

Meeting of the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
RGVMPO POLICY BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, April 5, 2023 – 1:30 PM

MINUTES

Presiding: Vice Chairman – Commissioner David L. Fuentes. (Hidalgo County)

I) Call to Order

Vice-Chairman Commissioner David L. Fuentes called the Transportation Policy Board meeting to order at 1:31 P.M, 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) Com. David Garza (Alternate) - PRESENT
Hidalgo County	Comm. David L. Fuentes (Vice-Chairman) PRESENT Comm. Ellie Torres (Alternate)
Starr County	Judge Eloy Vera (Designee) Reyna Guerra Proxy – PRESENT
City of Brownsville	Mayor Trey Mendez (Designee) PRESENT Nurith Galonsky-Pinana (Alternate)
City of Edinburg	Mayor Ramiro Garza (Designee) - PRESENT Comm. Daniel “Dan” Diaz (Alternate)
City of Harlingen	Mayor Norma Sepulveda (Designee) – PRESENT Gabriel Gonzalez (Alternate)
City of McAllen	Mayor Javier Villalobos (Designee) Roel “Roy” Rodriguez (Alternate) – PRESENT
City of Mission	Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza (Designee) – PRESENT Comm. Jessica Ortega- Ochoa (Alternate)
City of Pharr	Mayor Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez (Designee) Comm. Daniel Chavez (Alternate) – 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) – PRESENT Ramon Navarro, V. (Proxy)
Valley Metro	Rick Guerra (Designee) - PRESENT Nancy Sanchez (Alternate)
TxDOT Pharr District	Pedro “Pete” Alvarez (Designee) - PRESENT Rex A. Costley (Alternate)
EX-OFFICIO	
RGV Partnership	Daniel Silva
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 March 1, 2023

Judge Trevino Chairman (Cameron County) asked if there were any corrections to the Policy minutes of March 1, 2023.

No corrections were noted to the minutes of March 1, 2023. Motion to approve was made by Starr County Reyna Guerra and was seconded by TxDOT Pedro "Pete" Alvarez. The item was unanimously approved.

2. Discussion on Draft 2024 UTP Allocation for Category 7 Funding

Rudy Zamora Jr. presented the Draft 2024 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) planning targets shared with TxDOT Districts & MPO staff. Mr. Zamora also highlighted that Category 7 – Metropolitan Mobility and Rehabilitation funds are listed with a slight increase over a ten-year span. As Mr Zamora reviewed the Programming CAT 7 summary chart, he pointed out that the negative 76.66M is based off the 2024 draft UTP allocation and the total approved funding. Mr Zamora reviewed the numbers on the summary chart and conveyed that the negative balance is an unobligated amount.

Mr. Zamora asked for any questions or comments before proceeding to the next page.

TxDOT's Pedro "Pete" Alvarez commented that he wanted to be clear that the number in the green represents projects that the in the mill but are not quite ready for letting, therefore a federal approval has not been received. At this point Mr. Zamora confirmed the comment.

Mayor of Edinburg Ramiro Garza asked if the negative balance is something normal/customary based on the allocation of the funds. Mr. Zamora provided a comparison between the previous year and the current year and a review of how the resulting negative 76.66M.

Andrew Canon added to the answer to Mayor Ramiro Garza's question stating that during his tenure he does not remember carrying about such a large negative balance in category 7, it was the case in category 2 without RMA's.

TxDOT's Pedro "Pete" Alvarez asked to confirm that we are overprogrammed, once all this gets approved, we are overprogrammed seventy-six point six six million. Andrew Canon agreed but also informed that there is an allocation in year 2032 and the board can approve to allocate the projects and that will bring up the negative balance to 100 million. He added the board can approve the negative balance and move forward without any problems, but where it becomes a problematic is that as we start to advance projects to our TIP years, we have projects would want to move in the TIP that have no real money identified with them because they were brought in and carried a negative balance. And that's where MPO staff is a little perplexed about what would be done as we get closer in the years to those projects. Andrew Canon summarized the problem by stating that we can allocate the year 2032 by taking 30 million dollars and place them in one or two projects without any problems. But as we advance, there's not actually any money in there because we are carrying a negative balance in the checkbook. So, we would not be able to move it to the TIP years for the advancements of projects and federal highways would not our TIP as those projects advance.

TxDOT's Pedro "Pete" Alvarez restated that we are over programmed we need to figure out a way to make sure that we get closer to the actual amount available.

Andrew Canon reminded the board that part of the negative balance is what the board approved to be allocated to Harlingen San Benito area and its now 17 million dollars agreed under spend not because San Benito Doesn't have any projects at moment ready to go forward. Meetings with Harlingen and San Benito have been done and we know that there are projects that are going to be coming up in the works but once they get projects ready, that's their suballocation by sub region of funding that we need to keep them holding the policy board las year when we did this, we agreed that we would do that. Therefore, that is seventeen million dollars which is part of the negative balance.

Vice Chairman Commissioner David L. Fuentes commented that everyone agrees that it is a large negative number, and it continues to grow. He added that everyone can agree that we need to get projects shovel ready as quickly as possible or at least get them to letting. And part of making things happen is the quarterly updates, which is an accountability mechanism for releasing money as we see projects advancing or not advancing. He reiterated that the obligation of the board is to get the projects shovel ready and obligated to prevent the negative number from continuing growing. Furthermore, he added that we need to look at the scoring prospective because some grading numbers need to be a little

bit different for the purpose of accomplishments and milestones within project development. He added that that the scoring needs to be looked at with a fresh set of eyes to make sure that the assessments and ranking make sense. Vice Chairman Fuentes provided his own two examples. Two projects that are close to shovel ready, with AFA's, ROW assignment, a land that's getting purchased and the scoring is in the 30s. He should not be graded that low if he's a couple of years away from construction.

Vice Chairman Fuentes concluded that he wants to make sure that everyone agrees that the scoring and the metrics make sense so that the funds can be assigned properly. Consequently no one should be overly concerned if the funds are taken away when the projects are not being advanced. Regardless of leadership in the board and the local government changing we need to continue to advance projects otherwise it would be in a tough situation in the next legislative session.

Cameron County Commissioner David A. Garza asked about the impact of inflation on the projects contributing to the 76 million negative number, and if it is viable to continue with these projects. Andrew Canon addressed the question of inflationary rate stating that the MPO has an inflation rate that is put onto the projects that are compounded for the projects that are outside of the four-year window, and that inflationary rate has not kept up with real world measures and the MPO is mindful of it and always ready to find additional fundings when possible and feasible. But when the Budget is set as it is, it gives a little credence to why the policy board adopted a resolution that said, once a category 7 allocation is granted, it holds at that number. And part of that was to help motivate, when possible, some advancement of projects so that those external forces did not inflate the project so much that it became unreasonable for local government.

City of McAllen Manager Roel Rodriguez asked if we could confirm that there is not enough money for upcoming projects and how did the MPO ended up with a negative balance. Andrew Canon explained that some projects have been in the book as far back as 2019 that have not let and one of the factors affecting the negative balance started that there was already a negative balance approved by policy board before the current cycle started. Mr. Canon went ahead and reviewed the numbers on some of the projects that led to the current situation.

A conversation between Andrew Canon, Cameron County Commissioner Fuentes, TxDOT's Pedro "Pete" Alvarez, City of Edinburg Mayor Ramiro Garza, and Vice-Chairman David L Fuentes about the importance of advancing projects, spending funds, and the importance of the Policy Board doing/implementing something to move projects and or money as necessary. Additionally, agreeing that it is important to identify projects that are ready to go and relocate funding.

Vice Chairman confirmed that the item is only for informational purposes only and restated to the board the importance of relocating funds according to what would work or what the community needs.

TxDOT's Pete Alvarez reminded the board about the upcoming workshops to continue the process on the final decisions about projects. Andrew Canon provided an update on the Workshop status and schedule. Rudy Zamora noted that the MPO is currently under public involvement for the May quarterly revision cycle and there is the long range MTP on the website available for review as well as the short-range TIP. Mr. Zamora also provided a review of the latest public involvement events and schedule. He added that the UTP would be adopted in August and that there would be an August revision cycle.

After no additional questions or comments were presented Chairman Judge Trevino introduced item 3.

3. Local Transportation Planning Project

Fernando Cantu provided an update on calling for local transportation planning project. He highlighted that the deadline for the submittals was April 21, 2023, and since then 3 submittals were received

Project	Organization	Local Contribution	MPO Contribution
Weslaco SW Loop Planning Corridor/ Alignment Study	Hidalgo County Pct. 1 / City of Weslaco	\$62,500	\$187,500
Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2024-2050	RGVMPO		\$300,000
RGVMPO Passenger Rail Study	RGVMPO		\$250,000

Vice-Chairman asked about the total budget amount for the project. Mr. Cantu informed the board that it's an estimate of 700 to a million.

Vice-Chairman also asked about the deadline, Mr. Cantu advised that the deadline was April 1st and he provided a status of the current status of the process which will lead to the final approval by the board in June or July, 2023.

After no additional questions or comments were presented Chairman Judge Trevino introduced item 3.

4. Discussion of IJIA Infrastructure BIL and grants submitted by the RGMPO.

Javier Dominguez provided a presentation on the four grants that were submitted by the RGVMPPO during the funding period. Mr. Dominguez reviewed the grants awarded, not awarded and the ones pending.

Awarded

Texas Federal Land Access Program (TX FLAP)

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

Reconnecting Communities- Not Awarded

Pending

Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation

Areas of Persistent Poverty

Javier Dominguez thanked everyone that assisted and supported him and the MPO.

Mr. Dominguez provided the board with details about the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG). He highlighted that the deadline to submit a letter of intent is April 28, 2023, and the deadline to apply is towards the end of May. He added that if no one within Hidalgo County applies the money would be relocated to outside of the valley. He added that there are 3 deliverables due in the next 4 years. A Priority Climate Action Plan expected by March 2024, A Climate Action Plan expected in March 2025 and an update on both by 2027.

Vice Chairman asked about who was included in that MSA, Mr. Dominguez confirmed that is McAllen, Mission, and Edinburg.

Andrew Canon asked about the deadline to submit, and Mr. Dominguez confirmed that it is by April 28th.

Cameron County Commissioner David A. Garza asked about examples of what types of projects qualify for these types of funding. Mr. Dominguez stated that it could be traffic signalization and electrification.

After no additional questions or comments were presented Chairman Judge Trevino introduced item 5.

5. Border Master Plan

Item tabled-no action required.

V) Executive Session at 2:17

A. Personnel Matters Pursuant to Section 551-074 (1) to Deliberate the Appointment, Employment, Evaluation, Reassignment, Duties, Discipline, or Dismissal of a Public Officer or Employee

Motion to proceed to executive session made by City of Pharr's mayor Ambrosio Hernandez and was seconded by Starr County Reyna Guerra.

Motion to reconvene into Open Session was made by City of Mission's mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza and was seconded by San Benito's mayor Ricardo "Rick" Guerra.

B. Reconvene into Open Session for **NO ACTION** for Executive Session as Described above.

Reconvene into open session at 3:40PM

VI) **RGVMPO Executive Director's Report and Updates**

Andrew Cano confirmed that there is nothing critical that needs to be discussed in his report.

No action required.

VII) **Status Report – Vice-Chairman Commissioner David L Fuentes informed the board that the status reports would not be presented at this time. He added that if anyone has any questions and if anyone has any questions to reach out to staff accordingly.**

VIII) **New or Unfinished Business**

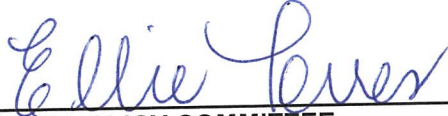
City of Edinburg Mayor Ramiro Garza Jr. invited everyone to the opening ceremony to the inauguration of a Vietnam Memorial Wall Replica taking place April 20th at Ebony Heights. Invites will be sent out to all board members.

LRGVDC , Manuel Cruz informed the board about the first COG retreat taking place from May 23rd to May 24th. More details will be send out.

IX) **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the RGVMPO TPB Members, Vice-Chairman commissioner David Fuentes called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was done by City of Mission's mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza and second by TxDot Pharr District Engineer Pedro "Pete" Alvarez. Motion carried unanimously.

ATTEST: _____


RGVMPO POLICY COMMITTEE
(TPB) VICE CHAIRMAN