

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN-PERSON MEETING
September 12, 2024 - Minutes**

I) CALL TO ORDER

Benjamin Worsham – Chairman (Cameron County) 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
Hidalgo County	Velinda Reyes
City of Brownsville	Joel Garza
City of McAllen	Rene Gonzalez
City of Edinburg	Tomas Reyna
City of Harlingen	Roberto Hernandez
City of Mission	Absent
City of Pharr	Maria Rangel
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	Absent
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	
RGVMPO Staff	

III) PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments

IV) CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of August 8, 2024

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

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

D) PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. Discussion on the FY 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) November 2024 Revision Cycle

Rudy Zamora presented information on the FY 2025-2028 TIP November 2024 Revision Cycle, including the following:

- **Public Involvement:**
 - A 30-day public engagement period runs from September 9th to October 9th.
 - A flyer announcing the public involvement process is being used, and it will be posted on the RGVMPO website and at in-person locations.
 - The in-person location in Brownsville is still being finalized, with potential options being the Plaza Transit Station, the Segovia event, or the farmers market.
- **TIP Approval and Revision:**
 - The initial 2025-2028 TIP needs to be approved by FHWA and FTA by September 24th.
 - Until federal approval is received, the current short-range TIP Amendment 13 and the Transit TIP remain in effect.
 - Once federal approval is obtained, draft revisions for the November cycle can be proposed.
 - The deadline for submitting administrative changes or project revisions to MPO is October 1st.
- **Project Readiness and Update Forms:**
 - A project readiness meeting will be held to discuss administrative changes, project timelines, and other concerns.
 - Update forms for both STIP and MTP projects (highway and transit) are available for submitting technical changes and revisions.
- **November Revision Timeline:**
 - STIP workshops are scheduled for October 4th and 11th.
 - The deadline for uploading projects and documentation to the eSTIP system is October 7th.
 - TIP revisions and documentation must be finalized in the system by October 18th.
 - The earliest date for federal approval of the November revisions is December 9th.

There were no questions or comments from the committee.

B. Discussion on Annual RGV Thoroughfare/ROW Plan Amendment Process

Luis Diaz presented on the annual RGV Thoroughfare/ROW Plan amendment process. Key points from the presentation included:

- The plan is a collection of existing, planned, and preserved right-of-way (ROW) for transportation corridors 80 feet and wider within the Rio Grande Valley. It guides future development, promotes connectivity, and design uniformity.
- The MPO collects and displays thoroughfare data from local governments on its interactive map (UMAP) but does not have enforcement authority over ROW designations.
- UMAP Interactive Map: The UMAP displays existing, expanded, and new ROW designations. It can be accessed through the RGVMPO website.
- Amendment Process: Amendments to the Thoroughfare Plan must be accompanied by an ordinance or resolution from the relevant city or county. Forms available on the RGVMPO website.
- Timeline for Amendments:
 - September 12th: Presentation to the Technical Advisory Committee.
 - October 8th: Check-in meeting to address questions and progress.
 - December 20th: Deadline for amendment submittals.
 - February 25th: Presentation of amendments to the TAC and Policy boards.
 - March: Presentation of amendments to Commissioners Court.
 - April 2025: Amendments reflected on the UMAP.
 - August 2025: Amendment process opens again.

Chairman Ben Worsham opened the floor for questions and comments. No questions or comments were raised.

C. Update on RGVMPO TMA Planning Certification Process

Luis Diaz provided an update on the RGVMPO's upcoming federal certification scheduled for December 5th and 6th.

- **Desk Audit Review:** A desk audit review was conducted, focusing on 18 key areas. The review identified four areas for improvement.
- **Areas for Improvement:**
 - **Freight and Intermodal Planning:** Questions were raised about the MPO's engagement in freight and intermodal planning. Diaz confirmed that resources demonstrating the MPO's compliance have been shared with federal partners.
 - **Public Outreach:** Concerns were noted regarding public outreach and visualization techniques. Diaz stated that the MPO is working to enhance visualization and direct the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) team to relevant resources on the website.
 - **Safety Planning and Congestion Management:** The MPO is actively developing its safety planning and congestion management process, which will be presented next month. This address concerns related to performance management and performance measures.
 - **MPO Staffing and Training:** FHWA expressed concern about MPO staffing and training needs. Diaz reported progress in filling vacant positions, including a new planner and GIS specialist starting soon, and ongoing efforts to fill remaining vacancies.
- **Certification Event:** The on-site certification event will be held in Weslaco on December 5th and 6th. A virtual option will also be available. The first day will involve a roundtable discussion with the Policy Board and stakeholder interviews. The second day will conclude with closing remarks and a final report from FHWA. A follow-up meeting in 2025 will provide a detailed report on the certification findings.

Eric Davila requested a calendar invite with details about the certification event. Diaz agreed to share the information. Davila also inquired about the presentation of follow-up items, to which Diaz clarified that engagement with FHWA is ongoing and will be discussed at the December meeting.

Verlinda Reyes asked about the participants in the certification meeting. Diaz explained that it will involve a roundtable discussion with the Policy Board and interviews with various stakeholders.

Chairman Ben Worsham thanked Luis and asked if there were any questions. There were no more questions or comments.

D. RGVMPO Contract Updates

Luis Diaz provided updates on various RGVMPO contracts:

- **2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP):**
 - The contract for developing the 2050 MTP is underway with Alliance Transportation Group.
 - Public engagement events were held from August 29th to 31st in Edinburg, McAllen, and Brownsville.
 - The contract completion and presentation to the Policy Board is expected by October 10th of the following year.
 - The project includes project scoring, assistance with a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan, data review, and staff training.
- **Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Action Plan:**
 - This project is funded by a grant received by the MPO.
 - The kickoff meeting was held earlier this year.
 - The final plan is expected to be completed and presented to the TAC and Policy Board by March of the following year.
 - The plan will be shared with municipalities to assist them in seeking grants for safety initiatives.

- **Weslaco Loop Planning Corridor Alignment Study:**
 - The kickoff meeting for this project was held yesterday at the Edinburg office.
 - ETSI and LNG are the consultants working on the study.
 - The project will examine different options for the Weslaco Loop.
 - A webpage will be created on the RGV MPO website to display the draft map and proposed alignments.
 - The estimated completion date is February of the following year.
 - Engagement meetings will be held throughout the project, with the next meeting scheduled for October 18th.
- **Legal Services Contract:**
 - Negotiations are ongoing with Jackson Walker, a law firm from Austin, for legal services.
 - A meeting is scheduled for early next week to discuss negotiations and pricing.
 - Caso law firm in Edinburg is an alternative option if an agreement cannot be reached with Jackson Walker.
- **Passenger Rail Study:**
 - This contract has been awarded to ACOM.
 - It is currently pending legal review.
 - A kickoff meeting is expected to be held soon after the legal review is completed.

Eric Davila asked if the outreach for the Weslaco Loop project would be similar to that of the SS4A project, including invitations to both TAC and Policy committee members. Diaz confirmed that it would be, with engagement meetings and public involvement outreach shared with TAC members.

Eric Davila inquired about the scope of the legal services contract and the stage of negotiations with Jackson Walker. Diaz clarified that they are currently negotiating rates for the work needed, as the initial quote was high. If a fair price cannot be agreed upon, they will consider the alternative firm, Caso, and present the decision to the Policy Board.

No more questions or concerns.

E. RGV MPO Executive Director's Report and Updates

Luis Diaz provided the Executive Director's report, including the following updates:

- **Staff Attendance at Conferences:** All staff attended the TxDOT Planning Conference in Dallas last week. Some staff also attended the TEMPO meeting in Arlington at the NCTCOG offices.
- **Budget Update:**
 - The total adjusted budget is \$4,249,042.40.
 - The amount spent to date is \$1,366,822.65.
 - The expected spending at this point in the fiscal year was \$1,770,000. The MPO is currently operating under budget.
 - The current budget period closes at the end of September, and the new budget begins in October.

Eric Davila inquired about the difference between the amount spent and the expected spending, asking if it was related to contracts that started recently.

Luis Diaz confirmed that some of the difference is due to pending invoices for recently started contracts, which are expected before the budget period closes.

Eric Davila followed up by asking if those invoices would account for most of the difference, and Diaz confirmed that they would.

No more questions or comments

F. TxDOT Project Status Report

Dora Robles presented the TxDOT Letting Report.

- Key Updates:
 - Projects displayed in blue font indicate a change in the letting date.
 - The 24-month letting exercise has been completed.
 - As per standard practice, local government projects have been pushed to the latter two years of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to allow for flexibility. TxDOT is willing to work with local governments to accelerate projects if needed.
 - Changes in the letting report aim to achieve balanced lettings per quarter to meet TxDOT division requirements.

No questions or comments.

II) NEW OR UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairman Worsham led a discussion on the necessity of holding in-person TAC meetings when no action items were scheduled. Luis Diaz confirmed that no such requirement exists and suggested either canceling meetings or convening virtually in these instances. The committee unanimously agreed to implement a virtual meeting format for any future meetings lacking action items.

III) ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the RGVMPO TAC Members, Chairman Ben Worsham called for a motion to adjourn. Eric Davila with the Cameron County RMA made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:05am. The motion was seconded by Rene Gonzalez with the City of McAllen, meeting was adjourned.