, 2024, where a decision on potential impacts is expected.
- The RGVMPPO currently has \$30 million potentially subject to the rule and a carryover of \$95.5 million.
- If the funds are transferred, the RGVMPPO will need to obligate \$63 million in 2025.

Project Prioritization Process:

- To address the potential funding transfer and develop the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Ms. Garcia presented findings from Mentimeter surveys conducted with the Project Readiness and Policy Board committees.

Top Priorities:

1. Improve quality of life and promote consistency between transportation improvements and planned growth.
2. *Project Readiness*: Increase transportation system safety. *Policy Board*: Improve transportation system resiliency and mitigate stormwater impacts.
3. Increase accessibility and mobility for people and freight.
 - **Evaluation Form Feedback**: The current project evaluation form received "fair" ratings, indicating room for improvement.
 - **Goals and Strategies Alignment**: Regional alignment was prioritized, followed by state alignment (Project Readiness) and federal alignment (Policy Board).
 - **Regional Plan Incorporation**: Responses varied between groups, with the Active Transportation Plan, Congestion Management Plan (CMP), and Transit Development Plan receiving high priority.
 - **Project Evaluation Timing**: All groups agreed that projects should be evaluated for prioritization before entering the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) from the MTP.
 - **Other Considerations**:
 - Re-evaluate the project ranking process.
 - Consider completed environmental assessments and approvals in evaluations.
 - Prioritize shovel-ready, data-driven projects with a documented process.
 - Align with elected officials' priorities.

No questions were raised during or after the presentation.

This item was for informational purposes. No action was taken.

D. TJKM – SS4A Comprehensive Plan Initial Project Status

1. Introduction (Melany Rodriguez)

- **SS4A Funding**: The RGVMPPO was awarded Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) funding to develop a regional comprehensive safety action plan.
- **TAC Role**: The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will play a key role in developing and identifying safety initiatives and strategies by providing regional input.
- **Project Goals**:
 - Eliminate preventable fatal and severe collisions by 2050.
 - Utilize a multifaceted approach (engineering, education, enforcement).
 - Promote safe travel for vulnerable users.
 - Ensure equitable safety investments.

2. Scope of Work (Nayam Amin)

- **Comprehensive Safety Action Plan**: TJKM is developing a comprehensive safety action plan for the RGVMPPO region.
- **Implementation Funds**: The plan is necessary to apply for implementation funds to enhance safety.
- **Scope of Work**:
 - **Completed**:
 - Existing Conditions – Document of Current Policies, Regulations, Projects, and Funding
 - Vision and Goal Development
 - **In Progress**:
 - Crash Data Analysis/HIN Development (based on TxDOT CRIS data for Cameron, Hidalgo, and Starr counties)
 - **Ongoing**:
 - Communication and Engagement
 - **Future Work**:
 - Safe System Priorities
 - Short-Term, Mid-Term, and Long-Term Action Strategy Development (for RGVMPPO, counties, and cities)

- Equity and Land Use Analysis
- Draft and Final SS4A Action Plan

3. Project Schedule (Nayam Amin)

- **Start Date:** March 2024
- **Completion Date:** March 2025
- **Community Engagement:**
 - Two community meetings were completed.
 - Five steering committee meetings planned (two completed).
 - One Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting was conducted.
- **Web Page:** An interactive map input platform is available on the RGVMPO website for public feedback.
- **Website Feedback:**
 - 63 feedbacks received.
 - Top feedback: Sidewalks (22%), speeding (13%), distracted driving (10%), infrastructure for pedestrians and bikes, street lighting.

4. Collision Analysis (Nayam Amin)

- **Data:** 10 years of crash data (2014-2023) from TxDOT CRIS.
- **Collision Types:**
 - 88,000+ total injury collisions.
 - 32% are attributed to unsafe speeds.
 - 29% related to right of way
 - 4% pedestrians and 2% bikes
 - 72% of collisions happen during daylight hours
- **Fatalities and Serious injuries:**
 - Speed Zone 30 miles and above (56%)
 - Speed Zone 40 miles and above (13%)
 - Many of them occur within the urban or suburban areas
- **Next Steps:**
 - Identify the High Injury Network.
 - Develop strategies and safety improvements.
 - Secure funding for implementation.

No questions were raised during or after the presentation.

This item was for informational purposes. No action was taken.

E. RGVMPO Executive Director's Report and Updates

Michael Medina presented a summary of the RGVMPO's current fiscal year budget status highlighting that from a planning aspect the RGVMPO is within budget but is in the best interest of the MPO to look at the planning activities within each task, so we understand the needs of the MPO. Mr. Medina added that depending on the results from the federal certification at the beginning of December, attention needs to be paid to the items in need and make the necessary changes.

Mr. Medina also provided an update on the thoroughfare plan highlighting the following points:

- Submission Deadline: December 20, 2024.

Timeline:

- February 2025: Presentation to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- March 2025: Presentation to the Policy Board
- April 2025: Presentation to the County Commissioners Court
- August 2025: Annual Thoroughfare Plan Amendment process

Mr. Medina clarified the MPO's role in the thoroughfare planning process, emphasizing its focus on providing technical assistance and mapping capacity to municipalities and counties.

Mr. Medina also informed the board of the following meetings scheduled as follows: December 4, 2024-TAC and December 11, 2024 – Policy meeting. Pedro ‘Pete’ Alvarez suggested to have a TAC and Policy meetings on December 4th, TAC in the morning and Policy on the afternoon, to be able to meet the deadline for the Category 2 mobility projects that need to be submitted for consideration by December 6th, 2024.

The board agreed to have the meetings as proposed by Mr. Alvarez. TAC meeting at 10:30am and Policy Board at 1:30pm.

Mr. Medina closed his report by reminding the board that the Federal Certification review would take place on December 5th – December 6th and agenda and calendars would be emailed accordingly.

F. TxDOT Project Status Report

Pedro Alvarez provided an update to the board regarding the Interchange providing a completion date of December 2024.

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

- Hidalgo County
 - FM 1015 South
 - FM1015 North
 - FM 1925 (Monte Cristo)
- Cameron County
 - IH 69E Ramp Reversal
 - SH 4 (Concrete Pavement)
- Starr County
 - US83 (Margarito Rd to Roma Blanca Rd)
 - FM765
- TxDOT Project Design Updates
 - FM 491 (Willacy County main drain)
 - Tower Rd (Hidalgo Count Pct. 2)
 - Valley View Road (Hidalgo Count Pct. 2)
 - Mile 1 West Road (Hidalgo Count Pct. 1)
 - Mile 17½ North Road
 - Loma Blanca Rd (Starr County Pct 2)
 - Minnesota Ave (City of Brownsville)
 - Brown Ave (Cameron County Pct. 1)
 - Stanger Rd (City of San Benito)

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

G. Cameron County RMA Project Status Report

Pete Sepulveda provided updates on the following projects. Detailed information within the agenda packet.

- Veterans POV Expansion
- SH 550 Gap 2 Project
- East Loop – International Trade Corridor
- Flor de Mayo Bridge
- Free Trade Bridge
- Old Alice Rd
- Dana Avenue
- FM 509
- FM 509 - FM 508
- FM 1846 Williams Road
- SH104
- Harlingen Rail Improvements
- S. Parallel Corridor Phase III
- West Blvd Roadway
- U.S. 281 Connector
- Whipple Road
- Outer Parkway
- Morrison Road
- FM 1847
- Los Fresnos Hike & Bike Trail
- Stenger Road Sidewalk Improvements
- Primera Road Sidewalk Improvements
- North Cameron County Rail Safety and Reutilization Project
- SH 48 Master Plan
- SH 550 DCs from Brownsville
- U.S. 77 -I69E Plan

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

H. Hidalgo County RMA Project Status Report

Ramon Navarro initiated the reporting by advising the board that the HCRMA has a new Chairman re-appointed by the governor, Mr. Roberto Lozano.

Mr. Navarro also provided updates on the following projects. Detailed information within the agenda packet.

- Interstate in Hidalgo County (Loop)
- Overweight / Oversize Corridor
- Total Permits issues and funds collected
- 365 Toll Project
- Wetland Mitigation Site
- 365 Tollway Collection System Installation

I. Transit Project Status Report

Sandy Philips provided updates on Transit Projects. Detailed information within the agenda packet.

- All agency transit reports
 - Brownsville Metro
 - Island Metro
 - Metro McAllen
 - Valley Metro
- Statistics for B-Metro
- Jose Colunga Bus Yard Rehab Project
- Metro McAllen
- Valley Metro
- LRGVDC Valley Metro Get the Vote out initiative
- LRGVDC – Valley Metro Services Expansion Project

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

VI) OTHER BUSINESS (OLD OR NEW)

Next Transportation Policy meeting would be held on December 4th, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the RGVMPPO TPB Members, Chairman David Fuentes called the meeting adjourned at 3:20pm.

ATTEST:



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