

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**In-Person
Minutes
February 8, 2024**

I) CALL TO ORDER

Ramon Navarro – Vice-Chairman (Hidalgo County RMA) called the TAC Meeting to order at 10:00 AM. The TAC Meeting was held in person.

II) ROLL CALL

RGVTAC Representatives in attendance were as follows:

MEMBERS PRESENT	
ENTITY	VOTING MEMBERS
Cameron County	Benjamin Worsham, Chairman
Hidalgo County RMA	Ramon Navarro, Vice Chairman
Hidalgo County	Armando Garza, Jr.
City of Brownsville	Juan Peña Jr.
City of McAllen	Absent
City of Edinburg	Tomas Reyna
City of Harlingen	Absent
City of Mission	Absent
City of Pharr	Absent
City of San Benito	Johanna Maldonado
Starr County	Absent
TxDot Pharr District	Dora E. Robles
Valley Metro	Nancy Sanchez
Cameron County RMA	Eric Davila
Brownsville Metro	Simon Ortiz
McAllen Metro	Jon Ray Bocanegra
Port of Brownville	Absent
Port of Harlingen	Absent
Port Isabel-San Benito Navigation District	Jose Morales
Cameron County Spaceport Dev Corp.	Absent
Guest	
RGVMPO Interim- Executive Director	Luis Diaz
LRGDVC	Javier Dominguez
RGVMPO Staff	

III) PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments

IV) CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of January 11, 2024

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro asked if there were any corrections to the minutes and no corrections or comments were presented.

No corrections or comments were noted to the minutes. Tomas Reyna with the city of Edinburg made a motion to approve the minutes of January 11, 2024. The motion was seconded by Eric Davila with Cameron County RMA. Motion carried.

Approved March 14, 2024

B. Discussion and Action to recommend transit projects for 5310 Program Funds

Eva Garcia presented information regarding the 5310 Program funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to address the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities.

Eva Garcia outlined that the RGVMPPO follows the LRGVDC's 5310 Program Management Plan (PMP) which governs the administration, management, programming, selection, and oversight of projects.

Ms. Garcia informed the board that staff recommended awarding full funding to two (2) Metro McAllen projects and partial funding to one (1) Valley Metro project. Eva Garcia indicated that project scores and coordination details would be presented before requesting action.

Discussion proceeded among the Technical Advisory Committee Members regarding the proposed projects, funding allocations, and their alignment with the transportation needs of the target population.

Ramon Navarro asked about the oversight of funds and Dora Robles clarifying that the lead agency responsible is LRGVDC.

Jon Ray Bocanegra elaborated on the unique nature of transit projects and the responsibility of the MPO in ensuring timely progress and compliance.

Eva Garcia acknowledged the importance of understanding the agreement between recipient and sub-recipient agencies for obligating funds, expressing her intention to explore it further.

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro thanked Eva Garcia for the insights provided and opened the floor for recommendations or motions to move forward with the item.

Joel Garza motioned to approve the recommended transit projects for the 5310 program funds, representing the City of Brownsville. Dora Robles seconded the motion on behalf of TxDOT.

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro confirmed the motion and declared it passed unanimously.

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

Luis Diaz introduced the agenda item 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.

Luis Diaz 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.

Joel Garza raised a question regarding potential overlap between the responsibilities of the fiscal agent and the proposed legal services, expressing concerns about double dipping.

Luis Diaz addressed Joel Garza's question, explaining that legal services were not explicitly included in the responsibilities of the fiscal agent as outlined in the planning agreement. He acknowledged Joel's point and mentioned plans to revisit the planning contract in July to potentially make amendments.

Joel Garza made a motion to approve Amendment #2. Tomas Reyna seconded the motion. Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro confirmed the approval of Amendment #2 to the UPWP for the 24-25 fiscal year.

D. Discussion and Action on 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.

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro invited questions or concerns from the attendees. There were no questions or concerns raised. He reiterated that this is an action item and called for a motion to proceed.

Johanna Maldonado from the City of San Benito made a motion to approve the Throughfare Plan as presented. Nancy Sanchez from Valley Metro seconded the motion. Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro confirmed the motion and second. He announced that the Throughfare Plan is approved and will be presented before the Policy Board for approval.

Approved March 14, 2024

E. Discussion and Action on Federal Functional Classification of East Loop CSJ 0921-06-315 & Surrounding Facilities

Luis Diaz provided an overview of the Federal Functional Classification amendments concerning East Loop and surrounding facilities. 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.

Dora Robles expressed gratitude for the diligent work done and emphasized the importance of monitoring discrepancies in the classification process. She assured attendees that proposed classifications would reflect on the state web planning map once the relevant projects are completed.

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro raised concerns about the proposed downgrades in functional classifications and inquired about the physical functionality and adherence to build standards of the affected facilities.

Luis Diaz responded, assuring that the recommendations were based on average traffic counts and considerations of surrounding facilities, ensuring compliance with traffic movements.

Tom Reyna expressed concerns about the proposed classification for Russell Rd and suggested coordination to ensure the improvement of east-west corridors.

Luis Diaz acknowledged the concerns and suggested addressing them after concluding the discussion on East Loop.

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro redirected the discussion back to East Loop and called for a motion to approve the action for the functional classification.

Eric Davila from CCRMA made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Joel Garza from the City of Brownsville. The motion was carried, and the item was approved.

Transition to Chairman Benjamin Worsham:

Chairman Benjamin Worsham arrived and assumed control of the meeting.

F. 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. Tom Reyna expressed concerns about the proposed classification change and its impact on future development plans for east-west corridors. Luis Diaz assured Tom that the recommendations were based on current traffic counts and explained the rationale behind the classification change.

Tom Reyna highlighted the need for coordinated planning to avoid potential obstacles in right-of-way acquisition.

Dora Robles emphasized the importance of considering the bigger picture and future traffic projections in planning functional classifications. She mentioned the need for re-evaluation in the future as the area develops rapidly.

Chairman Benjamin Worsham inquired about the use of traffic counts and projections in the classification process.

Luis Diaz clarified that projections were not available now and assured that TxDOT would not impose restrictions on localized projects based on functional classifications.

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro emphasized the importance of having up-to-date GIS data for the upcoming review by FHWA. Joel Garza suggested coordinating with the city of Edinburg for future projects to ensure support from all entities.

Armando Garza made a motion to approve the Federal Functional Classification amendments, which was seconded by Tom Reyna. The motion was carried unanimously.

Approved March 14, 2024

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

Eva Garcia provided an overview of the status of TASA projects, focusing on FY2019-2020, FY2021-2022, and FY2023-2024 projects. She highlighted the ongoing efforts of RGV MPO staff in coordinating with TxDOT and local government project sponsors to ensure timely obligation and reimbursement of programmed funds.

Eva expressed gratitude to all involved parties for their continued communication and coordination. She informed the members that they could act by acknowledging the update as presented or recommending award changes on one or more TASA projects.

Eric Davila made a motion to acknowledge the update presented by Eva Garcia. Jose Morales from the Port Isabel-San Benito District seconded the motion. The update on TASA projects was acknowledged by the members.

H. Discussion and Action Congestion Management Process Subcommittee

Klarissa Gonzalez provided an overview of the Congestion Management Process (CMP) and its importance as a federally mandated document for Metropolitan Planning Organizations with populations over 200,000. She outlined the purpose of the CMP, which is to identify, analyze, and monitor traffic congestion in urban areas and to provide data-driven implementation strategies for alleviating congestion.

Klarissa announced the formation of a subcommittee consisting of 5 to 10 members aimed at contributing insights and feedback towards the development of the CMP. She mentioned that the subcommittee will convene virtually once a month in March, April, and May, totaling three meetings. Discussions during the subcommittee meetings will focus on establishing regional goals, assessing congestion challenges, and pinpointing implementation strategies. Klarissa invited stakeholders to participate in the subcommittee by sending their contact details to kgonzalez@RGVMPO.org.

Joel Garza inquired whether staff members could participate in the subcommittee, to which Klarissa confirmed that staff members are eligible to participate.

Dora Robles asked if the meetings would be held in person or virtually, and Klarissa clarified that the meetings would be held virtually.

Chairman Ben Worsham called for a motion to acknowledge the update presented by Klarissa Gonzalez. Armando Garza made a motion to acknowledge the update, which was seconded by Tom Reyna. The update was acknowledged by the members.

I. TxDOT Initiative to prevent Federal Funds Lapse

Rodolfo Zamora informed the members about TxDOT's initiative to prevent the lapse of federal functional funds. He explained that TxDOT currently has a remaining balance of MPO apportionment, known as carryover funds, which risk lapsing if not obligated. To prevent this, TxDOT proposes swapping funds on projects within MPO boundaries to either STP-Flex or STP-MM funds. The purpose of this initiative is to ensure that carryover federal funds are obligated and successfully reimbursed for the Rio Grande Valley (RGV). Specifically, TxDOT is proposing a swap of CAT 7 construction projects in FY 2024 to STP Flex and CAT 1, 4, 11, and 12 construction projects within MPO boundaries to STP-MM.

Chairman Ben Worsham opened the floor for discussion and questions from the members. After discussion, Chairman Ben Worsham determined that a motion was not required at this time. Further discussion would be held between members and item would be presented at the policy board.

V) **REPORTS AND UPDATES**

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 RGVMPPO 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 Ben Worsham invited questions from the members. However, there were no questions raised.

B. RGVMPPO Executive Director's Report and Updates

Luis Diaz provided an update on the budget, mentioning that since the start of the new budget year in October, they have expended \$149,764.24 out of a maximum budget of \$354,088.87. He assured the board that they are well within budget.

He also mentioned that they are working on functional classification (FC) requests and expressed appreciation for the letters of support and resolutions received. They are diligently working on these requests to classify the roadways.

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro asked if there were any questions or concerns regarding the Executive Director's report. Hearing none, he acknowledged the report on behalf of the board and moved on to the next agenda item.

C. TxDOT Project Status Report

TxDOT Pharr District office staff provided a status report within the RGVMPPO. The detailed report is within the agenda packet for reference.

No questions were posed after the presentation.

D. Cameron County RMA Status Report

Eric Davila (Cameron County RMA) provided an updated presentation on projects that are currently within the Cameron County RMA.

No questions were posed after the presentation.

E. Hidalgo County RMA Status Report

The report is included in the agenda packet, HCCRMA was not available to present the report.

F. Transit Status Report

Jon Jay Bocanegra provided a Transit Status Report, included within the packet for reference.

No questions were posed after the presentation.

VI) **NEW OR UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

VII) **ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the RGVMPPO TAC Members, Chairman Ben Worsham called for a motion to adjourn. Joel Garza with the City of Brownsville made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:49am. The motion was seconded by Dora Robles with TxDOT, meeting was adjourned.