

**Meeting of the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization  
RGVMPO POLICY BOARD MEETING**

**Wednesday, February 28, 2024 – 1:30 PM**

**MINUTES**

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

**I) Call to Order**

Chairman Commissioner David L. Fuentes called the Transportation Policy Board meeting to order at 1:30 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:**

<b>Members Present:</b>	
<b>Entity</b>	<b>Individual</b>
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. Com. David Garza - PRESENT
City of McAllen	Mayor Javier Villalobos (Designee) Eduardo Mendoza (Proxy) - PRESENT
City of Edinburg	Mayor Ramiro Garza (Designee) - PRESENT Comm. Daniel “Dan” Diaz (Alternate)
City of Mission	Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza (Designee) City Manager Randy Perez (Alternate) – PRESENT
City of Harlingen	Mayor Norma Sepulveda (Designee) Gabriel Gonzalez (Alternate) - PRESENT
City of Pharr	Mayor Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez (Designee) Commissioner Daniel Chavez (Proxy) - PRESENT
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) Ramon Navarro, V. (Proxy) - PRESENT
Valley Metro	Tom Logan (Designee) - PRESENT Nancy Sanchez (Alternate)
TxDOT Pharr District	Pedro “Pete” Alvarez (Designee) - PRESENT Rex A. Costley (Alternate)
<b>EX-OFFICIO</b>	
LRGVDC	Manuel Cruz
LRGVDC	Javier Dominguez
<b>GUEST</b>	
<b>Others Present:</b>	
RGVMPO	Luis Diaz
RGVMPO	Staff

**III) PUBLIC COMMENT**

NONE

#### IV) ACTION & DISCUSSION ITEMS

##### A. Approval of Minute(s) for January 31, 2024.

Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of January 31, 2024.

**No corrections were noted to the minutes of January 31, 2024. Motion to approve by Ramon Navarro from the Hidalgo County RMA and it was seconded by Reyna Guerra from Starr County. The item was unanimously approved.**

##### B. Consideration and Action to approve Resolution 2024-03 concurring with the TxDOT Initiative to Prevent Federal Fund Lapse.

Eva Garcia provided an overview of the TxDOT initiative, emphasizing the need to advance projects into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to prevent federal fund lapse. She highlighted the regional situation, stating that only 17 percent of construction projects with category 7 are scheduled for fiscal year 2024 in the RGVMPPO region. She explained that the proposed funding swap would help maximize the obligation of federal funds without affecting the amount allocated to MPOs.

Chairman Fuentes raised a question regarding public comments on the obligation of category 7 funds and its impact on future funding. Pete Alvarez clarified that the initiative does not affect various funding and emphasized the importance of utilizing available funds to meet obligations.

Mayor Ramiro Garza inquired about the timeframe for the funding swap and the replenishment of funds for projects. Pete Alvarez explained that the replenishment would be instantaneous once approved by the policy board.

Commissioner David Garza sought clarification on whether the initiative would delay any category 7 projects. Eva Garcia assured that it would not and stated the goal to reach the state average percentage for fiscal year 2025.

Commissioner David Garza also inquired about the status of category 2 funds. Pete Alvarez mentioned the challenges faced in the Pharr district and committed to providing the percentage number.

Mayor Ramiro Garza sought clarification on the destination of the funds. Pete Alvarez explained that the funds would remain within the region's allocation.

Chairman Fuentes requested Eva Garcia to share the list of projects close to advancing, which she agreed to do.

**Following the discussion, a motion was made by Pete Alvarez to approve the item, which was seconded by Commissioner David Garza. The motion passed.**

##### C. Consideration and Action to Approve Resolution 2024-07 Programing 5310 Program Funds

Eva Garcia provided an overview of the 5310 Program, explaining that it provides formula funding to meet the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities. She mentioned that the RGVMPPO follows the LRGVDC's 5310 Program Management Plan and recommended awarding full funding to two Metro McAllen projects and partial funding to one Valley Metro project.

Chairman Fuentes opened the floor for questions. Upon receiving none, he proceeded to call for a motion.

**Mayor Ramiro Garza Jr. from the City of Edinburg motioned to approve the recommendation. Pete Alvarez from the TxDOT Pharr District seconded the motion. A resolution was approved to formalize the recommendation and share it with state and federal partners.**

##### D. Discussion and Action on FY 24-25 Unified Planning Work Program #2

Fernando Cantu providing an overview regarding the FY 24-25 Unified Planning Work Program Amendment #2. He outlined the purpose of the amendment, which was to make changes to the administrative tasks within the UPWP budget.

Fernando highlighted the specific changes proposed in Amendment #2, including updates related to hiring staff, securing attorney services, and recruiting services for a hiring firm. He explained the necessity of these amendments, addressing gaps in the UPWP that needed to be addressed.

Chairman Fuentes opened the floor for questions. Upon receiving none, he proceeded to call for a motion.

**Commissioner David Garza from Cameron County motioned to approve the item. Mayor Ricardo Guerra from the City of San Benito seconded the motion.**

#### **E. Discussion and Action Throughfare Plan**

Alma Provencio provided an overview of the 2023 Throughfare Plan Amendment process. She highlighted the timeline of the amendment process, noting that submissions closed on December 21st, 2023.

Alma presented a comprehensive list of all the amendments submitted by various entities, totaling 15, and displayed it on the screen for reference.

Alma reminded the attendees that the Throughfare Plan amendment process is an annual activity, allowing entities to submit proposals each year. She informed that staff is seeking approval to adopt the amendments into a resolution, which will be presented to the Transportation Policy Board for approval.

Alma explained that once the resolution is approved, staff will present the amendments to the commissioner's courts in Starr, Hidalgo, and Cameron County.

All approved amendments will be reflected on the U map after the approval process in April 2024.

Mayor Ramiro Garza inquired about the next step after the approval of the resolution and Alma confirmed that after that it would be only a presentation to the commissions of Hidalgo, Starr, and Cameron but only for information that the resolution approval is final.

**Mayor Ramiro Garza from the City of Edinburg motioned to approve the resolution. Ramon Navarro from Hidalgo County RMA seconded the motion.**

#### **F. Discussion and Action on Federal Functional Classification of East Loop CSJ 0921-06-315 & Surrounding**

Luis Diaz provided an overview of the Federal Functional Classification amendments concerning East Loop and surrounding facilities. He provided a detailed description by referencing the map included within the packet. He emphasized the importance of functional classification in determining eligibility for funding under the Federal-aid program and its significance in measuring outcomes for preservation, mobility, and safety.

Luis mentioned that the amendments presented were in coordination with TxDOT and FHWA and would be presented for approval at the Policy Committee meeting.

Chairman Fuentes requested a simplified explanation of the difference between a minor arterial and a major collector. Luis Diaz clarified that a minor arterial is like an expressway with higher speeds, whereas a major collector is meant to collect traffic from neighborhoods and local streets, indicating a hierarchy of roadways.

Ramon Navarro emphasized the importance of ensuring that downgrading the roadway classification wouldn't lead to failure in meeting criteria or traffic levels. He confirmed that thorough analysis had been conducted by the MPO. Luis Diaz confirmed that the analysis included evaluating existing conditions and projections, as well as ensuring that the surrounding network would be maintained without modifications.

**Chairman Commissioner Fuentes opened the floor for any additional questions or comments. Upon receiving none, he called for a motion.**

**Commissioner David Garza motioned to approve the item, representing Cameron County. Frank Parker seconded the motion on behalf of Cameron County RMA. The motion was carried unanimously.**

#### **G. Discussion and Action on Federal Functional Classification of Russell Road**

Luis Diaz provided an overview of the Federal Functional Classification amendments concerning Russell Rd.

He emphasized the importance of functional classification in determining eligibility for funding and described its significance in measuring outcomes for preservation, mobility, and safety. Luis explained the recommendations for expanding the Federal Functional Classification to plan for future developments along Russell Rd.

Ramon Navarro raised a point for clarification regarding the proper identification of a road. He questioned whether Rooth Road to the south of 10th Street should be considered as 10th Street or 23rd Street. Luis Diaz responded, stating that it should be identified as 29th Street.

**Chairman Commissioner Fuentes opened the floor for any additional questions or comments. Upon receiving none, he called for a motion.**

**Mayor Ramiro Garza Jr. from the city of Edinburg motioned to approve the item, Commissioner Daniel Chavez from the City of Pharr seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.**

## **H. Discussion and Possible Action on Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA; also known as Category 9) Projects.**

Eva Garcia provided an update on the TASA projects for the year 2024, emphasizing the importance of transparency and effective communication. She outlined the different phases of the projects, including the reimbursement phase, obligation phase, and program phase. Eva highlighted the need for timely submission of reimbursement requests to ensure federal funding reaches the communities.

She reported that most projects were progressing well, with the majority working on the 30 percent environmental and design phase.

Eva Garcia sought guidance from the members regarding the next steps for the inactive project and potential AFA amendments.

Chairman Fuentes recommended revisiting the matter in March for further discussion.

Pete Alvarez raised a concern about some projects being left but not awarded, urging local governments to expedite the process to address this challenge.

Chairman Fuentes thanked the presenters for their updates and guidance.

No action was taken at this time.

## **V) PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS**

### **A. Greenhouse gas emissions deadline**

Klarissa Gonzalez provided information on the Greenhouse Gas Emission Deadline, emphasizing that it is an informational item only. She explained that on December 7th, 2023, FHWA released a final rule amending the Code of Federal Regulations to establish a new performance measure related to tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions resulting from transportation on the National Highway System. MPOs are required to adopt targets no later than 180 days after the State targets are adopted. Klarissa highlighted that there are no specific penalties for failing to achieve GHG targets, but significant progress must be documented by the state DOT. She informed the members that all MPOs, including attainment and nonattainment areas, are now required to measure and report 4-year declining targets of tailpipe CO2 emissions resulting from transportation on the National Highway System. The RGVMP will establish a regional target based on the statewide target no later than August 1st. Performance measurement and reporting will utilize the calculated annual tailpipe CO2 emissions from the year 2022 as a baseline.

Chairman David Fuentes opened the floor for questions.

Frank Parker raised a question regarding how the growth factor would be incorporated into the data.

Luis Diaz responded, stating that the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are reported annually and are based on the vehicles on the road. He explained that once the VMT data is updated, it would reflect the new added capacity.

Frank Parker expressed his concern, questioning the value of dedicating time to the matter at hand. He pointed out that there seemed to be no penalty for not addressing the issue, and he believed that the state would handle it eventually.

Luis Diaz responded, acknowledging Frank's concern, and explaining that while there may not be immediate consequences, the data collection process is part of the broader performance measures being implemented. He highlighted that such measures eventually become integrated into the planning process, particularly when federal funds are involved, emphasizing the importance of compliance with federal regulations.

Klarissa Gonzalez provided further clarification, explaining that the increase in vehicle miles traveled without a proportional increase in CO2 emissions could positively impact the region's proportions, making them appear better in terms of emissions. She reiterated that the focus on the matter stemmed from federal regulations mandating reporting on this metric.

Ramon Navarro raised a question regarding the region's status in terms of designations and containment zones, expressing concern about potential impacts on funding.

Luis Diaz responded, stating that the region is currently attaining, meaning it meets air quality standards. He suggested the possibility of presenting a report to the TAC board to provide further insight into the region's status and historical comparisons. Klarissa Gonzalez added that while some regions may be experiencing worsening air quality, the status of the region remains below the threshold for concern.

**B. Discussion on Congestion Management Process Subcommittee**

Klarissa Gonzalez, provided an overview of the CMP, highlighting its significance as a federally mandated document sustained by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) with populations over 200,000. She emphasized that the purpose of the CMP is to identify, analyze, and monitor traffic congestion in urban areas, providing data-driven implementation strategies to be evaluated for effectiveness over time.

It was noted that the RGVMPPO is required to have this document completed by August for the 2024 certification review. Klarissa announced the invitation for stakeholders to join a subcommittee consisting of 5 to 10 members aimed at contributing insight and feedback towards the development of the CMP.

The subcommittee will convene virtually once a month in March, April, and May, totaling three meetings. Discussions within the subcommittee will focus on establishing regional goals for alleviating traffic congestion, assessing congestion challenges and requirements, and pinpointing strategies for implementation.

Stakeholders interested in participating in this subcommittee were instructed to send their contact details to kgonzalez@RGVMPO.org.

Chairman Fuentes encouraged active participation in the subcommittee to ensure comprehensive and effective development of the CMP.

No further discussion ensued on this matter.

**C. RGVMPPO Executive Director's Report and Updates**

Luis Diaz provided an update on the RGVMPPO's budget highlighting that they are well below the expected expenditures for the fiscal year since it started in October. Luis Diaz also provided contact information and advised the board that the RGVMPPO office is open to any entity that would like to meet individually to get more information on any specific issue or anything.

Luis provided an overview of a possible upcoming MPO101 workshop.

No questions were raised.

**D. TxDOT Project Status Report**

TxDOT Pharr Area District Staff provided a detailed project status presentation.

Details for each area are included within the agenda packet.

**VI) OTHER BUSINESS (OLD OR NEW)**

**VII) New or Unfinished Business**

none

**ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business to come before the RGVMPPO TPB Members, Chairman Commissioner David L. Fuentes called the meeting adjourned at 2:47pm.*

ATTEST:

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RGVMPO POLICY COMMITTEE  
(TPB) VICE CHAIRMAN

