

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

**Wednesday, July 31, 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 (VIRTUAL) Helen Ramirez (Proxy)
Cameron County	Judge Eddie Treviño, Jr. - PRESENT Com. Sofia C. Benavides
City of McAllen	Mayor Javier Villalobos (Designee) Assistant City Manager Michelle Rivera (Proxy) - PRESENT
City of Edinburg	Mayor Ramiro Garza (Designee) - ABSENT Comm. Daniel “Dan” Diaz (Alternate)
City of Mission	Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza (Designee) - PRESENT Asst. City Manager Juan Pablo “JP” Terrazas (Alternate)
City of Harlingen	Mayor Norma Sepulveda (Designee) Gabriel Gonzalez (Alternate) - PRESENT
City of Pharr	Mayor Ambrosio “Amos” Hernandez (Designee) - ABSENT Ruben Alfaro (Proxy)
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
<b>Others Present:</b>	
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 May 29, 2024.

**Assistant City Manager from the City of McAllen pointed out an error on item IV.A. No other comments or corrections were noted to the minutes of May 29, 2024. Motion to approve correction by Pedro “Pete” Alvarez from TxDOT. Approval was seconded by Reyna Guerra from Starr County. The item was unanimously approved.**

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

Fernando Cantu presented the proposed amendment to the FY 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The amendment includes integrating language that addresses the 2021 Planning Emphasis Areas (PEAs). This addition is essential for aligning the UPWP with the requirements for Metropolitan and Statewide Planning Research Work programs. The amendment also updates Task 3.2, 'Complete Streets,' to comply with the new federal mandate requiring Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to allocate at least 2.5% of their PL (Planning) funds toward planning activities that promote safe and accessible transportation options. This requirement aims to improve transportation accessibility for individuals of all ages and abilities across various travel modes.

Pedro Alvarez requested a correction to the TxDOT representative, and Fernando Cantu acknowledge the request and confirm to change it.

**Pedro Alvarez from TxDOT made a motion to approve. Approval was seconded by Reyna Guerra from Starr County. The item was unanimously approved.**

##### **C. Discussion and Action on TJKM Contract Amendment**

Fernando Cantu presented a proposed amendment to the current TJKM contract. The amendment aims to incorporate new tasks and increase the budget from \$199,648.95 to \$250,000. This adjustment is necessary to ensure that all activities related to the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant are adequately funded. The additional budget will allow for enhanced project capabilities, improved outcomes, and ensure that the SS4A goals are met effectively.

##### **Discussion:**

- Fernando outlined the specific new tasks that necessitated the contract amendment and budget increase.
- Attendees discussed the importance of these additional tasks in achieving the SS4A Grant objectives.
- The impact of the budget increase on project scope, timelines, and expected outcomes was analyzed.
- There was consensus on the need for the budget adjustment to ensure the successful implementation of the SS4A project.

A motion was made by Reyna Guerra from Starr County to approve the TJKM - SS4A Contract Amendment, including the budget increase to \$250,000. The motion was seconded by Ramon Navarro from Hidalgo County RMA.

##### **D. Discussion and Action on ATG – MTP Contract Amendment**

Fernando Cantu presented a proposed amendment to the current ATG contract highlighting the following:

- The current ATG contract is being amended to include new tasks and increase the budget from \$338,838.21 to \$397,043.03.
- This amendment allows ATG to review the Travel Demand Model (TDM) and incorporate its outputs into the new Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).
- The additional budget covers TDM review, staff training, and the contract extension to December 2025.

Mr. Cantu introduced Ben Magallon to provide more information regarding the item.

Luis Diaz added in addition to ATG assisting with the review and providing feedback on the data, the contract amendment also includes an opportunity for ATG to provide training to RGVMPPO staff on the outputs and the data.

Commissioner Fuentes inquired about the potential impact of the contract extension on other trickle-down contracts or deadlines. Fernando Cantu clarified that the MTP expires next year, not this year. The contract extension will not negatively impact on any deadlines and will allow for a better MTP due to the additional time for incorporating the TDM outputs.

Ben Magallon from ATG provided a review of the of the contract amendment highlighting the following;

- **Support and training for RGVMPPO staff** on TDM review and validation.
- **Integration of TDM** into the MTP for improved project scoring.
- **Contract extension to December 2025** to align with MTP timeline.
- **Ensuring federal compliance** by using the latest tools and data.
- **Adding Task 7** for TDM review and support, including staff training.
- **Collaborative approach** between ATG and RGVMPPO staff.
- **Extended timeline** for public involvement and feedback.
- **Expanded study area** to include portions of Stark County.
- **Leveraging existing data validation** for accuracy.
- **Support for network reviews.**
- **Contract clarification** to incorporate the amendment.

Luis Diaz Added that Mr. Ben Magallon will be available after the meeting to conduct stakeholder interviews for the MTP. Board members are encouraged to participate if they have time.

**A motion was made by Pedro “Pete” Alvarez from TxDOT to approve the ATG - MTP Contract Amendment, including the budget increase to \$397,043.03. The motion was seconded by City of McAllen’s assistant City Manager Michelle Rivera.**

#### **E. Discussion and Action for Qualifications RFQ for Legal Services for RGVMPPO Contract Review**

Fernando Cantu presented the need for the RGVMPPO to acquire qualified legal firms through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process. The selected firm will be responsible for reviewing and enhancing contractual agreements, ensuring legal compliance, and evaluating both new and existing contracts with vendors. The firm will also review Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between the RGVMPPO and local governments, providing legal guidance on interpretation, compliance, and potential amendments. Additionally, the firm will ensure adherence to federal regulations such as 23 CFR Part 450 and 2 CFR Part 200. The RGVMPPO/LRGVDC seeks to select an experienced attorney or law firm capable of delivering high-quality, timely legal advice to the organization’s executive and administrative staff.

**Chairman Fuentes, Judge Trevino, Frank Parker, Norma Sepulveda and Pete Alvarez engaged in a discussion highlighting the following points.**

- Concerns about the absence of hourly rates in the RFQ.
- Concerns about potential higher costs associated with a national firm compared to a local firm.
- Commissioner emphasized the value of choosing a local firm for cost-effectiveness.

Felipe Lopez with procurement department stepped up to the podium to address the following concerns:

- The RFQ process did not initially request hourly rates, but these would be negotiated during contract discussions.
- Due to federal funds involvement, the highest-ranked firm must be selected, but negotiations can occur, and the contract can be declined if an agreement isn't reached.

- The procurement process allows for requesting rates from both firms simultaneously.
- The scope of work doesn't include travel, only remote contract review.
- The scoring criteria were reviewed, highlighting the importance of experience, expertise, qualifications, understanding the RGVMPPO, and resources/capacity.

**A motion was made by Pedro “Pete” Alvarez from TxDOT to proceed with issuing the RFQ for Legal Services for RGVMPPO Contract Review as presented. The motion was seconded by San Benito mayor Ricardo Guerra.**

## V) PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

### A. Congestion Management Process Update

Klarissa Gonzalez provided an update on the recent Congestion Management Process (CMP) Subcommittee meetings. The subcommittee has been focusing on a comprehensive analysis of traffic congestion in the region and has engaged in productive discussions on establishing regional goals, evaluating traffic challenges, and identifying effective strategies for implementation. The first draft of the 2024 RGVMPPO CMP is now available for review and feedback before its adoption this fall.

Frank Parker inquired about the traffic flow before and after the study, specifically asking if data was available for comparison. Klarissa Gonzalez confirmed the availability of historical traffic data for comparison and mentioned a recent study on traffic light synchronization and flow.

Commissioner Fuentes mentioned the recent inclusion of a study on traffic light synchronization and traffic flows.

Klarissa Gonzalez clarified that the mentioned study is referred to as the "commercial delay setting" and focuses on traffic signal synchronization and protection. She reiterated the feedback from federal authorities regarding the need for a more comprehensive performance benefits process that includes alternative transportation options and infrastructure improvements, in addition to traffic signal synchronization.

**Informational item, no action required.**

### B. National Ambient Air Quality Standards Revision

Klarissa Gonzalez informed the committee about the revision of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) by the EPA, effective May 6th, 2024. The primary annual standard for the PM2.5 pollutant has been reduced from 12 micrograms per cubic meter to 9 micrograms per cubic meter. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has indicated that Cameron County and Hidalgo County might be affected by this revision. Consequently, TCEQ has awarded the LRGVDC a grant to conduct air quality planning activities focused on monitoring the level of PM2.5 in our area. The LRGVDC will conduct air quality planning activities as outlined in the TCEQ grant. The RGVMPPO will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as needed

Frank Parker inquired about the possibility of objecting to the location of the air quality monitors, expressing concerns about potential pollution from bridge traffic. Klarissa Gonzalez acknowledged that TCEQ is open to receiving input on unusual events like wildfires that could affect air quality data validation.

Pedro “Pete” Alvarez highlighted various factors contributing to air quality, especially near the international border. He suggested considering monitoring locations considering these factors and exploring solutions from other metro areas.

**Informational item, no action required.**

### **C. Presentation Discussion on Category 7 Utilization & Carryover Efforts**

Eva Garcia provided an update on the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 16 revisions. She shared new estimates and updated the committee on the Project Readiness Subcommittee's discussions regarding project prioritization and scoring criteria. She also highlighted that these efforts have been closely coordinated with TxDOT Pharr District staff. Ms. Garcia also informed the committee about the ongoing efforts to address the new requirements and new estimates and discussions with the Project Readiness Subcommittee and acknowledged the coordination efforts of TxDOT Pharr District staff. She added that the RGVMPPO will continue to work with the Project Readiness Subcommittee to finalize the project prioritization and scoring criteria and continue to work to increase allocation utilization and decrease carryover.

**Informational item, no action required.**

### **D. Discussion regarding the RGVMPPO Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (TASA; also known as Category 9)**

Eva Garcia updated the committee on the status of the FY2021-2022 TASA Projects, all of which are currently in the 'obligation phase'. She reminded the members that the awarded funds are set to lapse by September 2025. As previously discussed in the May 2024 TASA Update, Ms. Garcia provided project development updates. She highlighted the ongoing communication with RGVMPPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) & Transportation Policy Board (TPB) Members regarding TASA projects to ensure the timely obligation and reimbursement of programmed funds. She also emphasized the continued collaboration with the Texas Department of Transportation Pharr District (TxDOT) and Local Government (LG) project sponsors to provide these updates to RGVMPPO Members. Ms. Garcia reiterated the commitment of the RGVMPPO to continue to monitor the progress of the TASA projects and provide updates as needed and to continue to effectively work with TxDOT to assist entities to ensure timely obligation and reimbursement funds.

**Informational item, no action required.**

### **E. Federal Functional Classification Status Update**

Luis provided a status update on recent Federal Functional Classification submittals and upcoming submittals. He highlighted the role of functional classification in describing roadway system performance, benchmarks, and targets, particularly as agencies move towards a performance-based management approach. Mr. Diaz assured the board that the RGVMPPO will continue to update on any further development related to functional classification.

**Informational item, no action required.**

### **F. RGVMPPO Executive Director's Report and Updates**

Luis Diaz provided updates on various aspects of the RGVMPPO's operations, including:

#### **1. Budget Update:**

- The RGVMPPO is currently well within its budget, with total expenditures of \$1,201,840.89 against a planned expenditure of \$1,593,390.
- The total adjusted UPWP for the year is \$4,249,040.

#### **2. Federal Certification Review:**

- A notice has been sent out regarding the upcoming federal certification review, scheduled for December 5th and 6th.
- Staff is actively coordinating with FHWA to ensure compliance.
- Changes have been made to the website to provide easy access to required documents.

#### **3. Project Readiness:**

- A survey was sent out requesting individuals to register for the Project Readiness event in September.
- The deadline for registration is August 28th at 8 pm.
- The focus is on hearing from RPTAs rather than consultants representing local governments.

#### **4. TASA Working Group:**

- The first meeting of the TASA Working Group for the FY 2025-2026 TASA program call is scheduled for August 9th.
- Subsequent meetings are planned for September 13th and October 9th.

**Informational item, no action required.**

#### **G. TxDOT Project Status Report**

TxDOT Pharr Area Staff provided updates on the following projects. Detailed information within the agenda packet.

- **FM 676:**

- Roadway reconstruction and widening from La Homa to Conway.
- Currently at 44% completion
- Expected completion date is November 2025

- **FM 576:**

- From Taylor Rd. to Ware Rd.
- Widening from 2 lanes to 4 lanes
- Currently at 1% completion
- Expected completion date is July 2026

- **I-69 Controversial Project:**

- Northbound and southbound reversal from Industrial Boulevard to 249 in Harlingen
- Currently at 67% completion
- Expected completion date is September 2024

- **SH 4:**

- Widening from I-69 to I-648 in Brownsville
- Currently at 22% completion
- Expected completion date is 2026

- **Various Farm-to-Market Road Projects:**

- Updates were provided on several Farm-to-Market Road projects, including environmental assessments, right-of-way acquisitions, utility coordination, and anticipated let dates.

**Informational item, no action required.**

#### **H. Cameron County RMA Status Report**

Cameron County RMA staff provided an update on various projects. Detailed information within the agenda packet.

Mr. Sepulveda provided updates on various Hidalgo County RMA projects:

##### **Completed Projects:**

- **CBP Primary Lane Expansion:**

- Recently opened, adding four passenger vehicle lanes.
- CBP is currently testing the new lanes.

##### **Ongoing Projects**

- **Gap 2 Project:**

- This is the final segment of SH 550 to be designated as Interstate 169
- PS&E is 95% complete
- Coordination with Union Pacific is in progress
- Environmental clearance is expected in 6-9 months

- **Donna-Rio Bravo International Bridge:**

- Received presidential permit.
- Currently in NEPA process and working with Mexico
- Financial feasibility study for a potential toll bridge is underway

- **Pharr International Bridge:**
  - Design is 100% complete, right-of-way acquired.
  - Pending TxDOT decision on public involvement process
  - Environmental clearance expected in 30-120 days
- **Other Projects**
  - Updates were provided on several other projects, including Green Avenue, Loop 509, Loop 508, William Brown, SH 107, Harlingen Growth Corridor, SH 481, Ware Road, FM 907, and various sidewalk and bike lane projects.

**Additional Updates**

- **Toll Tag Interoperability:**
  - RMA's toll tag is now interoperable with Harris County Toll Road Authority
  - Working on making it interoperable with Mexico.
- **2025 UTP Draft**
  - Draft 2025 UTP shows \$400 million decrease from current UTP
  - No funding for projects along US 281 or US 77
  - Deadline for comments is August 25<sup>th</sup> at 4PM
  - Transportation Commission will approve 2025 UTP in August 22<sup>nd</sup>'s meeting.

Judge Trevino highlighted the recent groundbreaking for the next segment of I-69 in Kennedy County. He expressed disappointment with the \$400 million decrease in funding in the 2025 UTP, especially considering the region's recent designation as a metropolitan district. He emphasized the need for the region to receive more funding, not less. He urged all members to submit comments on the draft UTP.

**Informational item, no action required.**

**I. Hidalgo County RMA Status Report**

Mr. Navarro presented the Hidalgo County RMA quarterly project status report, highlighting several key updates:

- **Projects:**
  - The East section of the loop is currently left off in many projects.
  - SH-68 and IBTC are now overseen by TxDOT.
  - Construction on segments 1 and 2 of the 365 tollway is underway.
  - The Hidalgo County RMA is responsible for oversight and administering overweight/oversized permits for Hidalgo County.
    - 354,726 permits have been issued since January 14, 2014, generating \$63 million.
    - In 2024, 40,019 permits have been issued, generating \$8,170,436.
    - June 2024 saw an annual decline in permits a month earlier than usual.
  - The 365 Tollway project is progressing with a change order issued for the toll collection system.
  - The Heavy Highway project has seen 13 change orders and various RFIs and submittals.
  - Work continues embankment, underground infrastructure, levee work, and bridge structures.
  - The project is at 48% production and 68% timewise.
  - Suspensions of work were issued for cement-treated base and MSC wall panels due to quality concerns.
  - Other projects, such as Loop 509, Loop 508, William Brown, SH 107, Harlingen Growth Corridor, SH 481, Ware Road, FM 907, and various sidewalk and bike lane projects, are also in progress.

**Informational item, no action required.**

**J. Transit Status Report**

Transit representative provided updates on the following projects. Detailed information within the agenda packet.

Simon Ortiz provided updates on several transit initiatives:

- **Brownsville Metro:**
  - Launched mobile ticketing and smart card projects on July 12th.
  - Shelter improvement project is underway with 17 new shelters expected later this year.
  - The bus stop improvement project includes filling in curb cuts.
  - A disability study for Bus Rapid Transit has been launched.
  - An RFP is out for a micro transit and operational study for the City of Brownsville.
  - A new diesel-electric hybrid bus was launched.
  - TIGER Bus Yard Project is 40% complete.
  - Ridership data for all agencies in the Valley was shared.
  - McAllen Metro launched a route expansion.
- **Valley Metro:**
  - The new unit is in service.
  - Travel training and CDO Academy are ongoing.
  - A five-year Regional Transportation Coordination Plan is in progress.
  - Valley Metro is also launching a smartphone app.

Chairman Fuentes expressed his gratitude to Island Metro, Tom Logan, and Judge Trevino for their assistance in coordinating Island Metro service for the South Texas Judges and Commissioners conference held last month at South Padre Island. He highlighted the value of the service in helping attendees travel between hotels, the conference center, and various events.

**No other questions or comments. Informational item, no action required.**

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

Javier Dominguez extended an invitation to all attendees to join the Statewide Texas Passenger Advisory Committee meeting with Travis County Judge Andy Brown. Lunch will be provided from 11:30 AM to 12:45 PM in Weslaco. Judge Brown will likely discuss garnering support for fair share funding for rail projects in Texas and the potential inclusion of RGVMPPO in future funding applications. Previous Involvement: Texas Rail included the RGVMPPO in their letter of intent but not in their actual application. Positive feedback suggests the RGVMPPO has a strong case for inclusion in future funding applications.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business to come before the RGVMPPO TPB Members, Chairman Commissioner David L. Fuentes called the meeting adjourned at 3:18pm.*

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

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

