

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON MEETING
August 8, 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	Ruben Alfaro
Hidalgo County	Velinda Reyes
City of Brownsville	Joel Garza
City of McAllen	Rene Gonzalez
City of Edinburg	Mardoqueo Hinojosa
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	Nancy Sanchez
Cameron County RMA	Absent
Brownsville Metro	Octavio Salazar
McAllen Metro	Absent
Port of Brownville	Absent
Port of Harlingen	Absent
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 July 11, 2024

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

Roberto Hernandez from the City of Harlingen made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, which was seconded by Dora E. Robles from TxDOT Pharr District.

Approved: September 12, 2024

B. Discussion and Action on Federal Functional Classification of Nolana Loop

Luis Diaz reviewed the request from Hidalgo County Commissioner Precinct 1 for the functional classification change for Nolana Loop Section 4 from its current unclassified status to a Major Collector. The specific section under consideration is from Victoria Road to FM 88 (Texas Blvd.), representing 2 miles of the total 10-mile Nolana Loop. Luis added that further clarification on existing roadways will be sought before the final submittal of the packet.

Chairman Ben Worsham inquired about the current classification of the road section, to which Luis Diaz confirmed it is currently unclassified.

Velinda Reyes from Hidalgo County emphasized the importance of this project for the county and the region.

Chairman Ben Worsham asked if there were any more questions or comments and after none were presented, he asked for a motion to approve item. Velinda Reyes from Hidalgo County made a motion to approve. Rene Gonzalez from the City of McAllen seconded the motion. Motion passed.

C. Discussion and Action for Clean Cities Coalition

LRGVDC Executive Analyst Javier Dominguez provided a presentation seeking approval from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to present a letter of commitment to the Policy Board for joining the South Texas Clean Cities and Communities Coalition as a community stakeholder.

Mr. Dominguez highlighted the following:

- The Clean Cities initiative was previously hosted by the MPO but has transitioned to the LRGVDC administrative office.
- The LRGVDC is seeking apprenticeship status for a five-year contract with the Department of Energy (DOE) to establish the coalition.
- The coalition aims to unify three Councils of Governments (COGs) south of San Antonio, with potential inclusion of the Golden Crescent COG.
- The DOE contract offers \$110,000 annually, with recertification in the fourth year.
- Full designation from the DOE, granting access to funding, typically takes 1-2 years.
- The coalition will be structured with founding stakeholders forming a decision-making committee.
- Membership is open to public and private entities, with potential for private companies to pay membership fees to support local initiatives.
- Benefits of joining include access to a peer network of coalitions, expertise sharing, grant preferences, and data on EV registrations and certified green parking spaces.
- The MPO is invited to join due to its role in the NEVI TxDOT plan for EV infrastructure funding.

Dora Robles asked about membership beyond the initial 9-15 stakeholders and about what resources or funding commitments are required beyond committee participation.

Javier Dominguez informed the board that the initial focus is on equitable representation across the three COG regions and that additional members can be recruited through outreach at various committees and events. The primary commitment is time for participation in initiatives, subcommittees, and potential quarterly meetings. No membership fees are required for public partners.

Javier added that resources gained include expertise sharing, grant preferences, and networking opportunities and that local match funding for grants can be leveraged through coalition resources.

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

Nancy Sanchez from Valley Metro made a motion to approve, and Roberto Hernandez with the City of Harlingen seconded the motion. Chairman Ben Worsham confirmed that the motion passed.

I) PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. House Bill 3697 Presentation

John Jameson Director of TxDOT Local Government Programs Section provided a detailed presentation regarding House Bill 3697, passed in the last legislative session, has tightened the requirements around corridor identification in relation to plat applications and approvals. Counties can no longer refuse to review or approve a plat application due to lack of corridor identification unless they have a formal agreement with TxDOT outlining those corridors. TxDOT has developed a streamlined process for counties to enter into such agreements.

- Transportation Code, Section 201: Quadrant planning with counties
- Texas Administrative Code, Section 232: Further details on corridor agreements
- House Bill 3697: Added Section C to the Administrative Code, requiring agreements for corridor-based plat refusals
- Corridor Definition:
 - A plan derived from existing transportation plans, adopted by relevant entities (TxDOT, county, MPO)
- Agreement Process:
 - Counties submit a one-page form to their local TxDOT district office
 - Form includes:
 - Corridor transportation plan and link to online version
 - Proof of plan approval by the county or relevant entity
 - Map of corridors and link to online map
 - Signature by County Judge or authorized representative with proof of authorization
 - TxDOT reviews the submission and, if satisfactory, executes the agreement via DocuSign
- Post-Agreement Requirements:
 - TxDOT publishes notice in the Texas Register and a local newspaper
 - Counties must submit a new agreement if their corridor plan changes
- Next Steps for Counties:
 - Adopt a corridor plan if one doesn't exist
 - Obtain authorization to enter into an agreement
 - Submit the request and supporting information to TxDOT
- Resources:
 - TxDOT webpage with program details and application form: [invalid URL removed]
 - Contact Brandon Munoz at the Pharr District office for submissions

Mardoqueo Hinojosa: Inquired about the difference between the new corridor agreement requirements and the existing thoroughfare plan process in the MPO and county.

John Jameson: Acknowledged potential overlap, stating the county's thoroughfare plan could serve as its corridor plan for the agreement.

Ben Worsham asked if the new rules primarily affect cases where development bypasses city jurisdiction and goes directly to the county. He also clarified that Chapter 232 applies to both city and county requirements within the ETJ, even in border counties. He noted that some cities in Cameron County have opted out of ETJ platting, making the county solely responsible, which would necessitate an agreement with TxDOT for right-of-way dedication.

John Jameson confirmed that the new law prevents protecting right-of-way without a TxDOT agreement.

Ben Worsham suggested each county is likely responsible for adopting the plan or a portion within their jurisdiction, potentially requiring each judge's approval.

Velinda Reyes asked if they are currently in compliance and if any action is needed.

John Jameson clarified that entering into an agreement is not mandatory but may be beneficial for protecting corridors and future planning, especially with the recent law changes.

No other questions or comments.

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B. National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program Phase II Update

Klarissa Gonzalez provided an update on the Texas Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan, which was developed by TxDOT and approved by FHWA in 2022. The plan is currently in Phase II of deployment.

Phase II allows Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to propose study areas and power ratings for EV charging stations to be located equitably within their Metropolitan Area Boundary. The RGVMPPO is required to propose six to eight study areas by December 2024, considering specific criteria.

TxDOT will then select a specific site within each proposed study area for the installation of charging stations. Following this, private entities will have the opportunity to participate in a competitive grant application process managed by TxDOT.

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 of RGVMPPO CAT 7 Utilization Report

Luis Diaz presented a Utilization Report on the RGVMPPO's CAT 7 Programming in relation to the DRAFT 2025 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) Allocations. Detailed presentation provided within the budget packet.

Roberto Hernandez from the City of Harlingen inquired about the possibility of ranking projects in the UTP to address potential delays (e.g., right-of-way acquisition).

Luis Diaz confirmed that project readiness information will be collected and compiled into a report, with the goal of providing a ranking system. However, the September presentation will focus on showcasing projects and their current development progress.

Mr. Hernandez also asked how adding new projects to the UTP would work and if they need to wait until 2033 to budget for projects not currently listed but potentially shovel ready.

Luis Diaz explained that a program that calls for projects not currently in plans will be possible once the negative balance is addressed. Until then, the focus is on utilizing existing funds and potentially swapping programmed projects for those deemed higher priority.

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.

D. RGVMPPO Executive Director's Report and Updates

Luis Diaz reported on the RGVMPPO budget, Ambient Air Quality Standards and the Thoroughfare Plan Amendments.

Budget Update

- The RGVMPPO is currently well within its budget.
- The total spent is \$391,550, against a budgeted amount of \$1,593,390.
- The remaining budget until October is \$249,042.
- The new budget year will start with a positive balance.

Ambient Air Quality Standards

- Changes have been made to the PM 2.5 pollutant standards.
- There is currently an informal public involvement period.
- The RGVMPPO will be putting together a formal submittal for public involvement and will bring it to the committee for feedback.

Thoroughfare Plan Amendments

- The RGVMPPO will be opening for submittals for amendments to the Rio Grande Valley Thoroughfare Plan.
- The criteria from the House Bill presentation will be taken into consideration in the amendment process.
- Amendments will be accepted starting this month.
- Cities must have amendments approved by their City Commission before the MPO can record them.

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- Counties will have resolutions presented to them after approval by the policy board.
- An email will be sent out shortly with the amendment process and deadlines.

Questions and Answers

- Ben Worsham asked about considering the required corridor plan for the TxDOT agreement, how relevant is the thoroughfare plan now?
 - Luis Diaz responded that it's up to each local government to decide whether to use the county plan or create a separate corridor plan.
- Ben Worsham stated that given that the corridor plan is required for additional right-of-way dedication, what is the use of the thoroughfare plan now that we're relying on the corridor plan?
 - Luis Diaz: The thoroughfare plan might still be relevant initially, as it may not perfectly match the corridor plan. However, in the long run, the corridor plan will likely be the primary tool for managing right-of-way dedications.

No more questions or comments

E. TxDOT Project Status Report

Dora Robles provided a brief update on recent and upcoming TxDOT project lettings.
no more questions or comments, so the meeting moved on to the next item.

II) NEW OR UNFINISHED BUSINESS

III) ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the RGVMPO TAC Members, Chairman Ben Worsham called for a motion to adjourn. Roberto Hernandez with the City of Harlingen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:05am. The motion was seconded by Joel Garza with the City of Brownsville, meeting was adjourned.