

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON MEETING
July 11, 2024 - Minutes**

I) CALL TO ORDER

Benjamin Worsham – Chairman (Cameron County) called the TAC Meeting to order at 10:02 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
Hidalgo County	Absent
City of Brownsville	Juan Peña Jr.
City of McAllen	Rene Gonzalez
City of Edinburg	Tomas D. Reyna
City of Harlingen	Roberto Hernandez
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	Claudia Olmedo
Cameron County RMA	Absent
Brownsville Metro	Simon Ortiz
McAllen Metro	Jon Ray Bocanegra
Port of Brownville	Absent
Port of Harlingen	Amy Lynch
Port Isabel-San Benito Navigation District	Absent
Cameron County Spaceport Dev Corp.	Absent
GUESTS	
RGVMPO Interim- Executive Director	Luis M. 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 May 9, 2024

Chairman Benjamin Worsham asked if there were any corrections to the minutes and no corrections or comments were noted to the minutes.

Juan Peña Jr. from the City of Brownsville made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, which was seconded by Ramon Navarro from the Hidalgo County RMA.

B. Discussion and Action on FY 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program Amendment #3

Fernando Cantu presented Amendment to the UPWP; the revisions included

- The UPWP is being revised to integrate language addressing the 2021 Planning Emphasis Areas, pertinent to the development of Metropolitan and Statewide Planning Research Work programs.
- Update Task 3.2 'Complete Street' to reflect the requirement for MPOs to allocate at least 2.5% of their PL funds toward ds designated planning activities aimed at enhancing safe and accessible transportation options for individuals of all ages and abilities across various travel modes.
- Changes are mainly title updates and minor in-house modifications, such as identifying specific items under computer purchases (tablets, computer hardware, software server).
- All changes are highlighted in yellow for easy review.

Jon Ray Bocanegra (Metro McAllen) commented on the communication with the MPO regarding the UPWP, he mentioned an issue with the remaining balance on planning funds for a route realignment project, which was denied by TxDOT due to the contract end date. Jon Ray also expressed concerns about ensuring the remaining funds are reimbursed and sought guidance on amending the UPWP for the next TAC meeting.

Mr. Bocanegra also asked about a carryover of approximately \$2.8 million in planning funds. Fernando Cantu confirmed the carryover amount and clarified the timeline and constraints related to the fiscal year 2024 funds.

Luis Diaz explained the contractual and budgetary constraints leading to the denial of reimbursement by TxDOT and he suggested setting up a separate meeting with TxDOT to discuss potential recourse and further action. Jon Ray Bocanegra agreed to discuss the issue further in a separate meeting.

Dora Robles requested a minor correction in the BPAC membership under TxDOT to update the representative's name. Fernando Cantu confirmed the update would be made.

Ramon Navarro inquired if there were any budget impacts due to the changes and Fernando Cantu assured there were no budget impacts; changes involved only adding verbiage to specify fund usage.

Chairman Ben Worsham asked if there were any mor questions or comments and after none were presented, he asked for a motion to approve item with the changes requested by TxDOT. Tomas D. Reyna from the City of Edinburg made a motion to approve with the specified changes. Juan Peña from the City of Brownsville seconded the motion. Motion passed.

C. Discussion and Action on TJKM – SS4A Contract Amendment

Fernando Cantu provided an overview of the proposed amendment to the TJKM contract. The amendment would incorporate new tasks and increase the budget from \$199,648.95 to \$250,000 to ensure all necessary activities are adequately funded to meet SS4A Grant goals. The additional budget aims to enhance project capabilities and improve outcomes.

Chairman Worsham inquired about the specific items being added to the scope of work. Fernando Cantu deferred the question to Melany Rodriguez.

Melany Rodriguez explained that the new tasks include studying and assisting in the selection of potential pilot locations in Starr County, Hidalgo County, the City of Harlingen, and the City of Brownsville. Additionally, the selection of proven safety countermeasures for the region and general recommendations will be included. The report will be presented to the TAC and Policy meetings.

Chairman Worsham asked if these additions were included in the report.

Fernando Cantu confirmed that while the additions are not included in the current report, they will be included in the packet for the Policy meeting.

Ramon Navarro asked if there was any recourse to the confusion.

Fernando Cantu explained that the confusion was caught early during the kickoff meeting, so it did not significantly impact the project.

Chairman Worsham inquired if the consultant had experience with planning documents for SS4A.

Fernando Cantu confirmed that the consultant had previously completed three or four SS4A planning documents in California and was familiar with the requirements.

Chairman Worsham asked if this issue was raised during negotiations and Fernando Cantu reiterated that the issue was identified during the kickoff meeting.

Dora Robles questioned if the additional tasks resulted in higher rates and Fernando Cantu explained that additional tasks were added, reflected in the packet as task 7, and this justified the increase in the budget.

Melany Rodriguez added that the additional funding was necessary due to the amended contract and the new tasks.

Chairman Worsham asked about the original budget request for the project and Melany Rodriguez stated the original request was \$200,000 and that the new budget is \$250,000.

Luis Diaz mentioned that \$250,000 is the full grant awarded, and utilizing the full amount prevents the need to return any funds. Fernando Cantu reiterated that staying at \$200,000 would require returning \$50,000, so the amendment utilizes the entire grant.

Chairman Worsham asked if there were any further questions or comments for the staff.

Roberto Hernandez with the City of Harlingen inquired if task 3, the communication and engagement task, was being added and Melany Rodriguez clarified that while task 3 was added, specifically, the amendment included presentations to BPAC, TAC, and Policy meetings.

With no more questions or comments, Chairman Worsham requested a motion to approve.

Roberto Hernandez with the City of Harlingen made a Motioned to approve and Claudia Olmedo with Valley Metro seconded the motion. Chairman Ben Worsham confirmed that the motion passed.

D. Discussion and Action on ATG – MTP Contract Amendment

Fernando Cantu introduced an amendment to the ATG contract to include new tasks (reviewing the Travel Demand Model (TDM)) and increase the budget from \$338,838.21 to \$397,043.03.

Ben Magallon (ATG) presented the amendment, highlighting the need for TDM review to ensure consistency with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the importance of accurate data, especially concerning cross-border traffic. He confirmed ATG's commitment to work on the model as soon as it is received.

Questions and Discussion:

- Ramon Navarro: Questioned the changes from the original proposal and justification for the budget increase.
- Luis Diaz: Explained the extended timeline and added scope for TDM services.
- Johanna Maldonado: Inquired about the previous contract and revisions.
- Dora E. Robles: Asked about the project schedule and previous modeling practices.
- Tomas D. Reyna: Questioned the budget and labor costs.

Clarifications Provided by Staff:

- The contract includes a detailed scope of work and milestones.
- Previous models were done by consultants due to staff size limitations.
- Budget and labor costs follow national labor statistics and procurement policies.

Motion to Approve: ATG – MTP Contract Amendment

- Moved by Ramon Navarro (Hidalgo County RMA).
- Seconded by Juan Peña (City of Brownsville).
- Motion passes with one vote against from Tomas Reyna (City of Edinburg).

E. Discussion and Action for Qualifications RFQ for Legal Services for RGVMPO Contract Review

Fernando Cantu presented the need for the RGVMPO to acquire legal services for contract review and compliance.

The services sought included:

- Reviewing and enhancing contractual agreements and legal compliance.
- Evaluating new and existing contracts with vendors to identify risks and recommend amendments or renegotiations.
- Reviewing MOUs between the MPO and local governments.
- Offering legal guidance on interpretation, compliance, and potential amendments.
- Ensuring adherence to federal regulations (23 CFR Part 450 and 2 CFR Part 200).

Fernando Cantu also informed the board that the RFQ was advertised in the newspaper, procurement website, AMPO, and Texas newspaper. And two firms submitted proposals: Jackson Walker and Castle Law Firm.

Scoring results:

- Jackson Walker: 379 points
- Castle Law Firm: 250 points
- Committee recommendation: Jackson Walker

Tomas D. Reyna (City of Edinburg) made a motion to approve the selection of Jackson Walker. Johanna Maldonado (San Benito) seconded the motion. The motion passed.

F. Discussion and Possible Action regarding the RGVMPO Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (TASA; also known as Category 9)

Eva Garcia provided an update on the TASA program, highlighting the following points:

- **Federal Funding Process:** Briefly explained the federal funding process, from apportionment to programming to obligation and reimbursement, emphasizing the importance of timely project completion.
- **Reimbursement Projects:** Highlighted the progress of various projects in the reimbursement phase, including the Jackson Road hike and bike trail, PSJA Phase 2 project, Brownsville-Los Fresnos project, and Cameron County projects.
- **2021-2022 Group:** Discussed the status of two planning projects (Freddy Gonzalez Trail and West Rail Trail) and the Port Isabel project, noting that none are expected to obligate funds in FY2024.
- **2023 Group:** Mentioned that most projects in this group are working on executing AFAs and are expected to obligate funds in FY2026 or FY2027.
- **Upcoming Call for Projects:** Announced working group meetings in August, September, and October to gather feedback on scoring criteria and documentation requirements for the next call for projects, tentatively scheduled to open in November.

Dora Robles supplemented Eva Garcia's update by emphasizing the need for projects in the 2021-2022 group to be let no later than May 2025 to ensure timely obligation of funds and receive credit in the same fiscal year. She encouraged project sponsors to work with their project managers to meet this deadline.

Ramon Navarro asked for clarification on the May 2025 letting deadline and inquired whether unused funds could be transferred to other projects. Dora Robles confirmed the deadline and explained that funds are project-specific and cannot be reallocated.

Eva Garcia encouraged attendees to reach out with any further questions and clarified that the item was for information only and did not require any action. Possible action was added in case an action was required for item.

Chairman Ben Worsham suggested keeping future reports as such as informative to avoid confusion.

D) REPORTS AND UPDATES

A. Congestion Management Process Update

Klarissa Gonzalez presented the first draft of the 2024 RGVMPPO Congestion Management Process (CMP) for review and feedback highlighting the following Key points:

- **Timeline:** The CMP adoption is planned for September, with a backup date in October. The final document must be adopted by December for the in-person certification review.
- **Federal Regulations:** The CMP follows federal regulations outlined in the provided link.
- **CMP Components:** The CMP includes eight steps based on the FHWA guidebook, addressing three principles: reducing congestion on highways, improving transit and bike/pedestrian facilities, and addressing truck travel.
- **Data Sources:** The CMP utilizes various data sources, including previous delay studies, traffic signal data, and travel time indices.
- **Congestion Causes:** The primary cause of congestion in the RGVMPPO area is traffic signals, which differs from national, global, and state trends.
- **Solutions:** The CMP analyzes congestion patterns and identifies potential solutions, with a focus on signal improvements and addressing bottlenecks.
- **Performance Measures:** Efforts are underway to incorporate performance measures and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies.

At the closing of her presentation Klarissa provided a survey link and contact information for feedback.

Ramon Navarro inquired about the correlation between identified congested intersections and ongoing intersection improvement projects. Klarissa Gonzalez explained that some projects are off-system and not in the current dataset. However, more segments will be added to the dataset in the future to monitor specific locations more precisely. Navarro suggested that this data could be used to justify funding for future projects

B. National Ambient Air Quality Standards Revision

Klarissa Gonzalez provided an update on the recent revision of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), effective May 6, 2024. The revision reduced the primary annual standard for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) from 12 micrograms per cubic meter to 9 micrograms per cubic meter. Cameron County and Hidalgo County may be potentially affected by this change. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has awarded the LRGVDC a grant to monitor PM2.5 levels in the area.

Chairman Ben Worsham thanked Klarissa and asked if there were any questions. There were none, so the meeting moved on to the next item.

C. Presentation Discussion on Category 7 Utilization & Carryover Efforts

Eva Garcia provided an update on the efforts to manage Category 7 funding utilization and carryover, considering changes to the Texas Administrative Code and a new 20% threshold on carryover. She reported on meetings with the TxDOT Pharr district and Austin finance division, with another meeting tentatively scheduled for the end of July. Ms. Garcia indicated that the RGVMPPO is aiming to get under the 200% threshold by the end of 2025. She also discussed the importance of aligning project selection and ranking processes with federal performance measures and emphasized the need for ongoing communication with local governments and entities regarding project timelines.

Ramon Navarro expressed appreciation for the workshops with local governments and entities but emphasized the importance of follow-up communication regarding project rescheduling and amendments, due to the potential impact on local budgets.

Ms. Garcia acknowledged this concern and highlighted the value of monthly meetings with cities and TxDOT in facilitating communication.

Dora Robles added that clear communication from project developers regarding updated schedules and potential delays is crucial for decision-making and shared that updated project schedules are requested twice a year, typically due in early September. She encouraged transparency from project developers.

Ms. Garcia noted that the MPO is not currently making changes to its TIP revision or project scoring forms but will be exploring process improvements in the future to enhance communication during the MTP and TIP revision cycle.

Chairman Ben Worsham thanked Eva and asked if there were any questions. There were no more questions or comments, so the meeting moved on to the next item.

D. Federal Functional Classification Status Update

Luis Diaz presented an update on the status of federal functional classification (FC) requests for various projects. He highlighted the East Loop project, which is currently under review by TPMP and noted that the City of Brownsville will provide additional information to support the FC request. Mr. Diaz also mentioned that several projects have received approval for FC, including Morrison Road, Russell Road, International Drive, and Los Ebanos. He discussed the importance of evaluating surrounding areas before submitting FC requests for higher-capacity roadways and emphasized that FC requests will continue to be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Dora Robles added that it is important to demonstrate that projects with approved FC are being actively worked on, as FHWA can revoke approval due to inactivity.

Mr. Diaz clarified that this requirement applies to new construction projects and that continuous updates should be recorded for these projects.

Chairman Ben Worsham thanked Luis and asked if there were any questions. There were no more questions or comments, so the meeting moved on to the next item.

E. RGVMPPO Executive Director's Report and Updates

Luis Diaz reported that the LRGVDC is currently well within budget, having spent \$944,055 against a projected expenditure of \$1,239,304. He also mentioned that the federal certification review is upcoming in December and that the MPO has been working closely with federal partners to prepare. A desk audit is being conducted this month, and the MPO has been submitting reports and receiving feedback on various emphasis areas. Mr. Diaz noted that there may be communication with stakeholders regarding specific topics once feedback from Federal Highways is received.

F. TxDOT Project Status Report

Dora Robles provided a brief update on recent and upcoming TxDOT project lettings. She noted that several projects were let in May and June, and bid analysis and reviews are ongoing. There are no lettings scheduled for July, but two state let projects are planned for later months.

Rene Gonzalez inquired about the status of Taylor Road and noted that it was not included in the report. Ms. Robles responded that according to the latest communication with the City of Mission she believes that the project was pushed to May. She clarified that this is subject to change and that the project is be ready earlier than the conversation can take place. Mr. Gonzalez indicated that he would investigate the matter further.

Chairman Ben Worsham thanked Dora and asked if there were any more questions or concerns. There were no more questions or comments, so the meeting moved on to the next item.

G. Cameron County RMA Status Report

Chairman Ben Worsham noted that the CCRMA representative was not present to provide status but the status report was included within the agenda packet for review.

H. Hidalgo County RMA Status Report

Ramon Navarro Chief Construction Engineer for Hidalgo County RMA provided a detailed review of the status report included within the agenda packet.

Some of the items highlighted were as follows:

365 Toll Project: Coordination with McAllen, Foreign Trade Zone, and TxDOT for long-term alignment plans on the north side of the county.

Overweight/Oversized Permit Fees: Update on permit issuance and revenue generation since January 2014, totaling \$61,755,746. Clarification that funds are used for infrastructure improvements within the district.

Granjeno Wetland Mitigation Project: Awarded. Notice to proceed expected next week.

Chairman Ben Worsham thanked Ramon and asked if there were any questions or concerns. There were no questions or comments, so the meeting moved on to the next item.

I. Transit Status Report

Simon Ortiz provided a detailed review of the status report included within the agenda packet highlighting the following data:

Ridership:

Total ridership from October 2023 to April 2024: 1,189,970

Breakdown by agency:

- B Metro: 784,290
- Island Metro: 267,304
- Metro McAllen: 388,312
- Valley Metro: 125,335

B Metro Updates:

- Mobile fare project launched.
- Bus shelter improvement project phase one completed, with additional sites planned.
- Stop improvement project completed.
- BRT and micro transit studies launched.
- New hybrid diesel bus received and ready for service.
- Park and Ride project 40% complete.

Island Metro Updates:

- Ridership from October 2023 to April 2024: 207,334

John Ray Bocanegra from the City of McAllen provided an update regarding Metro McAllen highlighting the following data:

- Metro McAllen Updates:
- Mobile ticketing launched.
- Route expansion with new routes added.
- Grant-funded bus purchases.

Claudia Olmedo from Valley Metro provided an update regarding Valley Metro highlighting the following data:

- Valley Metro Updates:
- Travel training event
- Funding received for the regional transportation coordination plan.
- Smart fare project launch planned.

II) NEW OR UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairman Ben Worsham has tasked the MPO and TxDOT Pharr District with preparing a presentation on House Bill 3697 for the upcoming TAC and Policy meetings. Luis Diaz (MPO) and Dora Robles (TxDOT) acknowledged the request and confirm to collaborate on its fulfillment.

III) ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the RGV MPO TAC Members, Chairman Ben Worsham called for a motion to adjourn. Tomas D. Reyna with the City of Edinburg made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:28am. The motion was seconded by Juan Peña with the City of Brownsville, meeting was adjourned.