

Meeting of the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
RGVMPO POLICY BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, March 27, 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:

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
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) - PRESENT City Manager Miker R. Perez (Alternate)
City of Harlingen	Mayor Norma Sepulveda (Designee) - PRESENT Gabriel Gonzalez (Alternate)
City of Pharr	Mayor Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez (Designee) Ruben Alfaro (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)
EX-OFFICIO	
LRGVDC	Manuel Cruz
Others Present:	
RGVMPO	Luis Diaz
RGVMPO	Staff

III) PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE

IV) ACTION & DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Approval of Minute(s).

Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of February 28, 2024.

No corrections were noted to the minutes of February 28, 2024. Motion to approve by Frank Parker, Jr. from the Hidalgo County RMA and it was seconded approve by Ramon Navarro from the Hidalgo County RMA. The item was unanimously approved.

B. Discussion and Action on the May 2024 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Revision Cycle

Rudy Zamora addressed the board, informing them that the public involvement period for the current cycle would conclude on March 31st, following its commencement on March 1st. Three successful in-person events have taken place thus far. Zamora highlighted that the February revisions were nearing approval, anticipated by April 2nd. He emphasized the need for the policy board's approval of these revisions, providing additional documentation distributed before the meeting, which included four projects from the Cameron County area. Reallocation of funds from the Morrison Road project to three other projects was detailed, clarifying that there would be no additional funds added.

Chairman David Fuentes sought clarification regarding the absence of movement of money, confirming that it was solely a reallocation between projects.

Rodolfo Zamora confirmed that there would be no additional funds added and discussed plans for seeking additional funding for future projects. He outlined forthcoming efforts, including the creation of the new TIP for the years 2025 to 2028 and collaboration with Alliance Transportation Group for the new 2050 MTP.

Chairman inquired about the conclusion of public comments.

The city of McAllen Eduardo Mendoza raised a question regarding the origin of the submitted revisions.

Rodolfo Zamora explained that all revisions included in the packet summary sheet were received prior to the TAC meeting for public involvement. Submissions primarily came from local governments or on-system projects from TxDOT.

Chairman encouraged further questions or comments from the board.

Mayor Ramiro Garza shared concerns regarding public engagement in the early stages of projects, seeking guidance on the requirement for public hearings before projects are listed.

Rodolfo Zamora outlined the engagement process, emphasizing the involvement of MPO and TxDOT in hosting public meetings for project revisions. Highlighted the necessity for early engagement to ensure proper steps are followed.

Pedro Alvarez recommended early engagement with MPO and TxDOT to receive guidance and ensure adherence to proper procedures.

Chairman expressed gratitude for the discussion and sought a motion.

Judge Eddie Treviño made a motion to approve the revisions on behalf of Cameron County.

Chairman: Requested a second. Mayor Norie Gonzalez-Garza seconded the motion on behalf of the City of Mission.

C. Consideration and Possible Action regarding Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 16 Revisions

Eva Garcia provided background on the January 17th minute order passed by the Texas Transportation Commission, officially adopting amendments to the Texas Administrative Code. She outlined key changes, including an annual review of category 5 and category 7 carryover, and the implications of exceeding a 200 percent carryover threshold.

Chairman Fuentes sought clarification on the need for action from the board.

Eva Garcia: Garcia explained that while action wasn't required, guidance or approval from the board would be appreciated. She emphasized the importance of adhering to the new regulations to prevent funds from being transferred to safety projects.

Frank Parker asked about the possibility of reclaiming unused funds in the following year.

Eva Garcia responded that unused funds would lapse and be reallocated to district discretionary projects.

TxDOT representative Pete Alvarez underscored the need for project readiness and emphasized the importance of utilizing allocated funds. He commended Cameron County for proactive project allocation.

Representative from the City of Edinburg Ramiro Garza Jr. inquired about the utilization percentages of the past three years.

Eva Garcia: agreed to provide the utilization percentages for reference.

Eduardo Mendoza sought clarification on fund reallocation procedures.

Pete Alvarez explained TxDOT's commitment to utilizing available funds and encouraged proactive project development.

Chairman Fuentes expressed confidence in TxDOT's ability to manage fund allocations effectively.

Judge Eddie Trevino emphasized the need for project prioritization and readiness to prevent fund loss.

Pete Alvarez affirmed TxDOT's commitment to expediting the development process by obtaining necessary agreements within a year. He suggested postponing action on the matter until the next Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting.

Chairman Fuentes called for a motion to table the item.

Judge Eddie Trevino motioned to table the item on behalf of Cameron County.

Mayor Garza Jr. seconded the motion on behalf of the City of Edinburg.

D. Discussion and Action to approve Resolution 2024-09 Re-programming of FY2021-2022 Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA; Category 9) Funds

Eva Garcia provided an update on the status of TASA projects, highlighting the need to obligate funds within the specified timeline. She explained that the City of Hidalgo had forfeited its project, resulting in \$70,000 needing to be reprogrammed. The funds would be split equally between the City of Elsa and the City of Harlingen, both of which had planning projects in progress.

Chairman Fuentes inquired about the readiness of Elsa and Harlingen to receive the additional funds and ensured that they had plans for their use.

Eva Garcia confirmed that both cities were aware of the potential allocation and had plans for utilizing the funds.

Ramon Navarro raised a concern about the distribution of additional funds and whether other entities had been consulted.

Eva Garcia explained that the other communities were not consulted as they had construction funds allocated, and the decision primarily concerned planning funds.

Chairman Fuentes sought clarification on the project timeline and emphasized the importance of timely decision-making.

Pete Alvarez recommended moving forward promptly to avoid further delays in project execution.

Eva Garcia reiterated her confidence in the decision and anticipated no issues from other communities.

Chairman Fuentes called for a motion to approve the resolution.

Judge Trevino Jr. motioned to approve the resolution.

Pete Alvarez seconded the motion. Chairman Fuentes thanked the participants, and the item was approved unanimously.

V) PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Presentation and Discussion regarding the RGVMPPO's Bike/Ped Program (Annual Update)

Eva Garcia began her presentation by providing an overview of the Active Transportation Plan adopted in December 2020, outlining its goals and areas of success. She detailed the progress made in various initiatives under planning and design, facility inventory, policy and programs, education and encouragement, safety, and active tourism.

Frank Parker suggested enhancing marketing efforts to promote awareness of the available facilities, emphasizing the importance of branding and marketing strategies. Eva Garcia acknowledged the need for improved branding and marketing, noting plans to incorporate these efforts into upcoming events and media campaigns.

Chairman David Fuentes highlighted the potential for promoting healthy lifestyles throughout the year, suggesting opportunities to align with various health-related awareness months. He inquired about the availability of a centralized map for trails. Eva Garcia confirmed the existence of an active transportation map on the RGVMPPO website, specifically designed to showcase trails and bike lanes in the region. She concluded her presentation by mentioning upcoming events, including a Vision Zero Texas training scheduled for June 5th, and encouraged participation from law enforcement, planners, and engineers.

Chairman Fuentes thanked Garcia for her comprehensive update and reiterated that the item was for information only, no action required.

B. Presentation and Discussion regarding Carbon Reduction Program Projects

Eva Garcia provided an overview of the Carbon Reduction Program, including the funding allocation process and eligibility criteria for projects. She discussed the timeline for project selection and highlighted the importance of maintaining high utilization rates for allocated funds. She presented a shortlist of projects eligible for funding, focusing on those with the potential to be ready for implementation by fiscal year 2028. She outlined the criteria used to select these projects and explained the considerations for submittals. The shortlisted projects discussed were the Hidalgo County Precinct One Trail and the Dennett Road Gap project. Garcia detailed the readiness and funding requirements for each project, emphasizing the need for eligibility determination before final programming.

Chairman Fuentes inquired about the timeline for action on the shortlisted projects.

Eva Garcia clarified that the current discussion was for informational purposes only, with official action to be taken once eligibility is confirmed by FHWA.

Chairman Fuentes thanked Garcia for her presentation and noted that official action on the projects would be revisited in May after eligibility confirmation.

C. Presentation on RGV MPO Attainment Status

Klarissa Gonzalez provided a detailed overview of the lower Rio Grande Valley's designation status regarding air quality, emphasizing that it currently holds an attainment status, meaning it meets national air quality standards. She explained the significance of this status in terms of responsibilities and actions for transportation planning, as mandated by the Clean Air Act.

During her presentation, Klarissa discussed the various pollutants monitored under the act and the numerical standards associated with each. She highlighted the importance of ongoing monitoring and compliance efforts, citing the resilience and sustainability analysis from the previous year.

In response to a question from Judge Eddie Trevino about the selection criteria for testing sensor sites, Klarissa mentioned that it's determined by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). However, she was unsure of the specific criteria and offered to find out more.

Klarissa also addressed concerns about emissions from Mexico affecting the region's air quality, noting that while emissions are being recorded by sensors, factors such as border crossing congestion can impact sensor readings. She mentioned that emissions from the area are recorded by sensors located in cities like Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio.

D. Federal Functional Classification Status Update

Luis Diaz provided an update on the Federal Functional Classification status for various projects. He presented a table categorizing the resolutions passed since the merger, highlighting the progress and status of each project.

- Projects like IBTC and Morrison Road are awaiting review before being passed on to Federal Highways.
- The East Loop and surrounding area recently received approval, with additional traffic counts being acquired for further justification.
- Russell Road and International Drive have already acquired FC, with ongoing progress recorded annually by TxDOT.
- New constructions awarded FC are placed in proposed FC status until completion.
- Los Ebanos is under review by TxDOT.
- Russell Road's request for a longer stretch was recommended by Federal Highways for planning purposes.
- Pending stipulation revisions include Nolana.

Ramiro Garza Jr. inquired about extending Russell Road to 281, which Luis clarified was already classified beyond that point.

Chairman David Fuentes opened the floor for further questions and no more questions were brought up.

E. RGV MPO Executive Director's Report and Updates

Luis Diaz provided a brief update as the Executive Director, focusing primarily on the budget status. He reported that the MPO's expenditures were well within the budget, with \$606,148 expended out of a total of \$885,217.

Additionally, Luis mentioned his initiative to arrange visits with each of the local governments, emphasizing the availability of the MPO for meetings or inquiries.

Chairman David Fuentes opened the floor for any questions or further discussion, but since there were none, he proceeded to the next item on the agenda.

F. TxDOT Project Status Report

Arlene Garcia and Yahaira Marroquin provided updates on various TxDOT construction projects in Hidalgo and Cameron Counties, respectively.

Arlene Garcia presented updates on FM 1015 South and FM 1015 South to I2, highlighting completion percentages and estimated completion dates. She also shared images of construction progress.

Yahaira Marroquin discussed the I69 ramp reversal project in Cameron County, detailing completion status, scope of work, and contractor involvement. She also addressed questions about truck circulation and construction progress.

During the discussion:

Frank Parker inquired about truck turnaround on Highway 48, expressing concerns about safety and circulation.

Pete Alvarez promised to investigate Frank's concerns regarding truck circulation.

Chairman David Fuentes asked about the progress of the interstate interchange project and drainage improvements on FM 1015.

Arlene Garcia and Pete Alvarez responded, promising to provide updates on drainage and addressing concerns about truck circulation.

Chairman David Fuentes opened the floor for any further questions or discussion, but since there were none, he proceeded to the next agenda item: Other Business.

VI) OTHER BUSINESS (OLD OR NEW)

During the "Other Business" segment of the meeting, Ramiro Garza Jr. raised a crucial point about the presence of the two MSAs in the region, specifically McAllen and Edinburg, and its potential impact on funding and regional unity. He emphasized the importance of merging these MSAs to present a unified front and attract investment to the region.

Judge Eddie Trevino expressed support for reigniting discussions about merging the MSAs, highlighting the benefits of presenting the region as one cohesive entity.

Pete Alvarez from TxDOT clarified the historical context of MSA classification changes and noted the potential benefits of merging MSAs for funding and regional development.

Luis Diaz from the MPO offered to conduct research and bring back information for further discussion at future meetings.

Frank Parker inquired about TxDOT's budget increase in recent years, to which Pete Alvarez confirmed an increase in funding, especially in the Pharr District.

Chairman David Fuentes acknowledged the importance of the topic but suggested adding it to the agenda for a more in-depth discussion at a future meeting, as it was not on the current agenda.

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 2:48pm.

ATTEST:



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