

Meeting of the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
RGVMPO POLICY BOARD SPECIAL MEETING
Thursday, December 13, 2023 – 1:30 PM

MINUTES

Presiding: Chairman David L Fuentes (Hidalgo County)

I) Call to Order

Chairman David L Fuentes called the Transportation Policy Board meeting to order at 1:30 P.M., and a quorum was established. The TPB Meeting was held in person with members present.

II) Roll Call

RGVMPO TPB 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. David Garza (Alternate)
City of McAllen	Mayor Javier Villalobos (Designee) 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 Assistant City Manager JP Terrazas (Proxy)
City of Harlingen	Mayor Norma Sepulveda (Designee) - PRESENT Gabriel Gonzalez (Alternate)
City of Pharr	Mayor Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez (Designee) – ABSENT Comm. Daniel Chavez (Alternate)
Starr County	Judge Eloy Vera (Designee) Reyna Guerra Proxy – PRESENT
City of San Benito	Mayor Ricardo “Rick” Guerra (Designee) – PRESENT 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) - ABSENT Ramon Navarro, V. (Proxy)
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
GUEST	
Alliance Transportation Group	Ben Magallon
Others Present:	
RGVMPO	Luis Diaz
RGVMPO	Staff

III) PUBLIC COMMENT

Speaker: City of San Benito Police Chief Mario Perea.

Comment: Thanked each entity for the assistance provided to the City of San Benito during the latest events.

IV) ACTION & DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Approval of Minute(s) for October 25, 2023, and November 30, 2023

Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of October 25, 2023, and November 30, 2023.

No corrections were noted to the minutes of October 25, 2023, and November 30, 2023. Motion to approve by Reyna Guerra from Starr County and it was seconded by Pete Alvarez from TxDOT. The item was unanimously approved.

B. Metropolitan Transportation Plan – RFP Subcommittee Score and consultant selection

Fernando Cantu, RGVMPPO Transportation Planner III, provided an overview of the consultant selection process. He explained that RGVMPPO selectively outsources tasks that exceed their in-house capabilities or scope, and to ensure compliance with fiscal guidelines and regulations, they adhere to the procurement process established by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC), who serve as the fiscal agents of the MPO. On November 2nd, 2023, the subcommittee convened to evaluate the proposal submitted by Alliance Transportation Group for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Fernando Cantu informed the attendees that the resulting score from the evaluation was within the meeting packet.

Furthermore, Fernando Cantu requested approval for Alliance Transportation Group as the selected consultant based on the subcommittee's evaluation. He emphasized that when the subcommittee assessed Alliance Transportation Group, they received a high score of 8.35 out of 10, demonstrating their strong qualifications for the project. Therefore, it is the staff's recommendation to proceed with selecting Alliance Transportation Group, considering their reputable track record.

A motion was made to approve Alliance Transportation Group as the selected consultant for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, based on the staff's recommendation and the subcommittee's evaluation score of 8.35 out of 10. The motion was made by Pedro Alvarez with TxDot and it was seconded by Reyna Guerra with Starr County. Item passed unanimously.

C. Passenger Rail Feasibility Study - RFP Subcommittee Score and consultant selection

Fernando Cantu explained that RGVMPPO follows the procurement process established by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) for tasks that exceed their in-house capabilities or scope. The subcommittee evaluated proposals from AECOM and Triangle Railroad Holding Co. on November 2nd, and the meeting packet contained the evaluation score. Both the RGVMPPO staff and the TAC members recommended selecting AECOM as the consultant for the passenger rail feasibility study.

Chairman Fuentes opened the floor for questions and comments, and none were presented.

Reyna Guerra motioned to approve AECOM as the selected consultant, and Roy Rodriguez seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Weslaco, TX Southwest Loop Planning/Alignment Study – RFP Subcommittee Score and consultation selection.

Fernando Cantu explained that the RGVMPPO selectively outsources tasks that exceed their in-house capabilities or scope. He mentioned that to maintain compliance with fiscal guidelines and regulations, they adhere to the procurement process established by the LRGVDC, which serves as the fiscal agent of the MPO.

Fernando Cantu reported that on November 2nd, the subcommittee evaluated the singular proposal presented by TEDSI. He indicated that the resulting score is available in the packet. Fernando Cantu continued, stating that on November 30th, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) recommended reopening the Request for Proposals (RFP) for an additional 60 days to encourage broader participation and gather more comprehensive bids.

Chairman Fuentes informed the attendees that Hidalgo County Precinct One and the City of Weslaco are working on this project, and he has reached out to them to get their feedback. He confirmed that there are no issues.

Fernando Cantu recommended extending the RFP for 60 days, or the board's recommendation to proceed with TEDSI.

Chairman Fuentes asked for a motion from the attendees regarding the extension of the RFP.

Mayor Norie Gonzalez-Garza made a motion to extend the RFP, and Tom Logan seconded the motion. The motion passed.

V) PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Presentation of the RGVMPPO Resilience and Sustainability Analysis produced by ATG.

Javier Dominguez presented an update on the development of a Performance Management Framework for the RGVMPPO. He explained that a series of meetings, workshops, and staff interviews have been conducted to assess and evaluate the status of performance management work being done at the RGVMPPO and identify areas for improvement. Mr. Dominguez mentioned that the RGVMPPO is currently in contract with ATG for the development of this performance management framework. The framework aims to help the RGVMPPO address and comply with federal and state requirements regarding performance measures. He added that the attendees that the contract with ATG for the Performance Management Framework Study is scheduled to run through December 2023. He emphasized that this is the final deliverable for the study from ATG, which will allow for contract closeout. Mr. Dominguez introduced Ben Magallon from Alliance Transportation Group to provide a detailed presentation regarding the analysis that they produced.

Ben Magallon began the presentation by providing an overview of the final findings, strategies identified, and the content of the report. He emphasized the importance of resilience planning and how the report aims to address it.

Ben Magallon mentioned the guiding principles that structured the analysis and recommendations in the report. He highlighted the significant role of public engagement in the process and commended the RGVMPPO staff for their efforts in outreach and workshops.

Ben Magallon explained that the study examined various data related to network conditions, active transportation, transit, freight, evacuation routes, and more to assess regional quality of life and identify potential stressors and risks. He discussed the risk profiles developed using a theme of resilience analysis planning toolkit, including estimated annual losses and social vulnerabilities in different communities.

Ben Magallon mentioned that the study follows FHWA guidance for tech grant funding and is structured to support future grant applications. He touched on the cost-benefit analysis and the consideration of equity in the outcomes of resilience strategies.

Ben Magallon presented the mitigation measures and recommendations in the report, including graphical representations and funding opportunities. He introduced the Priority Investment Network, a tool that combines different data to assess resilience.

Ben Magallon mentioned that the report is approximately 200 pages long and is being developed for project closeout. He also suggested the possibility of forming a resilience task force.

Chairman Fuentes inquired about the practical use of the report moving forward and avoiding it sitting on the shelf.

Javier Dominguez explained that the plan includes getting feedback on projects based on the report, targeting grants, and identifying new initiatives. He mentioned the importance of ongoing conversations with partners and suggested modifying or adding to existing projects to make them grant-eligible.

No more questions or comments were expressed.

B. Discussion and update on Performance Management Framework Project with Alliance Transportation Group

Ben Magallon from ATG provided an overview of the project, explaining that ATG had won a bid in 2022 to perform a regionwide Resilience and Sustainability Analysis. He mentioned that ATG had conducted extensive research on natural disasters in the RGV Metropolitan Area Boundary and had produced several deliverables, including recommendations, an equity analysis, and "Cost-Benefit Analysis."

Ben Magallon emphasized that this presentation is the final deliverable for the study, allowing for contract closeout. He highlighted that the study assesses how planning and policy mechanisms impact the resiliency and sustainability of the community.

Ben Magallon mentioned that the report identifies both chronic and acute stressors experienced in the RGV and includes recommendations based on cost-benefit and equity analyses. He also noted that the report identifies possible grant opportunities and serves as data-driven research supporting the region's need for funding related to sustainability and resilience.

Chairman Fuentes thanked Mr. Magallon and opened the floor for questions.

Ramiro Garza Jr. inquired about the timeline for implementing the study's findings.

Luis Diaz responded, explaining that they are awaiting some documents to be received in their office. Once received, they will meet internally to incorporate the findings into their project scoring and tracking. Implementation is expected to start early in the coming year.

Chairman Fuentes asked if there were any other questions or comments, and none were presented.

C. Discussion and update on FM 509 Corridor Study with TEDSI

Eric Dietrich provided an overview of the study, explaining that the city of Harlingen had sought assistance for a corridor study to make informed decisions regarding alignment choices. He emphasized the importance of the study in evaluating and determining the most effective route and providing valuable insights to enhance planning and infrastructure development in the region.

Eric Dietrich mentioned that the RGVMPPO is presently engaged in a contract with TEDSI for the development of the FM 509 Corridor study. He highlighted that the comprehensive study includes planning services such as data collection analysis, preliminary drainage analysis, and traffic projections. The study's focus extends from US 281 to I-69E in Harlingen, Texas, with the aim of enhancing planning and infrastructure considerations for FM 509. Eric Dietrich noted that this presentation serves as the final presentation for contract closure. He mentioned that detailed information can be found within the agenda package, which was presented during the meeting by his colleagues.

D. 5310 Call for Projects

Eva Garcia explained that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides formula funding through the 5310 Program to states and designated recipients to address the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities. She mentioned that the RGVMPPO follows the LRGVDC's 5310 Program Management Plan (PMP), which outlines the process for administering, managing, programming, selecting, and overseeing the implementation of projects.

Eva Garcia informed the attendees that the RGVMPPO had opened the FY2024 Call for Projects for the 5310 Program on November 1st. She encouraged interested applicants to visit the RGVMPPO website to access the 5310 Program Guide, the 5310 Scoring Criteria, and the 5310 Application. Eva Garcia emphasized that applications should be submitted via email to info@rgvmppo.org no later than 5 PM on Wednesday, December 20, 2023.

Chairman Fuentes thanked Eva for the information and asked if there were any questions. With no questions from the attendees, Chairman Fuentes proceeded to the next agenda item.

E. Federal Functional Classification (FC) Post TxDOT Training Update

Luis Diaz explained the importance of federal legislation using functional classification in determining eligibility for funding under the Federal-aid program. He emphasized that transportation agencies describe roadway system performance, benchmarks, and targets by functional classification. He mentioned that as agencies move toward a more performance-based management approach, functional classification becomes increasingly important in setting expectations and measuring outcomes for preservation, mobility, and safety.

Luis Diaz referred to a 60-plus slide presentation within the agenda packet for more details about the training that was conducted. Chairman Fuentes thanked Luis for the update and opened the floor for questions.

Pete Alvarez raised a point about the need to consider the level of classification for individual roadways in the region, emphasizing the importance of having diverse classifications to qualify for federal dollars.

Chairman Fuentes agreed and stressed the necessity of functional classification for securing federal funding for construction projects.

Luis Diaz confirmed that they were coordinating with TPMP, TxDOT, and FHWA to analyze current submittals and address the need for a hierarchy of functionality in the network.

Chairman Fuentes commended the training program and suggested extending it to elected officials and representatives responsible for project presentations to enhance understanding and efficiency.

Luis Diaz acknowledged the suggestion and stated that they would continue developing the training program.

Chairman Fuentes concluded the discussion.

F. RGVMPO Executive Director's Report and Updates

Luis Diaz began by providing an update on the budget, mentioning that they are well below the expected expenditures for the fiscal year since it started in October. He reported that the actual expenditure so far is \$63,144.23, which is lower than the projected amount.

Luis also informed the members about ongoing amendments to the RGVMPO website. These changes are being made in preparation for an upcoming federal review by FHWA. The goal is to streamline the website, ensure all documents are up-to-date, and make information easier to find. FHWA has previously used the website for initial reviews, so these updates are essential for compliance. He assured the members that they would provide updates on the website changes soon.

Luis mentioned that the deadline for thoroughfare plan amendments is on the 21st, and they have received a couple of amendments. He emphasized that all amendments must be accompanied by an ordinance or resolution for support. The plan is to present these amendments to the county commissioners' courts for final approval, likely in February.

Lastly, Luis informed the members that they are currently in the public involvement phase for the MTP (Metropolitan Transportation Plan) and TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) as of the 11th. The public involvement period will close on January 11th. He mentioned that they already have a few locations for public involvement sessions.

Chairman Fuentes thanked Luis for the updates and open the floor for any comments or questions and none were presented.

G. TxDOT Project Status Report

TxDOT Pharr Area District Staff provided a detailed project status presentation. Katia Navarro presented a status report for projects in the Hidalgo County area. Yahaira Marroquin presented a status report for projects in the Cameron County area. Eric Ramirez presented a status report for TxDOT Project Design Updates.

Details for each area are included within the agenda packet.

VI) OTHER BUSINESS (OLD OR NEW)


- Luis Diaz and Manuel Cruz provided an update on the hiring process for the Executive Director position.
- Judge Eddie Trevino thanked everyone for the support during the presentation the day before in Austin, regarding the South Padre Island second access request.

VII) New or Unfinished Business

none

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the RGVMPO TPB Members, Chairman Commissioner David L. Fuentes called the meeting adjourned at 2:48pm.

ATTEST: 

 RGVMPO POLICY COMMITTEE
 (TPB) VICE CHAIRMAN