

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

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 At 9:30 am

## Microsoft Teams Meeting MINUTES

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

### I. Call to Order

Chairman Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez called the meeting to order at 9:41 AM, a quorum was established. The Rio Grande Valley MPO Policy Board Meeting was held at the Pharr Event Center located at 3000 N. Cage Blvd, Pharr, Texas and Microsoft Teams Virtual with members present.

### II. Roll Call

Roll call was taken, and present were representatives from each respective entity:

<b>Members Present:</b>	
<b>Entity</b>	<b>Individual</b>
City of Pharr	Chairman Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez
Cameron County	Judge Eddie Treviño, Jr. (Vice Chairman)
Hidalgo County	Comm. Eddie Cantu
City of Brownsville	Mayor Trey Mendez
City of McAllen	Mayor Jim Darling
City of Edinburg	Mayor Richard Molina
City of Mission	Mayor Armando O’Caña
City of Harlingen	Mayor Chris Boswell
City of San Benito	Mayor Ricardo “Rick” Guerra (ABSENT)
Cameron County RMA	Frank Parker, Jr.
Hidalgo County RMA	David Deanda, Jr. (Designee)
Valley Metro	Tom Logan
TxDOT Pharr District	Pedro “Pete” Alvarez
<b>GUEST</b>	
<b>Texas Secretary of State</b>	Ruth R. Hughs
<b>City of Roma</b>	Mayor Jaime Escobar, Jr.
<b>City of Roma</b>	Alejandro Barrera
<b>Rio Grande City</b>	Noe Castillo
<b>Rio Grande City</b>	Mayor Joel Villarreal
<b>EX-OFFICIO</b>	
RGV Partnership	Sergio Contreras
LRGVDC	Manuel Cruz
<b>Others Present:</b>	
RGVMPO	Andrew Canon
RGVMPO	Staff

### III. Public Comment

Mayor Hernandez welcome Policy Mayors and guests to the first in person meeting, since COVID-19 last year in April 2020. Mayor Hernandez also welcome Guest Speaker “**Texas Secretary of State Ruth R. Hughs**”.

Mr. Canon made the introduction as follows for Guest Speaker Texas Secretary of State Ruth R. Hughs - Texas Secretary of State Ruth R. Hughs is one of six state officials named by the Texas Constitution to form the Executive Department of the State. In addition to serving as Texas’ Chief Elections Officer, Secretary Hughs is also senior advisor and liaison to the Governor for Border and Mexican Affairs and is the state’s Chief International Protocol Officer.

Texas Secretary of State Ruth Hughs gave a brief update on her role as the Texas Secretary of State and provided an update on the Border Trade Advisory Committee (BTAC) meeting of 2020. The focus of the BTAC is to bring together stakeholders

from throughout the Texas-Mexico border region to advance initiatives to address challenges related to international trade with Mexico. In her capacity as Texas' Border Commerce Coordinator, the Secretary works closely in conjunction with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and Committee members to discuss strategies to better facilitate cross-border trade, improve transportation infrastructure and cargo processing, and increase coordination with public officials in Mexico.

Secretary Hughs provided a summary on the BTMP needs, challenges, opportunities, and funding strategies, such as public-private partnerships, to move people and goods more quickly and efficiently across Texas' 28 border crossings. It is estimated that the Rio Grande Valley will receive more than \$11 billion to address the needs of the region. The Texas-Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan (BTMP), is designed to identify transportation infrastructure challenges, solicit feedback from stakeholders throughout the border region, and implement long-term strategies for continuing to facilitate cross-border trade.

Secretary Hughs concluded her presentation by letting Policy Board Members know that she is committed to ensuring that she can be the voice for RGVMPPO's communities in Austin and looks forward to additional visits to our border communities to further strengthen the relationships, as she continues to seek feedback and input on how she can better serve RGVMPPO."

Mayor Hernandez thank Secretary Hughs for her visit and attending the Policy Board meeting and for everything she continues to do for the RGVMPPO.

#### **IV. Presentation, Discussion and Action Items:**

##### **A. Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes From: March 31, 2021**

*Chairman Hernandez asked if there were any corrections to the minutes of March 31, 2021. No corrections were noted to the minutes of March 31, 2021. Mayor Molina (City of Edinburg) made a motion to approve the minutes of March 31, 2021; as presented by staff. The motion was seconded by Mayor O'Caña (City of Mission); and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.*

##### **B. Discussion and Possible Action on Starr County Merger**

Andrew is asking Policy Board members to consider and approve where appropriate Resolutions from the Starr County which included (Starr County, City of Rio Grande, City of La Grulla, City of Roma, and City of Escobares) the Annexation area into the Rio Grande Valley MPO. Previous discussion had been held with Mayor O'Caña, County Starr Judge Eloy Vera and staff regarding possible merger. This proposed MAB Expansion is based on the smooth of the current UAB following census blocks and block group (MAB Map Attached).

Several Mayors from Rio Grande City and Roma were present and gave a brief appreciation message to Policy Board present for possible annexation of their cities into the Rio Grande Valley MPO.

After some discussion on this item, the Mr. Deanda (HCRMA) made a motion to recommend approval of the Starr County Merger and the updated MAB Map as presented by staff. The motion was seconded by Mr. Logan (Valley Metro); and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.

##### **C. Discussion and Possible Action on MAB Expansion Resolution 2021-07 to Include Starr County**

Mr. Canon presented resolutions from Star County which included (Rio Grande City, La Grulla, City of Roma; and City of Escobares) in support for the Policy Board to consider including the urbanized areas of Starr County as part of the RGVMPPO Metropolitan Area Boundary (MAB). Starr County and Rio Grande City each passed resolutions supporting the idea of merging into the RGV MPO. It is moving forward in a very positive light, the idea of bringing them in for a seamless transportation system all the way from Starr County to Brownsville. So, we are very excited about the possibility having Starr County in the group and what it would provide "a seamless planning process for us going west."

Staff concluded by letting Policy Board members know that this proposed MAB expansion is based on the smoothing of the current UAB following census block and block groups.

Both Mayors from the Cities of Roma and Rio Grande City gave a brief introduction before the RGVMPPO Policy Board and spoke in support of Starr County being admitted into the organization.

Mayor Escobar (City of Roma) noted that, "It is a pleasure and just happy to be considered part of the RGVMPO. It is a big step for Starr County, and we humbly ask that Starr County be considered part of the RGVMPO and thank the Policy Board for this opportunity.

Mayor Villarreal noted that "There is no doubt that the Rio Grande Valley has forged tremendous growth, prosperity and success over the last several years and this is something that benefits "Rio Grande City, the cities of Roma, La Grulla, Escobares and certainly Starr County," It gives me great pleasure to hear the narrative that is being promoted here today as far as what the Rio Grande Valley as a whole represents, and to have a unified and resounding voice that resonates in Washington, D.C., and Austin, Texas, particularly over the last several months."

We are gradually becoming the green energy capital of Texas. We have 11 international ports of entry, billions of dollars in trade, any destination anywhere USA, we certainly have first rate hospitals and schools, we have a strong, young workforce, we have space exploration now as well. So, it gives me, again, great pleasure to hear today that narrative that all of us are promoting, again, thank you for your consideration of Starr County as part of this RGVMPO,

Chairman Hernandez responded, we are honored to have you consider us, working together with your beautiful county and your great cities, to add to our entity as well. "I do want to give credit to Mayor O'Caña for meeting with the Starr County Judge and for coordinating this and putting it together and seeing the bigger vision.

Pete Alvarez, the Pharr District engineer for TxDOT, said including Starr County will help the RGV MPO take a more regional approach. "It is about partnering; it is about working together as one. We have identified multiple projects that will connect... most of the time when you think of the Valley you think of a connection north-south, along 281, 77. But, we need to be thinking east-west as well. That is Interstate 2, US 83, and so as we move forward, from a planning perspective, this will enable us to be able to carry on roadway systems that start in Cameron County, go through Hidalgo County, and ultimately will touch Starr County, and vice versa." Mr. Alvarez said there is a lot more truck movement between Laredo and the Valley these days. "So, we have looked at expanding roadways such as US 83 to four-lane divided highways. When it comes to the area, what we are looking at here is expanding the planning area. We are talking about connectivity, regionalization, mobilization. And so, we want to make sure that continues to happen, moving forward. And I think that Starr County being incorporated into the RGVMPO really gives us a greater voice as was previously mentioned and we are excited for the opportunity."

Edinburg Mayor Richard Molina pointed out that by including Starr County, the RGVMPO adds 61,000 people to its catchment area.

Chairman Hernandez concluded and praised the Policy Board on how the group's footprint is being expanded, thanks to the inclusion of Starr County and South Padre Island.

**No further discussion took place on this item, Mayor Boswell (City of Harlingen) made a motion to approve the MAB Expansion Resolution 2021-07 to Include Starr County as presented by staff. The motion was seconded by Mayor Medina (City of Edinburg); and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

**D. Discussion and Possible Action on Revising the RGVMPO Bylaws**

Andrew informed Policy Members present, that TAC members at their meeting recommended approval of the RGVMPO Bylaws to include the Annexation of Starr County, the RGVMPO Bylaws have been updated in Red. Weighed votes after including Starr County, will be 31 to 32 as revised on Page 2 of the Bylaws. (See Attachment). Also, under Section 1.06 of the Technical Advisory Committee, Starr County will have TAC Representation on this Committee (TAC).

Mayor Boswell praised the inclusion of Starr County in the RGVMPO but noted that the "**RE-DESIGNATION AGREEMENT FOR MPO CONSOLIDATION**" still needs to be revised to include amended to reconstitute the makeup of the board of directors, "Starr County" request and approved by Governor Abbott.

**Staff acknowledged Mayor Boswells' request and statement and agreed that the Re-Designation Agreement would be provided as required.**

**No further discussion took place on this item, Mayor Boswell (City of Harlingen) made a motion to approve the Revised Bylaws contingency to approval of the Re-Designation Agreement for MPO Consolidation and approved by Governor Abbott. The motion was seconded by Mayor Molina (City of Edinburg); and upon a**

vote, the motion passed unanimously.

**E. Discussion and Possible Action on FY2021-2022 TASA Program Call for Projects**

Eva Garcia, Bike/Ped Program Coordinator gave a brief update on the FY2021-2022 TASA Call for Projects. Approximately \$2.3M will be available for projects, with \$2.07M (90%) for construction and \$230,000 (10%) for planning. The following Program Timeline was presented to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee at their April 7, 2021 Meeting.

RGVMPO Staff presented the proposed timeline for your attention, feedback, and potential approval.

- April – BPAC reviews revised Program Call documents and approves activity timeline;
- May – FY2021-2022 TASA Program Call for Projects Workshop, May 25<sup>th</sup> at 1:30PM;
- June - July – Call for Projects opens June 1st and closes July 30<sup>th</sup> at 5:00p.m.;
- August – BPAC reviews, evaluates and scores submitted project applications-
- September – TAC and TPB will review the scored submitted projects and take action to award selected projects with TASA funding;
- October – 30-day public involvement period for November 2021 STIP Revisions; and
- November – Selected projects will be included in the November 2021 STIP Revision

No further discussion took place on this item, Vice Chairman Judge Trevino (Cameron County) made a motion to approve the FY2021-2022 TASA Program Call for Projects “Timeline” as presented by Staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cantu (Hidalgo County); and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.

**F. Discussion and Possible Action on the New Logo for RGVMPO**

Staff noted that on February 24, 2021 a one-page informational sheet was sent to the schools’ department chairs for dissemination to the Graphic Design Students Department. Through the information sheet, students were invited to create and submit, by April 1st, logo concepts that could be presented and considered by the TAC and Policy Board. The selected design would receive a \$100 gift card. However, to date, no submittals have been received. Mr. Cruz reached out to Staff letting them know that they had an individual that could re-design the logo (See Attachment). Staff provided four (4) different logos to Policy-member present for their review and consideration.

After some discussion on this item, it was the consensus of the Policy Board to re-do the logo with minimal colors and simplify the logo and remove the Lower Rio Grande Development Council rim and present it again at the next Policy Board meeting for approval.

**G. Discussion on RGV Traffic Safety Initiative**

Eva gave a brief background on this Traffic Safety Initiative as follows: On November 6, 2020, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) posted the FY 2022 Request for Proposals (RFP) notice for projects that support the targets and strategies of its Traffic Safety Program to reduce the number of motor vehicle related crashes, injuries and fatalities in Texas. At the request of the RGVMPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), the funding constraints and requirements were presented by RGVMPO Staff and discussed with BPAC Members at the December 2020 BPAC meeting.

Update: Motivated to implement the recommendations from the recently adopted RGVMPO Active Transportation Plan, and to further support the goals of the Texas Highway Safety Plan and the USDOT Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, RGVMPO Staff developed and submitted a grant application on January 6, 2021. The RGV Traffic Safety Initiative proposes a comprehensive approach to addressing traffic safety as a region, and the RGVMPO has been awarded to receive \$41,500.00 to fund the Initiative’s objectives and activities by Texas Transportation Commission. **Policy Board members acknowledged staff report as presented. No discussion took place on this item.**

**V. RGVMPO Executive Directors Reports and Updates**

**A. Directors Update**

- **New Office Location** – Staff noted that both office locations in Hidalgo and Cameron County are still pending final approval from FHWA and PPP. Currently RGVMPO have a total of twelve (12) employees, which some are using

tables to work from, due to not having enough office space. No final date is confirmed, still waiting on PPP for final approval.

- Mayor Hernandez asked TxDOT to contact PPP and assist the RGVMPD Director with this as soon as able.
- **Recognition of Policy Board Member** - Staff noted that this recognition was for Mayor Jim Darling, but Mayor Darling will be delivering the State of the City Address and was not available during this Policy Meeting. This is also his last year as Mayor for the City of McAllen. Recognition plaque for Mayor Darling will be presented at the next Policy Meeting.

**B. Financial Update**

Staff provided the Financial Summary to members present; staff noted budget continues to be (96%) under budget. **(Report filed with RGVTPB Packet)**

**VI. Status Report**

**A. TxDOT Project Status Report (Action Taken as Required)**

Both Dan Perales and Roberto Jimenez with (TxDOT) provided an updated presentation Via Teams on current projects and activities within the Hidalgo and Cameron Counties. All projects are continuing to move forward as scheduled. **(Report filed with RGVTPB Packet)**

**B. Cameron County RMA**

Mr. Sepulveda (Cameron County RMA) provided an updated presentation on projects that are currently within the Cameron County RMA. All projects continue to move forward as expected. **(Report filed with RGVTPB Packet)**

**C. Hidalgo County RMA**

Mr. Navarro provided an updated presentation on projects that are currently within the Hidalgo County RMA. All projects are continuing to move forward. **(Report filed with RGVTPB Packet)**

**D. Regional Transit (Metro)**

Frank Jaramillo for Valley Metro provided an updated report Via Teams for all (3) Three Transit Providers Via Teams that are currently within the Hidalgo/Cameron Regions. Details values on ridership could be found within the RGVTPB Packet. **(Report filed with RGVTPB Packet)**

**VII. New or Unfinished Business**

- Mayor Hernandez invited Policy members for Photo-ups with Texas Secretary State Ruth Hughs.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

*No further items were discussed, Chairman Hernandez called for a motion to adjourn at 11:25 AM. Mayor Molina (City of Edinburg) made a motion to adjourn. Mayor O'Caña (City of Mission) second the motion; and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.*

ATTEST:

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

6/17/2021