

MINUTES

Meeting of the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RGV MPO) Transportation Policy Board

Wednesday, September, 30 2020
at
1:30 pm
Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting

Presiding: Chairman Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez (Mayor, City of Pharr)

I. Call to Order

Chairman Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez called the meeting to order at 1:30PM, a quorum was established. The Rio Grande Valley MPO Transportation Policy Board Meeting was held via Microsoft Teams with members present at the LRGVDC Ken Jones Executive Board Room, 301 W. Railroad, Weslaco, Hidalgo County, Texas.

II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken, and present were representatives from each respective entity and a quorum was declared.

Members Present:	
Entity	Individual
City of Pharr	Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez (Chairman) Com. Eleazar Guajardo – Alternate
Cameron County	Judge Eddie Treviño, Jr. (Vice Chairman) Com. David A. Garza (Alternate)
Hidalgo County	Com. Eddie Cantu (Designee) Com. David Fuentes (Alternate)
City of Brownsville	Mayor Trey Mendez (Designee) Nurith Galonsky-Pinana (Alternate)
City of McAllen	Mayor Jim Darling (Designee) Roy Rodriguez (City Manager) Alternate
City of Edinburg	Mayor Ricard Molina (Designee) Comm. David White (Alternate)
City of Mission	Mayor Armando O’Caña (Designee) Comm. Jessica Ortega-Ochoa (Alternate)
City of Harlingen	Mayor Chris Boswell (Designee) Dan Serna (City Manager) Alternate
City of San Benito	Mayor Benjamin Gomez - Designee Manuel De La Rosa (Alternate)
Cameron County RMA	Frank Parker, Jr. (Designee) Arturo A. Nelson (Alternate)
Hidalgo County RMA	S. David Deanda, Jr. (Designee) Ramon Navarro, V (Proxyc)
Valley Metro	Tom Logan (Designee) Frank Jaramillo (Alternate)
TxDOT Pharr District	Pedro “Pete” Alvarez (Designee) Rex A. Costley (Alternate)
EX-OFFICIO	
RGV Partnership	Sergio Contreras (Designee)
Others Present:	
RGVMPO	Andrew Canon
LRGVDC	Manuel Cruz

III. Public Comment
NONE

Chairman Ambrosio Hernandez congratulated Judge Trevino and the Cameron County leadership on the award of funds. Vice Chairman Eddie Trevino noted they were blessed to receive notification through the Elections Department on receiving almost \$2M in private grant funding to assist with the upcoming Presidential Election. The funds will be utilized for infrastructure, poll workers, and safety equipment. Cameron County also received another \$250k, as the first recipient nationally from the Arnold Schwarzenegger Institute with the University of Southern California to supply and support two super centers. Chairman Ambrosio Hernandez wanted to make sure everyone heard the news of what the Cameron County leadership was undertaking and the success they were having to get out the vote, stating that it was something we need to make sure Washington and Austin knows that we do vote, we do matter and we care about our civic duty. We wish Cameron County a congratulations and best of luck.

IV. Presentation, Discussion and Action Items:

A. Consideration and Action on Resolution 2020-14 - National Highway System (NHS) Modification

Andrew Canon noted that Resolution 2020-14 on NHS Modification was in coordination with Federal Highways, who are going through a cleanup of roadway miles that they have on the NH System. This was a process that began last year when there were three separate MPOs who worked independently, but after the merger there were several exercises with TxDOT and with Federal Highway Administration. It did go before the Technical Advisory Committee and some recommendations were made to it but unanimously the document before the Board was approved. The Resolution is looking to remove some of the roadway segments from the NHS while maintaining the functional classification, which is an important aspect as it leaves the projects eligible for federal dollars.

Chairman Ambrosio Hernandez wanted to make sure Policy Board Members did have the opportunity to comment on this and ask questions before taking a motion. Vice Chairman Eddie Trevino wanted to clarify that this Resolution does not impact the region's projects or roads with regards to continuing to receive federal dollars and that it is more of an administrative cleanup that maybe should have been done some time back. Andrew Canon confirmed.

Commissioner Nurith Galonsky from the City of Brownsville motioned to approve Resolution 2020-14 on the NHS Modifications. The motion was seconded by Mayor Armando O'Caña from the City of Mission; and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.

B. Consideration and Action to Approve the Public Participation Plan Amendment (PPP)

Andrew Canon shared information regarding various public participation activities including YouTube videos, social media platforms, and bilingual information. The amendment met the 45 days required as part of the public involvement period. After presenting the amendments, no questions were asked.

Commissioner Ramon Navarro from the Hidalgo County Regional Mobility Authority motioned to approve Public Participation Plan Amendment (PPP). The motion was seconded by Mr. Pete Alvarez from the Texas Department of Transportation Pharr District; and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.

C. Consideration and Action to Approve FY2021-2022 TASA Project Call

Mr. Andrew Canon stated that staff had been working on the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program and the timeline for moving forward with the application call was approved by TAC. However, staff is asking the Policy Board for permission for postponement for the TASA program until early next calendar year. One reason for this was that TxDOT informed staff, after the Technical Advisory meeting, that some of the previous calls have to go through a revision and staff wants to make sure the amount for the call are accurate and true. Additionally, the Texas Transportation Commission acted on some revisions to the TASA program call and how projects have their eligibility. Minute Order #115852 was adopted by the TxDOT Transportation Commission on September 24, 2020 and includes the following TASA updates:

- Add Preliminary Engineering (PE) and Environmental Documentation as eligible in communities under 50,000 in population.
- Modifies local match options to include development credits and eliminates "in kind" match.
- For areas in the MPO planning area (MAB) but outside the federally designated Transportation Management Area (TMA) may submit applications to either the MPO or statewide program call, but not both concurrently.
- Requires MPO to include TxDOT's Direct Cost for PE and Construction oversight in the TASA awarding.
- Allows returned funds to address reasonable project overruns.

Andrew Canon advised the Policy Board that staff was seeking clarification from TxDOT for all the points being stated and further explained the bullet point updates from the minute order. Mr. Canon additionally stated that staff is working with TxDOT to determine whether there is a set formula for identifying the TxDOT direct expenditures as the MPO will now be required to include the costs with the TASA awards. Mr. Canon reiterated the request to push the program call back to early 2021 after they have received some guidance.

Mayor Armando O'Caña asked if communities over 50,000 would still be eligible to use TASA funds for PE and Environmental Documentation. Chairman Ambrosio Hernandez asked Mr. Pete Alvarez from TxDOT to assist with answering Mayor O'Caña's question. Mr. Pete Alvarez explained that the costs were not eligible before to communities that were smaller than 50,000 in population and so PE and Environmental would require a considerable contribution from their relatively smaller budgets. The amendment is an effort to help the communities that do not have those resources. Mayor O'Caña then asked Mr. Alvarez about the impact to communities larger than 50,000 in population and after some discussion Mr. Canon reiterated that it was due to the need to clarify the amendment updates that staff was asking for a delay of the program call.

City of Harlingen Mayor Chris Boswell motioned to table the FY2021-2022 TASA Project Call. The motion was seconded by City of Mission Mayor Armando O'Caña; and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.

D. Consideration and Action to Approve FY2020-2021 UPWP Amendment

Andrew Canon stated this was a standard operating procedure being done with the budget and that funds would be moved from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2021 for the contracts that the RGVMPo has through December 2020. Chairman Ambrosio Hernandez asked if the members had any questions and there were none.

City of Harlingen Mayor Chris Boswell motioned to table the FY2021-2022 TASA Project Call. The motion was seconded by Mr. Arturo Nelson from the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority; and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.

E. Consideration and Action to Approve the Changes for UTP Fiscal Constraint

Pete Alvarez stated that some changes have been made to the budgets as the TPP Division and TxDOT Administration asked the District to look at all the projects in the portfolio which were all in some phase of development. Mr. Alvarez continued that the projects in the top half of the shown table have construct authority at this time, but due to fiscal constraints FHWA has asked that the statewide portfolio be reviewed because the funding available through the UTP process has been significantly reduced which has put a lot of pressure on the development of the projects. The proposal is to move the projects in 'construct authority' to 'development authority' which allows for environmental, schematics and PS&E. Due to the funding not being available to go to construction at this time that is why the proposed on-system changes are being made. The projects will continue to be developed and become 'shovel ready' so that when the UTP funding is in a better position the projects can be placed back into 'construction authority'. Several projects in the bottom half of the shown table are in the 'development authority' and are proposed to move into 'plan authority' which allows for the feasibility studies and some of the initial environmental processes. However these projects would not be able to be cleared environmentally in 'plan authority'. These changes are to be fiscally constrained, but once the UTP update in 2022 determines the budget availability projects will be moved into the appropriate authority. Mr. Alvarez stated this was happening statewide and asked if there were any questions from the Policy Board. Chairman Ambrosio Hernandez asked for clarification that the projects were not being eliminated, but instead would be moved again when the budget gets better. Mr. Alvarez confirmed that that was correct and that projects would be moved as funding allowed.

Mr. Pete Alvarez from the Texas Department of Transportation Pharr District motioned to approve the changes. The motion was seconded by City of Mission Mayor Armando O'Caña; and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.

F. Discussion on Category 7 Projects Funding Workshop

Andrew Canon advised the Policy Board that this was an item from the Technical Advisory Committee seeking guidance from the Transportation Policy Board as to whether it was a wish from the Policy Board to hold a workshop with Policy Board members or to hold the workshop with Technical Advisory Committee members. Staff recommended that the Category 7 workshop occurred with the TAC members so that staff could convey the information to the elected officials on the Policy Board as a discussion item in the future. Chairman Ambrosio Hernandez asked if any Policy Board members had any questions or discussion regarding the workshop. Pete Alvarez stated that the TAC made a recommendation to the Policy Board as to whether or not to allow funding from different sources and asked if the workshop would cover this as he understood it had not been scheduled. Andrew Canon stated that there were plans for a workshop in Harlingen, but the facilities had been turned over for the pandemic testing needs, so TAC was requesting clarification about which members would be part of the workshop. City of Harlingen Mayor Chris Boswell stated that he had no issues with proceeding with the Staff's recommendations regarding the workshop. Pete Alvarez stated it would be appropriate for TAC to request guidance and some talking points or questions that they may have so that the Policy Board can prepare that guidance.

G. Consideration and Action for Resolution of Support for Proposed Mission/Madero – Reynosa International Border Crossing

Andrew Canon stated that the City of Mission Mayor Armando O'Caña was requesting that the Policy Board consider and approve a Resolution of Support for a future rail bridge in the Mission area. Mayor Armando O'Caña then addressed the Policy Board and shared that, on January the 4th of 2021, the City of Mission was going to formally submit to the President of the United States a request for an extension of the Presidential permit that was issued in the 1970s to the City of Mission. The City of Mission would like to include in the packet to the President a Resolution of Support for a 10-year extension. With the current working timeline, the plan is to begin construction in 2025 and complete the project in 2027, within the 10-year extension. The City Council has requested five different studies to include environmental studies for both the U.S. and Mexican sides, feasibility study on the Mexican side, and the traffic studies for both sides. Bids are closing for a professional consultant for the mentioned studies. Mayor O'Caña then asked if the Policy Board members had any questions for him. Chairman Ambrosio Hernandez stated that he had no issues with the request and expressed that he was delighted for the City of Mission as there was plenty of work to be done.

City of McAllen Mayor Jim Darling motioned to approve the Resolution as presented. The motion was seconded by City of Harlingen Mayor Chris Boswell; and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.

V. RGVMPo Staff Report and Updates

A. Director Update

- Announces of New RGVMPo Staff

Andrew Canon was happy to announce that the RGVMPo had two new staff, Manzanares and Eva Garcia. Mr. Canon stated that Natalie is new to the planning world and some members may be familiar with Eva as she has worked diligently on the Caracara Trails and many other bike/ped facilities in the Cameron County area, so we are excited about her integrating this into a regional system in the future.

- Recommend combining the November/December Technical Committee Meeting November 19, 2020

- Recommend combining the November / December Policy meetings for December 10, 2020

Andrew Canon reminded the Board that the next meeting will be Wednesday, October 28th at 1:30pm, and that the Board did approve moving the TAC meeting to November 19th and the Policy Board will be a joint meeting November 10th.

- RGVMPPO Executive Director Re-Appointment to Border Trade Advisory Committee (BTAC)

Mr. Canon included a letter from the Secretary of State a re-appointment to the Border Trade Advisory Committee (BTAC).

B. Financial Update

Andrew Canon stated that as to date the RGVMPPO has spent a total of \$1,098,293.42, approximately 60% of the budget. Mr. Canon stated that the number will change and go up now that the Board has approved the shifting of funds from 2020 to 2021.

VI. Status Report

A. TxDOT Project Status Reports (Action Taken As Required)

Ricardo Bravo presented the September 2020 construction update. Mr. Bravo stated that the US 83 Relief Route Phase II is 27% complete with the estimated completion time of August 2023. Mr. Bravo shared several photos of the contractor working on the US 84 project from different angles.

Mr. Bravo stated that Mr. Carlos Caballos would present the San Benito area office projects. Mr. Caballos stated that the first project being presented was the Spur 54 project in Harlingen for construction and upgrade of a non-freeway road. The project is approximately 81% complete with the estimated completion date of November 2020.

Mr. Caballos then provided an update on the I-69E Pedestrian Bridge. The project is about 88% complete with the estimated completion date of September 2020. Mr. Caballos then asked if there were any questions, though the Policy Board had none.

B. Cameron County RMA

Pete Sepulveda stated that the expansion of the Veteran's Bridge was in the process of negotiating a final donation/acceptance agreement with CBP and GSA. That should be in place in a couple of weeks and then the CCRMA will coordinate a letting date with TxDOT Pharr District. Mr. Sepulveda then stated the SH 550 GAP 2 Project was the last remaining gap to have an interstate highway from Olmito to the Port of Brownsville. A consultant is updating the design to ensure that it meets interstate standards – the project is fully funded. The East Loop project will become a new overweight corridor from the Veteran's Bridge to the Port of Brownsville on the southside. The CCRMA is developing documents in-house and will continue working with TxDOT Pharr District office, IBWC, and USFWS. Mr. Sepulveda presented an update on the Old Alice Road project, which will connect Los Fresnos with the City of Brownsville. A virtual public meeting was held and now the CCRMA is proceeding to complete the environmental document, the ROW is in place and the design is about 30% complete and the project is fully funded. Mr. Sepulveda then stated the West Rail Trail is on the abandoned Union Pacific rail right-of-way. The CCRMA is developing the environmental document in house and has partial funding for the project, the CCRMA will continue to work with the RGVMPPO Staff to secure additional funding. Mr. Sepulveda continued to explain that the West Blvd. project is the roadway component to the West Rail Trail and that the environmental work was in-house. The CCRMA is working with the TxDOT District Office, RGVMPPO Staff and Federal Highway Administration on getting a functional classification to proceed with the project. Mr. Sepulveda explained Whipple Road, in Los Fresnos, recently had a kick-off meeting with TxDOT and the consultant to develop various typical sections that may be presented to the County and Los Fresnos. Mr. Sepulveda stated the Dana Road project is in the development phase and FM 509 has a couple of pending issues that the CCRMA is working on with the Pharr District Office. They are hoping to complete the consultant selection process to move forward with the project. Mr. Sepulveda shared that the CCRMA continues to look at alternative analysis for Morrison Road after some challenges. The CCRMA is working with the local drainage district and City of Brownsville to proceed with the project. He also stated the U.S. 281 Connector is in the planning stages. Mr. Sepulveda then discussed the U.S. 77/ I-69E Plan, explaining that the 2021 UTP, approved by the Texas Transportation Commission, had a combination of \$392M in projects between the Pharr District and Corpus Christi District. In combination with U.S. 281 funding, \$478M, the region would be close to having what is needed for both segments to become Interstate standard highways. The CCRMA will continue to work on the projects and hopes there will be support in the next UTP for the two segments to become Interstate standard highways.

Chairman Ambrosio Hernandez asked Mr. Sepulveda how long the overweight corridor is and Mr. Sepulveda stated the overweight corridor, the East Loop is about 12 miles. There were no further questions.

C. Hidalgo County RMA

Ramon Navarro, the Construction Engineer with the Hidalgo County Regional Mobility Authority shared the approval of the UTP by the Texas Transportation Commission and that it brought a lot of the regional projects closer to fruition. Mr. Navarro acknowledged Mr. Andrew Canon for prominently representing the region on the Border Trade Advisory Committee.

On the 365 TOLL project, Mr. Navarro explained that the project was pending a second financial assistance agreement. The HCRMA is working on closing agreements and is actively pursuing a 42-month construction period through an April 2021 letting. On the IBTC project, Mr. Navarro explained the HCRMA was wrapping up the efforts for environmental concerns including a noise study. There is a forecasted letting date of June 2021, pending environmental clearance. Regarding the West Loop project, the HCRMA entered into an interlocal agreement with the City of Mission and are pending project proposals for another international crossing. Mr. Navarro additionally explained the HCRMA is seeing a 9.3% rise in overweight permits and construction economics remain steady.

D. Regional Transit (Metro)

Frank Jaramillo provided a regional transit report on behalf of four transit providers operating in the Rio Grande Valley. Mr. Jaramillo stated Brownsville Metro saw the top three routes averaging 4,100 passengers in the past month, reflecting that ridership is down for all metro services due to the pandemic. Additionally, the Eastside Bus Transfer Station project will include a park and ride. The project to improve bus stop safety and comfort will impact approximately 54 existing bus stops. The project is being matched with CDBG funding dollars. The SPI Metro is seeing similar reduction in ridership, as is Metro McAllen and Valley Metro with the higher education service transit routes seeing the more significant reduction in ridership due to the campuses being closed. Mr. Jaramillo additionally shared the Edinburg Transit Terminal recently held their ribbon-cutting celebration that highlighted the many amenities of the project. RGV Metro Express consists of three redline routes as well as a blue line for enhanced access to rural customers. Mr. Jaramillo thanked all involved partners that work together to make the RGV Metro Express successful. Mr. Jaramillo additionally shared that the expansion of a rural bus fleet was recently completed and includes 12 new TYPE II and TYPE XI units.

New or Unfinished Business Adjournment

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Ambrosio "Amos" Hernandez called for a motion to adjourn at 2:29 PM. *Tom Logan (Valley Metro) made a motion to adjourn. Pete Alvarez (TxDOT Pharr Dist.) seconded the motion; and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.*

ATTEST:



RGVMPO POLICY COMMITTEE
(TPB) VICE CHAIRMAN