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FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION



TMA CERTIFICATION REVIEW FOR THE LAREDO METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

December 8, 2020



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BACKGROUND

As required by 23 U.S.C. 134 (k)(5) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(k)(5), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) must jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process in Transportation Management Areas (TMA) at least every four years in accordance with 23 CFR 450 (Subpart C). Under federal law, a TMA is an urbanized area as defined by the U.S. Census, with a population of over 200,000 and designated by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, or any additional area where TMA designation is requested by the Governor and the MPO and designated by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation. The Laredo urbanized area is a designated TMA.

The Certification Review performed for the Laredo TMA consisted of a desk audit (completed in advance of the on-site review), a virtual site visit and public listening session, and the preparation of this report that summarizes the findings of the review. This review focused on compliance with title 23 U.S.C. 134 and 49 U.S.C. 5303 Federal planning laws and 23 CFR 450 metropolitan planning regulations; successes; challenges; and experiences of the cooperative, comprehensive, and continuous (“3-C”) planning process of the transportation partners – the Laredo MPO staff and management, TxDOT, El Metro Urban Transit, the City of Laredo and Webb County, and other local partners.

The certification review process is only one of several methods used to assess the quality of the local metropolitan planning process. Other activities include review and approval of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), review of the metropolitan long-range plan (MTP), review of the public participation plan, review of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that was approved by FHWA and FTA as part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and on-going meetings and contact with the transportation planning partners.

While the actual planning certification review report may not fully document all on-going contact between FHWA/FTA and the local and state planning partners, the final certification of the metropolitan transportation planning process is based upon the cumulative findings of the entire process. In January 2020, a desk audit was completed by members of the Federal Review Team based upon their knowledge and involvement in the Laredo MPO metropolitan planning process; review and approval, as applicable, of metropolitan planning products (including the UPWP, TIP/STIP, and MTP); and other information on the MPO website including the Public Participation Plan (PPP) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan prepared by the Laredo MPO staff.

The Federal Review Team limited the focus and scope of the FY 2020 TMA Certification Review virtual on-site discussion to the “high risk” areas identified during the previous certification review in FY 2016 and the FY 2020 desk audit. The following five metropolitan planning areas that were identified as “high risk” included: 1) Public Participation Process/EJ; 2) Congestion Management Process (CMP); 3) Performance-Based Planning and Programming (PBPP); 4) Freight and Intermodal Planning; and 5) MPO Staffing and Training Needs. These five “high risk” areas were identified based upon the FY 2016 TMA Certification Review and the day-to-day

working relationships and knowledge of the current MPO planning process. The following Federal Review Team worksheet was utilized in order to finalize the FY 2020 TMA Certification Review scope of review and identify the potential “high risk” areas for the on-site review completed in FY 2020. The FHWA worksheet was filled out based upon knowledge of the work tasks annotated within the FY 2020 UPWP, completion and subsequent approval of the FY 19-22 STIP/TIP and subsequent amendments, public outreach-consultation efforts and participation in the metropolitan planning process, review of previous FY 2016 TMA Certification review findings and recommendations, completion of the FY 2020 desk audit in February 2020, attendance at MPO policy board and technical meetings, and the determination of acceptable 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) by FHWA and FTA in April 2020.

**TABLE 1- FHWA/FTA Worksheet for Establishing “High Risks”
for FY 2020 Certification Review**

Certification Review Topic	Status			Proposal for Current Review – Place a check in the appropriate column and list specific focus, if any.		
	Included in Previous Certification Review (Y/N)	Addressed in Recent Federal Action (Y/N)	Past Issues/ Potential Risk (H) (M) (L)	Include in Future Certification Review	Rely on Desk Review and/or Recent Actions	Cover During On-Site Review
1. Organizational Structure & Policy Board Involvement	YES -in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
2. TMA/MPA Boundaries	YES-in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
3. Agreements & Contracts	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
4. UPWP Development	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
5. MTP Development	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
6. Financial Planning	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
7. Freight and Intermodal Planning	YES- in compliance	Needs follow-up review in FY 2020	H	YES	✓	✓
8. AQ & Transportation Conformity	N/A (Attainment Area)	N/A (Attainment Area)	N/A	N/A	N/A	
9. TIP Development: Includes Annual List of Obligated Projects	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	

**TABLE 1- FHWA/FTA Worksheet for Establishing “High Risks” for
FY 2020 Certification Review (CONT’D)**

Certification Review Topic	Status			Proposal for Current Review – Place a check in the appropriate column and list specific focus, if any.		
	Included in Previous Certification Review (Y/N)	Addressed in Recent Federal Action (Y/N)	Past Issues/ Potential Risk (H) (M) (L)	Include in Future Certification Review	Rely on Desk Review and/or Recent Actions	Cover During On-Site Review
10. Public Outreach/EJ: Includes Visualization Techniques	YES- in compliance	Needs follow-up review in FY 2020	H	YES	✓	✓
11. Self-Certifications: Includes Title VI, Nondiscrimination, EJ, and LEP	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
12.. Consultation and Coordination: Includes Freight	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
13. Management & Operations Considerations: Includes ITS	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
14. Security in the Planning Process	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
15. Land Use & connectivity	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
16. PBPP: Includes Safety Planning and CMP	YES- in compliance	Needs follow-up review in FY 2020	H	YES	✓	✓
17. Emerging Technologies	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	No	✓	
18. MPO Staffing and Training Needs	YES- in compliance	YES- in compliance (see discussion below)	L	YES	✓	✓

Identification of “Low-Risk” MPO Certification Review Planning Topics

The following section describes the rationale for determining the “low-risk” planning areas (or topics) associated with Table 1 above. The following planning subject areas were found to be “low-risk” for purposes of this review by the Federal Review Team based upon the rationale provided below in meeting 23 CFR 450 regulations. Based upon the new risk-based stewardship

and oversight (RBSO) planning methodology the following planning topics were eliminated from further review by the Federal Review Team.

1. Organizational Structure & Policy Board Involvement

The Laredo MPO utilizes three different planning bodies: a) Policy Board, b) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and c) MPO staff to conduct its required metropolitan planning activities. The MPO's website includes a link called About the MPO (<http://www.laredompo.org/>) that provides additional information on the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) itself, including a listing of the Laredo Urban Transportation Study (LUTS) Technical Committee, and the MPO Policy Committee membership.

The FAST Act metropolitan planning regulations have been met by the MPO having secured a signed Governor's designation by agreement and having a policy board comprised of local elected officials, officials of public agencies, as well as intermodal (including public transit) representatives, appropriate State officials per 23 CFR 450.310(d).

2. TMA/MPA Boundaries

The MPO planning area boundary includes all urbanized areas defined by the 2010 U.S. Census and those areas expected to be urbanized over the next 20 years. A copy of the current MPA boundary is shown in the newly adopted 2045 MTP. It is anticipated the MPO will review the MPA boundary again after the Year 2020 Census is issued and may revise its MPA accordingly in cooperation with the State and public transportation operator (El Metro) within the Laredo and Webb County Region consistent with 23 CFR 450.312.

3. Agreements & Contracts

The Laredo MPO contract with the State of Texas DOT (TxDOT- Transportation Planning and Programming Division) is current and valid (relevant parties signed it in September 2018) and provides the mechanism for metropolitan planning products to be delivered including roles and responsibilities of each party for the development of TIPs, UPWPs, and MTP adoption and coordination.

Acting through its MPO Policy Board (in conjunction with the TxDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA)), the Laredo MPO conducts the "3-C" metropolitan transportation planning process within the metropolitan planning area boundary. An interagency contract was signed with the TxDOT on September 24, 2018 that documents the roles and responsibilities of the MPO and its planning products.

In addition, a tri-party MOU for development of performance measures and goals has also been executed per the FAST Act regulations. The tri-party MOU document was signed and made effective in February 2018 by the MPO policy board and covers the MPO, transit agency, and TxDOT roles and responsibilities in the area of performance-based planning and programming as well as target-setting consistent with 23 CFR 450.314(h)(1).

4. UPWP Development

The FY 2020 UPWP was adopted by the Laredo MPO policy board on August 19, 2019 and was subsequently approved by FHWA and FTA on September 3, 2019 per 23 CFR 450.308. The UPWP includes a discussion of the planning priorities facing the metropolitan planning organization, includes discussion of the FAST Act ten planning factors, and how PBPP activities and goals will be met per the MAP-21 and FAST Act performance target deadlines and requirements. The annual performance & expenditure report (APER) for the FY 2019 UPWP was accepted by the FHWA and FTA on December 18, 2019.

5. MTP Development

The 2045 MTP was adopted by the Laredo MPO policy board on 01/21/2020 and has been reviewed by the FHWA and FTA and has been found acceptable on 04/29/2020 to meet the FHWA/FTA metropolitan planning requirements as per 23 CFR 450.324. The MTP included the ten FAST Act planning factors, performance targets and goals under the MAP-21/FAST Act, incorporated a 30-day public review and comment period, environmental mitigation efforts, and in-depth review of major planned corridors and fiscally constrained project listing per 23 CFR 450.324.

6. Financial Planning

The 2045 MTP and FY 19-22 TIP were found to be fiscally constrained by the FHWA and FTA per 23 CFR 450.324(f)(11). The financial plan also included recommendations on additional financing strategies to fund projects and programs included in the 2045 MTP in the terms of innovative finance techniques (including tolling, pricing, bonding, public private partnerships, and other strategies- pp 10-44 to 10-46 of the 2045 MTP). The annual 10-year UTP approved by the Texas Transportation Commission was used to check funding levels, by category of funding source, for the MPO financial plans for the FY 19-22 TIP and 2045 MTP.

7. TIP Development and Annual Project Listing (APL)

The FY 19-22 TIP was approved by FHWA and FTA as part of the FY 19-22 STIP on September 28, 2018 in accordance with the FAST Act metropolitan planning regulations and laws pursuant to title 23 USC 134 and 135 and implementing regulations under 23 CFR 450. The FY 19-22 TIP included language supporting the Performance-Based Planning and Programming requirements of MAP-21 and the FAST Act and was found to be fiscally constrained and had completed its public review and comment period prior to adoption. The Annual Project Listings (APL) are shown for several prior fiscal years on the Laredo MPO's website, however the MPO needs to update the on-line APL listings to show the most current fiscal year. An annual list of obligated projects (APL) for FY19 was submitted by TxDOT and the MPO on April 2, 2020 and was determined to be in compliance by FHWA and FTA on April 3, 2020.

8. Self-Certification Includes Title VI, Nondiscrimination, EJ, and LEP

The MPO self-certifications including meeting Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Nondiscrimination, Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, ADA of 1990, Environmental Justice, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have been documented and accepted by the FHWA Texas Division and FTA Region 6. They have been incorporated as part of the adopted Laredo MPO's FY 19-22 TIP approved by FHWA and FTA as part of the FY 19-22 STIP in September 2018 in accordance with 23 CFR 450.336. EJ/Title VI and the LEP plans are up-to-date and further discussed later in this report.

9. Consultation and Coordination: Includes Freight

The current Public Participation Plan (PPP) dated May 15, 2017 is FAST Act compliant. The MPO's PPP requires that the MPO provide for reasonable opportunities for affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation planning process.

10. Management & Operations Considerations: Includes ITS

Management & operations (M&O)- including ITS planning efforts and pavement preservation are documented in the 2045 MTP and funding is described as part of the financial plan adopted by the MPO policy board on January 21, 2020. Chapter 4 of the 2045 MTP identifies existing efforts and makes recommendations for Transportation System Management (TSM) programs and plans. STRATIS is the transportation management center administered by TxDOT's Laredo District and has been operational since February 2004. The mission of the program is "to provide best transportation and emergency management services through the use of our collective resources to maximize safety and mobility to the public."

From STRATIS center, TxDOT has access to ITS implementations such as Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) Cameras, Dynamic Message Signs (DMS), Highway Advisory Radio (HAR), and Video Image Vehicle Detection System (VIVIDS). TxDOT has also deployed nearly 30 miles of fiber optic cables around the City to provide communications to their roadside infrastructure.

11. Security in the Planning Process

Transportation security in the planning process has been documented in the 2045 MTP in Chapter 9 (Security) which describes increased security risks and advances within the Laredo MPO planning area on both the highway and transit side of planning and programming. The use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies to advance transportation safety, security, and mobility goals of the region is shown within the MTP. Through integrating innovative communications technologies into transportation infrastructure and vehicles, Laredo is working to implement a broad range of both wireless and traditional communications-based

information and electronic technologies to ensure the safety and security of freight movements and goods. The use of ITS enables transportation operators to make informed and coordinated decisions that lead to more secure and efficient travel. Within the Laredo region, ITS has been implemented through TxDOT, the City of Laredo, and El Metro.

12. Land Use & Connectivity

The 2045 Laredo MTP is based on the most recent available set of socioeconomic and transportation planning data. Specifically, the most recent existing land use data by the city of Laredo was utilized to develop the regional travel demand model for forecasting future growth both in terms of VMT as well as land-use changes to identify transportation needs for the next 25 years. The Laredo MPO's public participation plan involved all relevant partners in the development of the 2045 MTP, including the agencies with an interest in the areas of land use management and economic growth, among other MPO stakeholders. Additionally, land use development patterns within the Laredo metropolitan planning area are more fully described in Chapter 2 of the 2045 MTP.

13. Emerging Technologies

The use of ITS at the international border including surveillance equipment is fully documented as part of the 2045 MTP (see pp 4-43 to 4-44). The MTP (Chapter 8, pp 8-31 to 8-32) discusses the potential implications of connected and autonomous vehicles (including truck platooning) in the future within the transportation sector.

Results from Previous Review (FY 2016)

The following section discusses the results from the previous on-site TMA certification review completed via an on-site review in April 2016 and the final issuance of the report by FTA and FHWA in November 28, 2018. The first table shown on the following page lists the various commendations cited by the Federal Review Team in FY 2016. A second table provides a summary of the FY 2016 Federal Review Team recommendations.

TABLE 2- List of Commendations from Previous FY 2016 TMA Certification Review

Review Area	Commendation
Incorporation of MPO Planning Factors	Commend the Laredo MPO for incorporating the eight MAP-21 planning factors into the UPWP, TIP, and long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) documents. Encourage the incorporation of additional metropolitan planning factors under the FAST Act into the metropolitan planning process as appropriate.
Title VI/EJ	Commend the Laredo MPO for recent development of the Title VI/EJ Working Group, while the group has not formally met we are encouraged to see the formation of this new group to bolster the Title VI and EJ efforts of the metropolitan planning process.

Public Outreach	Commend the Laredo MPO for its updated website and easy to access documentation on Title VI and metropolitan planning documents (including forms and publications). Perhaps include a website counter to note number of web hits and use.
Training for New MPO Policy Board Members	Commend the Laredo MPO for its preparation of briefing materials for all new MPO policy board members, including the use of the FHWA-FTA Briefing Book for Decision-makers and new MPO primer on the metropolitan planning process.
Public Outreach	Commend the Laredo MPO for expanded use of English to Spanish language conversions of meeting notices, and public documents on its website, including newspaper notices for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations.
Public Outreach	Commend the Laredo MPO for its public involvement efforts including development of flyers, advertisements, livestreaming of MPO policy board meetings, website updates, and transit outreach efforts.
Transit Planning	Commend the MPO for its efforts to develop a transit development plan (TDP) for the region, as part of a five-year systemic transit plan for the metropolitan planning area using PL funds. Perhaps a long-term strategic plan for transit could be developed to serve as input into the long-range metropolitan transportation plan update in the future (upon completion of the comprehensive plan update under development by the City of Laredo).
Transit Planning	Commend El Metro, in conjunction with the Laredo MPO, for its efforts to convert older fleet buses into CNG clean fuel fleets and expansion of alternate forms of transportation within the region. The promotion of transit-oriented development and improved accessibility to jobs, healthcare, and education aligns well with the DOT's Ladders of Opportunity program.
Transit Planning	Commend El Metro, in conjunction with the Laredo MPO, for its efforts to fund and develop the new Metro Center stations within the metropolitan planning area. These future Metro Centers will expand the use of public transit, provide improved headways, provide modal options and help reduce congestion within the rapidly growing metropolitan area.
Livability/Sustainability	Commend the Laredo MPO, in conjunction with the FHWA Resource Center, for sponsoring its first Livability Workshop in August 2015. These efforts may help promote various livability goals and objectives within the metropolitan planning area.
Transportation Alternatives	Commend the Laredo MPO for its development and implementation of the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) within the region. The TAP program (now referred to as TA under the FAST Act) will serve to provide funding for active forms of transportation within the region.

TABLE 3- Recommendations from Previous FY 2016 TMA Certification Review

Review Area	Recommendation	Laredo MPO Rejoinder
EJ/Title VI and MPO Training	Recommend continued training and workshops on Title VI/EJ and MPO 101 training as part of the metropolitan planning process, especially targeted training for new policy board members and technical advisory committee members.	On April 27, 2017, per the MPO's request, representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) presented an MPO 101 workshop to the Laredo MPO Policy Committee. The workshop reviewed a variety of topics including but not limited to the MPO's: legislative history, purpose,

		<p>composition, responsibilities, and emerging obligations. In attendance were members of the Policy Committee, Technical Committee, representatives of various local stakeholder organizations, and members of the general public. On December 3rd and 4th, 2018, MPO Staff attended a two-day training course entitled Title VI and Public Transit, presented by Beverly Morris of the National Transit Institute. On August 5, 2020, MPO Staff attended a two-hour WebEx offered by FHWA, entitled Meaningful Engagement for Environmental Justice Without Public Meetings.</p>
Public Participation Process	<p>Recommend the Laredo MPO develop measures of effectiveness (MOE) for its public involvement process to ensure that public engagement efforts clearly document the most effective means of public engagement are focused upon through trial and error efforts. While the Laredo MPO has not used social media (including Facebook, Twitter, etc.) these tools may be used to reach out to younger generations and be alternate mechanisms to educate and reach out to the general public.</p>	<p>In order to assess the effectiveness of its outreach efforts, the MPO regularly requests that in-person event attendees, as well as, online participants fill out surveys which include demographic questions related to: age, gender, education, household income range, and zip code. The results of the surveys are then analyzed and mapped to identify the community groups the MPO is and is not reaching. Identification of all outreach efforts, as well as, the results and analysis of MPO surveys are typically memorialized in the final project document. The MPO uses the analysis of the survey demographic data to inform future event coordination in order to better target difficult to reach groups. Regarding social media, the MPO works closely with the City of Laredo's Public Information Office (PIO) to promote its various meetings and events. In addition to alerting all local media outlets, the City's PIO office posts MPO events on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as the City's website, and sends individual text messages to interested members of the public. The MPO will continue to evaluate and adjust its outreach efforts to ensure that all</p>

		sectors of the community have an opportunity to meaningfully participate in the planning process.
Public Participation Process	Recommend that the Laredo MPO obtain information from the general public as to how the public generally found out about local meetings (to measure or indicate effectiveness of different public involvement efforts and methodologies) and develop a database to better inform the public on future events, training, and workshops. The database could be refined to indicate or better gauge areas of interest for stakeholders for future reference and workshops. Information could be shared with the general public through Farmer's Market, City of Laredo festivals and events.	The MPO regularly requests that event attendees fill out surveys which among other things include questions on how they found out about the meeting. Again, the survey results are analyzed to identify which methods of advertising the event were most successful. This data is then used when planning future events. In order to develop its outreach data base of over 700 community members and stakeholders, the MPO has, over the years, compiled survey information, meeting sign in sheets, and various outreach lists. The database identifies the contact information for listed individuals including their: name, organization, title, committee affiliation, physical and email address, elected or appointed status, term expiration, and area of interest. The database may be sorted to target those individuals interested in attending an event. The MPO held Planning Nights events for the general public that were positively received by both the community and elected officials and will certainly be repeated.
Public Participation Process	Recommend the Laredo MPO consider the development of a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to provide input from the general public, better engage the general public, and include bicycle-pedestrian, transit dependent, and ADA accessibility needs into the metropolitan planning process. FHWA may provide the Laredo MPO with some successful examples of CAC efforts nationally.	The Laredo MPO recognizes the need to engage the general public and bicycle-pedestrian, transit dependent populations. The Walk-Bike-Ride Laredo group is composed of alternative transportation advocates and transportation professionals who seek a transportation system able to address the needs of every type of commuter. With the blessings of those individuals currently coordinating this group, the MPO plans on adopting this group as its own Active Transportation Committee. The MPO has recently acquired a long-range planner whose duties will include among other things, the coordination of all proposed subcommittees including the Active Transportation

		Committee, the Freight Transportation Subcommittee and the Title VI/Public Outreach Subcommittee.
Public Participation Process	Recommend the Laredo MPO policy board periodically rotate meeting locations to better serve the transit-dependent and other regions and populations traditionally not engaged within the MPO metropolitan planning efforts and decision-making activities.	With the advent COVID-19, and its concomitant social distancing requirements, the Laredo MPO has begun holding its meetings in a virtual format. Prior to the arrival of COVID – 19, the Laredo MPO would hold its regular Policy Committee meetings on the 3rd Monday of the month, in the City of Laredo, City Hall Council Chambers, located at 1110 Houston Street. The building is centrally located in downtown Laredo, two blocks from the main transit center, across the street from the County Judge’s offices, and serviced by its own bus stop. As the Policy Committee is composed primarily of City Council members, and County Judges, the City Hall location and its proximity to the County offices affords the members the greatest ease in attending the meetings. Nevertheless, the MPO will from time to time continue to suggest to the Policy Committee the possible relocation of their meetings.
Interagency Coordination	Suggest that the Laredo MPO work to better coordinate, cooperate, and communicate with the TxDOT Laredo District and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute on day-to-day planning activities including the MPO certification process, project development activities, staffing issues, and training opportunities.	<p>The MPO continues to seek a close working relationship with all its partners, but especially with TxDOT District Staff, the TxDOT Liaison, and the local transit provider. The MPO Technical Committee, composed of 22 representatives from the City, County, State, Federal, school system, and freight movement providers, is an integral component of the MPO planning process.</p> <p>The TxDOT liaison, has proven especially helpful and offers day to day assistance with the MPO’s requests for clarification, explanation, and/or TTI training. As always, the MPO will continue to seek to expand and strengthen its working relationships with all its planning partners.</p>

MPO Training	Suggest that the Laredo MPO utilize the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) for the purposes of developing an Access Management workshop (focusing on TIA thresholds) to advance the CMP and safety enhancements throughout the metropolitan planning area. The purpose of the workshops could be to better improve linkages between land-use and transportation decision-making through the CMP process.	On September 19, 2017, the MPO in collaboration with TxDOT, and TTI, sponsored a 3-hour workshop entitled, Access Management Workshop. The workshop was well received and was attended by 11 members of the community representing TxDOT, El Metro (transit), City Traffic Safety Department, and the MPO.
MPO Training	Recommend that the Laredo MPO utilize the FHWA Resource Center safety specialists to provide free local workshops, training, and sharing of technical expertise related to bicycle-pedestrian planning and development as well as provide technical support for intersection analysis improvements in conjunction with the FHWA Texas Division Office safety engineer.	On December 6th, 2016, the MPO in collaboration with the FHWA, coordinated a 2-day workshop entitled Designing Streets for Pedestrian Safety. The presentation was developed and presented by FHWA representatives. The workshop presented material on: planning factors that impact pedestrian safety, sidewalk design considerations, street crossing principles, street crossing counter measures, intersection geometry, signalized intersections and their effect on pedestrian safety, roundabouts, transit stop considerations, road diets, and selecting policy changes. The MPO, in coordination with FHWA, also sponsored a 2-day workshop entitled Designing for Bicyclist Safety, on June 13th, 2017.
MPO Staffing	Recommend that the Laredo MPO consider the formation of new internship programs with the local major universities, to provide temporary staffing assistance and on-the-job training for future employment opportunities.	The Laredo MPO continues to be very interested in enabling interns from both Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) and Laredo College (LC) to join the MPO. The MPO considers interns to be a valuable community resource that may well: increase productivity, drive innovation, and provide fresh perspectives. Prior to the start of Covid-19, the MPO was involved in ongoing discussions with both local institutions to develop an MPO internship program. Regrettably, the pandemic has temporarily suspended further discussions.

Regional ITS Architecture	The Laredo MPO should consider updating its regional ITS architecture system, in conjunction with TxDOT, to ensure that it remains current and modern to ensure interoperability of future funded ITS installations within the region.	On 12-18-19, MPO Staff met with the City of Laredo Traffic Safety Department Director to encourage the update of the 2005 City of Laredo ITS Master Plan, which was developed by his department. The Director expressed concerns regarding the lack of funding and staff availability necessary to develop the proposed study. As a result of the meeting, the MPO will prioritize the updating of the City of Laredo ITS Master Plan, utilizing either in house staff or outside consultants in 2021.
Freight Planning	Recommend the Laredo MPO consider development of a regional freight advisory committee, including members of the freight industry and private trucking companies including HEB, to provide input into the metropolitan planning process. The vast number and volume of truck traffic through the I-35 NAFTA ports-of-entry at the four major Laredo crossings is unprecedented within the United States.	The MPO understands the importance of freight movement in Laredo and is very interested in developing a freight advisory committee. Currently, representative of the Kansas City Railroad, and the Union Pacific Railroad, as well as a representative of the freight logistics community sit on the MPO Technical Committee and are consulted on all action items going before the Policy Committee. Furthermore, during the development of the update of the long-range plan, the MPO holds round table discussions with the freight community to get their perspective on the state of the network, community needs, and thoughts on the projects proposed for programming.
Freight Planning	The Laredo MPO should consider the development of a long-range freight and intermodal plan to serve as input into the long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) based upon the Freight Analysis Framework (FAF3) estimates of O/D truck movements from within and out of the region. The assessment of freight infrastructure and management/operations should be a focal point for the region as part of the metropolitan planning process.	Due to the importance of freight movement in the Laredo MPO area, the MPO has programed the development of a long-range freight plan in Subtask 5.1 of the 2021 Unified Planning Work Program.

August 2020 Certification Review

The FY 2020 on-site planning certification review was virtually held on August 26-27, 2020 by the FTA and FHWA via MS Teams video conference. Interviews with elected officials on the MPO Policy Board were completed the afternoon of August 26th and the morning of August 27th. A summary of the meetings and interviews are shown within the Appendix section of this report. The public listening session was held in the form of a 1-888 telephone call-in number- however this effort yielded no participation from the general public. An electronic public input form was also issued by the FHWA and FTA on the Laredo MPO website in order to supplement this public listening session format, however as noted within the Appendix section of this report, no public comments were received by either FHWA or FTA during this 30-day open comment period between August 27th thru September 30, 2020.

The on-site TMA certification review conducted on August 26-27, 2020, consisted of discussions on the several “high-risk” planning focus areas including: Public Participation Process/Title VI- Environmental Justice, Safety in the Planning Process, Performance-Based Planning and Programming (PBPP); Congestion Management Process (CMP), Freight and Intermodal Planning; and Future MPO Staffing and Training Needs. The on-site TMA certification review concluded with a close-out meeting that was held between the Federal Review Team and the MPO in order to discuss preliminary findings and observations. The remainder of this report summarizes the recommendations, observations, findings and conclusions associated with the 2020 TMA Certification Review process as part of the on-site review and presents follow-up activities associated with the previous review. Tables that summarize the commendations and recommendations of the Federal Review Team based upon the current FY 2020 TMA Certification Review are shown in the following section.

TABLE 4- Summary of Commendations from FY 2020 TMA Certification Review

Review Area	Commendation
Public Participation	Commend the Laredo MPO (in conjunction with the City of Laredo) for the development of innovative public outreach initiatives including topic-focused “Planning Nights”, use of social media outlets (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), Active Transportation Committee efforts, establishment of evening MPO meeting times, hosting of roundtable meetings.
Intermodal Freight	Commend the Laredo MPO for the programming of planning funds for the development of a regional long-range freight plan as part of the FY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program. This study will provide a comprehensive review of freight movement in the area and provide a short, medium, and long-term investment guide for freight mobility improvements in the region.
MPO Staffing	Commend the Laredo MPO for development and hiring of new staff positions that will assist the region’s in-house modeling and data collection capabilities and activities, strengthen freight and border planning, and improve short and long-range

	transportation planning efforts. These MPO staffing needs were identified as part of the recent Texas A&M Transportation Institute's management review.
Interagency Coordination	Commend the Laredo MPO for its ongoing interagency coordination and consultation efforts with TxDOT, El Metro regional transit provider, as part of Transportation Performance Measure (TPM) target and goal-setting efforts. The Laredo MPO also meets with Nuevo Laredo, Mexico on a monthly basis and as part of the bridge master plan development. The Laredo MPO is planning to host within the next year, a border cities conference for all cities along the U.S./Mexico international border.
Performance-Based Planning	Commend the Laredo MPO for the development of the tri-party Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for performance-based planning and programming, and periodic updating of the appendix of this document to identify new targets as updated by TxDOT and subsequently adopted by the MPO Policy Board.

TABLE 5- Summary of Recommendations from FY 2020 TMA Certification Review

Review Area	Issue	Recommendation
Public Participation Process	Update the Public Participation Plan to incorporate new engagement techniques.	Encourage the Laredo MPO to incorporate efforts including the "Planning Nights" events and current use of social media outlets into an updated Public Participation Plan (PPP). Consider undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the PPP more frequently than every five years as new innovative public engagement techniques are found effective within the region. Use the updated PPP techniques to help support future MTP updates and ensure that traditionally underserved populations are engaged as part of this planning effort.
Safety	Ensure better coordination of safety planning into the metropolitan planning process.	Encourage the full involvement of the Laredo MPO as part of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) update, Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) activities, and City of Laredo's Vision Zero planning efforts and related subcommittees to better integrate safety into the transportation planning process. Incorporate UPWP work tasks as needed in this area.

MPO Training	Leverage training and workshop opportunities through the FHWA and FTA, including the FHWA Resource Center.	Suggest the Laredo MPO utilize the technical resources of the FHWA Texas Division & FHWA Resource Center, and FTA. The FHWA and FTA provide free training and technical assistance related to safety planning and related UPWP tasks, freight modeling and data, value capture tools and techniques, establishment of MPO peer exchanges, MPO 101 basic training to the Policy Board members and MPO staff, and other technical assistance as needed in conjunction with TxDOT and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.
Congestion Management Process	Update Congestion Management Process (CMP) with current traffic data sources.	As part of the existing Congestion Management Process (CMP) and previously conducted travel time delay study (2013), work with TxDOT TPP Traffic Analysis Section and Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) to obtain and incorporate existing traffic data sources (e.g., INRIX data and COMPAT Tool) as part of the next CMP update. The MPO should continuously monitor its congestion levels through this data and identify areas of high congestion as part of its CMP and TIP/MTP project selection process.
Congestion Management Process	Ensure that transit-related options are evaluated within the CMP.	Ensure that public transit-related improvements are evaluated along with highway-related demand management (TDM/TSM, ITS, etc.) and traffic operational improvements as part of the next CMP update.
Performance-based Planning	Work with El Metro to ensure that the July 20, 2021 deadline for incorporating PTASP into the planning process is met.	Please note that the deadline for MPO incorporation of the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) safety performance targets is July 20, 2021 . After this effective date, all STIP/TIP and MTP updates must show written documentation of the PTASP targets and MPO regional efforts to monitor progress toward these adopted safety performance goals. Six months (180 days) after the adoption of the PTASP targets by the regional transit operator, the MPO must adopt PTASP targets through MPO policy board action.
Performance-based Planning	Need to address baseline conditions for TAM targets and conditions.	The 2020-2045 Laredo MTP identifies the TAM targets for the metropolitan area, but, unlike with the PM-1, PM-2, and PM-3 measures, does not identify actual (baseline) conditions for consideration relative to the targets. In the next update of the MTP, the system performance report should include baseline TAM conditions, as well as progress achieved in meeting the TAM targets in comparison with the system performance information currently provided.
Performance-based Planning	Measuring progress towards achievement of TAM targets in next TIP update	The 2021 – 2024 TIP contains a general statement that the transit projects in the TIP are intended to support achieving the TAM targets. For the next TIP update, it is recommended that a fuller description be provided

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Regulatory Basis

Sections 134(i)(5), 134(j)(1)(B) of Title 23 and Section 5303(i)(5) and 5303(j)(1)(B) of Title 49, require a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to provide adequate opportunity for the public to participate in and comment on the products and planning processes of the MPO. The requirements for public involvement are detailed in 23 CFR 450.316, which requires the MPO to develop and use a documented participation plan that includes explicit procedures and strategies to include the public and other interested parties in the transportation planning process. Specific requirements include giving adequate and timely notice of opportunities to participate in or comment on transportation issues and processes, employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, making public information readily available in electronically accessible formats and means such as the world wide web, holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times, demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input, and periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the participation plan.

Current Status

The current version of the Laredo MPO's Public Participation Plan was adopted by the MPO Policy Board in May 2017. The Laredo MPO website includes a copy of the current Public Participation Plan and this document is shown at the following web-link at: <http://www.laredompo.org/>. The Laredo MPO website also includes key agency staff contact information for additional information. As part of its current Public Participation Plan, it is the policy of the Laredo MPO to provide every opportunity for the involvement of citizens in the transportation planning process in conformance with the requirements of 23 CFR 450.316 (a).

The Laredo MPO's current Public Participation Plan provides for involving all stakeholders in the development of planning documents including the MTP, TIP, PPP, and subsequent amendments. The Public Participation Plan also includes agencies with an interest in the areas of land use management (General Land Office), environmental resources (Texas Council on Environmental Quality), environmental protection (U.S. EPA), conservation, and historic preservation (Texas Historical Commission). Moreover, Federal, State, and local representatives of such entities are invited to participate in a series of roundtable discussions performed by the MPO.

The adoption or revision of the Public Participation Plan requires a public review and comment period of not less than 45 days prior to final action by the Laredo MPO's Policy Committee. Continuous improvement of the public participation process is a goal of the Laredo MPO. In

striving towards that goal, the Laredo MPO's public participation plan is currently updated as needed and re-approved every five years. The periodic updates are to ensure that the plan effectively allows for a full and open public participation process for the citizens of Laredo.

The MPO's adopted Public Participation Plan (PPP), requires the MPO to provide opportunities for input from citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, as well as representatives of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties in the transportation planning process. In doing so, the MPO must provide early and continuing opportunities for public involvement in the development of their metropolitan planning products.

The MPO maintains an on-line webpage, as part of its public involvement efforts, for the purposes of providing information about the MPO, publicizing upcoming events, publishing its plans and studies in an electronic format, and as one method for soliciting feedback from the public. Currently, the site hosts information regarding the boundaries of the metropolitan planning area, the organizational structure of the MPO, the member agencies of both the Policy and Technical Committees, meeting agendas, the full meeting packet for the upcoming Policy Committee meeting, and required planning documents, including the PPP, MTP, TIP, UPWP, and the Annual Listing of Obligated Projects.

In addition to the basic planning documents available on the MPO's website, the website also provides access to previously conducted plans and studies like the Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study, the Laredo Transit Development Plan, the McPherson Road Capacity and Mobility Study, and the Del Mar Corridor Study, to name a few examples. As outlined in the FY 2016 Federal Certification Review, the MPO has completed an update and redesign of its website four years ago in order to increase the site's functionality, ease of use, visualization capacity, public outreach ability and transparency.

Meetings held by MPO staff for the purpose of securing public comment and all meetings of the Policy Committee are currently recorded on audio or video tape. Meetings held for the purpose of securing public comment are held at convenient and accessible times and at ADA accessible locations. Public meetings, conducted by the Laredo MPO, are held within a reasonable walking distance of an El Metro regional transit bus routes.

Meetings of the MPO Policy Committee are taped for later broadcast on a local public access channel. Persons attending public meetings that are conducted by the Laredo MPO are asked to register on a sign-in sheet if they wish to speak. The minutes of public meetings are generally prepared by MPO staff and constitute the official record of the proceedings.

As part of the current Public Participation Plan, the Laredo MPO staff is required to prepare a meeting packet that includes the meeting agenda and action items for consideration by the MPO Policy Board. The MPO meeting packets are generally mailed by MPO staff to the Laredo MPO Policy Board members about seven (7) days prior to the Policy Board meeting date or hand delivered five (5) days prior to the meeting. For TIP documents, as well as for MTP

adoptions there are also a 20-day public comment period made available through its website and direct notices in accordance with the currently adopted PPP. In order to assess the effectiveness of its outreach efforts, the MPO regularly requests that in-person event attendees, as well as, online participants fill out surveys which include demographic questions related to: age, gender, education, household income range, and zip code. The results of the surveys are then analyzed and mapped to identify the community groups the MPO is and is not reaching. Identification of all outreach efforts, as well as, the results and analysis of MPO surveys are typically memorialized in the final project document. The MPO uses the analysis of the survey demographic data to inform future event coordination in order to better target difficult to reach groups.

A recent example of the MPO using this methodology to support its public participation process, was during the development of the MPO's Active Transportation Plan. During this outreach effort, MPO staff collaborated with the City's Public Information Office (PIO) office to post a public survey, on the City's website and Facebook page, using the SurveyMonkey platform. The SurveyMonkey platform was chosen for its ease of use and built in analytics. The online survey was extremely successful, and as of the date of this review has garnered over 800 responses. An early review of the survey analytics revealed a lack of participation from community members under 18 years of age. In order to pursue more participation from younger age groups, the MPO is exploring working with the school districts on possibly distributing the survey to its student body.

In addition, the MPO works closely with the City of Laredo's Public Information Office (PIO) to promote its various meetings and events. In addition to alerting all local media outlets, the City's PIO office posts MPO events on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as the City's website, and sends individual text messages to interested members of the public. The MPO continues to evaluate and adjust its outreach efforts to ensure that all sectors of the community have an opportunity to meaningfully participate in the planning process. The MPO regularly requests that event attendees fill out surveys which among other things include questions on how they found out about the meeting. The survey results are analyzed to identify which methods of advertising the events were the most successful. This data is then used when planning future events. Roundtable meetings were held prior to the adoption of the 2045 MTP. These forms of focused events were found useful by the Laredo MPO in gathering input on several planning topics including: freight, active transportation (i.e., bicycle/pedestrian), EJ/Title VI populations, and transit needs in the Laredo region.

In order to keep current its public data base of over 700 community members and stakeholders, the MPO has, over the years, compiled survey information, meeting sign in sheets, and various outreach lists. The up-to-date database identifies the contact information for listed individuals including their: name, organization, title, committee affiliation, physical and email address, elected or appointed status, term expiration, and area of interest. The database can be sorted to target those individuals interested in attending events. The MPO uses this database to relay event information directly to these individuals via email. Finally, the MPO realizes the importance of reaching out to the community in settings where they regularly visit and recreate, rather than just during the regular public meeting format.

In the Spring of 2020, the MPO in collaboration with City Planning Department, TxDOT staff, Recode Laredo, and several other groups, participated in six “Planning Nights” held at local recreation centers and parks. Eight “Planning Nights”, or one in each Council District, were originally planned, however the onset of Covid-19 prevented the last two meetings from being held. Music, food, drinks, games and prizes were provided by the City of Laredo to encourage attendance and create a relaxed and inviting atmosphere. These focused meetings were held at 6:30 PM for working families to attend and participate in the discussion. The purpose of the “Planning Nights” was to reach out to the community on a variety of planning issues, including but not limited to: transportation network needs, on-system network projects, active transportation, zoning, land development, and community vision. The “Planning Nights” were positively received by both the community and elected officials and will be repeated in the future by the Laredo MPO for future partnering and public outreach efforts.

Commendation

Commend the Laredo MPO (in conjunction with the City of Laredo) for the development of innovative public outreach initiatives including topic-focused “Planning Nights”, use of social media outlets (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), Active Transportation Committee efforts, establishment of evening MPO meeting times, hosting of roundtable meetings.

Recommendation

- Encourage the Laredo MPO to incorporate efforts including the “Planning Nights” events and current use of social media outlets into an updated Public Participation Plan (PPP). Consider undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the PPP more frequently than every five years as new innovative public engagement techniques are found effective within the region. Use the updated PPP techniques to help support future MTP updates and ensure that traditionally underserved populations are engaged as part of this planning effort.

Finding

The FHWA and FTA Review Team found that the Laredo MPO has successfully met the public participation requirements of 23 CFR 450.316 of the FAST Act metropolitan planning regulation.

EJ-TITLE VI EVALUATION PROCESS

Regulatory Basis

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 2000d-1) states, “No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to the discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” The Executive Order issued on Environmental Justice in 1994 further amplified Title VI by providing that, “each federal agency shall make achieving

Environmental Justice part of its mission by identifying, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.” The Executive Order requires all federal agencies to establish internal policies to meet these requirements.

Executive Order #12898 (Environmental Justice) directs federal agencies to develop strategies to address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs on minority and low-income populations. In compliance with this Executive Order, USDOT and FHWA issued orders to establish policies and procedures for addressing environmental justice in minority and low-income populations. The planning regulations, at 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(vii), require that the needs of those “traditionally underserved” by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and/or minority households, be sought out and considered. Executive Order #13166 (Limited-English-Proficiency) requires agencies to ensure that limited English proficiency persons have meaningful access to services provided consistent with and without unduly burdening the fundamental mission of each federal agency.

Current Status

As part of the 2045 MTP, the Laredo MPO provided additional outreach and conducted regular communications with an array of stakeholders through the MPO contact list, additional targeted outreach to several elected officials, agencies, and community organizations was undertaken to further solicit input into the process, particularly by stakeholders and groups that represent environmental justice or other traditionally underserved members of the community. One-on-one email and telephone communications were conducted to introduce the purpose of the MTP and to solicit input on the vision, goals, and objectives of the plan as well as to identify regional needs. As necessary, additional in-person interviews were conducted with interested contacts.

The Laredo MPO actively seeks to increase participation in the metropolitan transportation planning process by Title VI and environmental justice communities. Public announcements and outreach materials are published in both English and Spanish. Additionally, the MPO advertises public involvement opportunities on El Metro buses, as well as at bus stations, and holds all public meetings in transit accessible locations, primarily at City Hall which is transit accessible and serves as a transit stop. As part of its Public Participation Plan (PPP), the MPO utilizes existing community and neighborhood organizations to reach out to Title VI and environmental justice communities. In order to account for environmental justice concerns in relation to transportation investments, Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data from the U.S. Census Bureau were used in order to identify population characteristics and geographic distributions of minority, low income, elderly, and the disabled population. Furthermore, because of Laredo’s special circumstances, the existence and locations of “colonias” were also considered as part of the 2045 MTP development.

According to the 2019 Census estimates, 95.5% of the population of Webb County, the majority of which is located within the metropolitan planning area, identifies as "Hispanic or Latino (of any race)." ¹ Only 3.9% of the population identifies as "white alone, not Hispanic or Latino."² Less than 1.1% of the population of Webb County identifies as "Black or African American alone," "American Indian and Alaska

¹ SOURCE: 2045 MTP, page 2-16.

² SOURCE: U.S. Census, Table ID: B01001H,
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Webb%20County,%20Texas%20Race%20and%20Ethnicity&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B01001H&hidePreview=false>

Native alone," or "Asian alone." Since most of the population within the Laredo metropolitan planning area is of Hispanic origin, mapping efforts focus primarily on other populations traditionally underserved by the transportation system. GIS analysis for the 2045 MTP update revealed that the largest concentrations of low-income, elderly, and disabled populations are located within the central city of Laredo. The low-income areas are generally distributed in the central city of Laredo, south Laredo, and the southeast side of the Laredo MPO region (per Table 2-8).³

Table 2-8: Population by Race, 2017

Population Estimate	Webb County Count	Webb County Percent	Texas Percent	United States Percent
White	256,620	95.2%	74.6%	73.0%
Black or African American	1,089	0.4%	12.0%	12.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native	585	0.2%	0.5%	0.8%
Asian	1,407	0.5%	4.5%	5.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	25	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
Some other race	8,499	3.2%	5.8%	4.8%
Total	269,624	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
One race	268,225	99.5%	97.4%	96.9%
Two or more races	1,399	0.5%	2.6%	3.1%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	257,482	95.5%	38.9%	17.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019

As a federally funded agency, the Laredo MPO recognizes the requirements for and benefits of developing and implementing a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan as part of the PPP. Doing so brings the MPO in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations. Title VI states that no person shall be subjected to discrimination due to their race, color, or national origin. Executive Order 13166 entitled "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English" further states that differing treatment based on a person's inability to speak, read or write English is a type of national origin discrimination and directs all federally funded agencies to public guidance to prevent such discrimination. (FTA Circular 4702.1B dated October 1, 2012).

As mentioned previously, ninety-five percent of the region include Hispanic populations, and to address these populations the Laredo MPO does have a current Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP) on its website. The LEP plan was last updated on March 21, 2016. In order to prepare this plan, the Laredo Metropolitan Planning Organization used a four-factor LEP analysis which considers the following factors:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in the Laredo metropolitan study area.
2. The frequency with which LEP persons contact the Laredo MPO staff.
3. The nature and importance of services provided by the Laredo MPO to the LEP population.
4. Interpretation services are available through the Laredo MPO upon request and is included in the overall cost to provide LEP assistance.

³ SOURCE, 2045 MTP, Table 2-8, page 2-16.

In addition, the Laredo MPO includes a contact person who serves as a point-of-contact for any Title VI discrimination claims, and this person has been designated as the MPO director on their website. No claims of Title VI discrimination have been filed by a citizen of Laredo according to the MPO during the FY 2020 certification review. Both the Title VI complaint form and procedures are shown in English and Spanish versions on the MPO website. The standard Title VI nondiscrimination statement and assurance documents are also shown on the website.

Also, during the FY 2020 TMA certification review, the Federal Review Team found that the Laredo MPO does post its major planning-related products and announcements in both English and Spanish versions. On February 9, 2016, the Technical Committee met and voted to approve the formation of a Title VI Working Group. The group is comprised of seven members of the Technical Committee including representatives from the MPO, TxDOT District Office, City Traffic Department, County Planning, and the local regional transit provider, El Metro. The purpose of this group is to ensure that the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households are met through the metropolitan transportation planning process.

Finding

The Laredo MPO substantially meets the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and public involvement requirements for traditionally underserved populations (including low-income and minority households) as part of the metropolitan planning process consistent with 23 CFR 450.336 and 450.316.

SAFETY IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Regulatory Basis

The FAST Act requires MPOs to consider safety as one of ten planning factors. As stated in 23 CFR 450.306, the metropolitan transportation planning process provides for consideration and implementation of projects, strategies, and services that serve to increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users. Safety was identified in TEA-21 as a planning factor, in combination with security. SAFETEA-LU emphasized the importance of safety by separating safety and security into individual considerations in the planning process, thus highlighting the importance of each issue.

In addition, SAFETEA-LU established a core safety program called the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) (23 U.S.C. Section 148), which introduced a mandate for Strategic Highway Safety Plans (SHSPs) that are collaborative, comprehensive and based on accurate and timely safety data. An SHSP is a Statewide coordinated safety plan that provides a comprehensive framework for reducing highway fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads. The SHSP strategically establishes Statewide goals, objectives, and key emphasis areas developed in consultation with Federal, State, local, and private sector safety stakeholders, as well as operators of other modes.

The development and updates of SHSPs leads to further collaboration among State and local transportation planners, traffic engineers, safety stakeholders, MPOs, and others. Metropolitan and Statewide transportation planners must be an integral part of the SHSP process. The goals, objectives, and strategies of the SHSP should be integrated into Statewide and metropolitan transportation plans as well as TIPs to place safety on par with other planning factors, particularly in choosing or evaluating new and continuing projects and initiatives. These types of best practices have the added benefit of helping to satisfy the safety-planning factor required for the transportation planning process.

23 CFR 450.306(d)(4) states that an MPO shall integrate in the metropolitan transportation planning process, directly or by reference, the goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets described in the HSIP, SHSP, Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan in 49 U.S.C. 5329(d) and other safety and security planning and review processes, plans, and programs, as appropriate. 23 CFR 450.324(h) encourages the inclusion of a safety element in the MTP that incorporates or summarizes the priorities, goals, countermeasures, or projects for the MPA contained in the HSIP and SHSP, as well as (as appropriate) emergency relief and disaster preparedness plans and strategies and policies that support homeland security (as appropriate) and safeguard the personal security of all motorized and non-motorized users.

Safety also appears in the Metropolitan Transportation Planning rule as a consideration in the CMP (23 CFR 450.322), Development and Content of the MTP (23 CFR 450.324), and Development and Content of the TIP (23 CFR 450.326).

Current Status

As part of the 2045 MTP, the MPO considers safety as a top priority. For example, as part of its MTP/TIP project selection process, those projects with safety goals or improvements are considered the highest priority and are awarded up to 100 points in the weighted scoring formula.⁴ The MPO recognizes the importance of providing a safe and secure transportation system. In addition, several transportation projects included in the plan explicitly address safety and security issues. As such, the Laredo MPO has developed the 2045 MTP with safety considerations as a top-level priority as shown in Goal #1 of the plan (page 3-15, 2045 MTP).

The Laredo MPO effectively meets the requirement under 23 CFR 450.306(d)(4) which states that an MPO shall integrate in the metropolitan transportation planning process, directly or by reference, the goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets described in the HSIP, SHSP, Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan in 49 U.S.C. 5329(d) and other safety and security planning and review processes, plans, and programs, as appropriate within the 2045 MTP document. The Laredo MPO also supports the inclusion of a safety element in the 2045 MTP that incorporates the priorities, goals, countermeasures, or projects for the metropolitan planning area as contained in the HSIP and SHSP, as well as (as appropriate) emergency relief and disaster preparedness plans and strategies and policies that support homeland security and safeguards the personal security of all motorized and non-motorized users.

⁴ SOURCE: 2045 MTP, pg. 10-25.

For example, Chapter 4 of the MTP identifies the top crash locations and fatal crash locations. Based on the crash analysis the Laredo MPO recommends the implementation of traffic calming measures, improved sight distances, lower speed limits, and improved signal timing to reduce the number of car collisions and lower crash severity as funding becomes reasonably available. The City of Laredo adopted a Vision Zero initiative in 2019. As part of Vision Zero, the City of Laredo is developing a data-driven action plan to reduce the number of traffic fatalities effectively to zero. Chapter 9 of the 2045 MTP identifies current regional efforts and recommends strategies for advancing safety, security, and resiliency.

The Texas Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), last updated in 2017, seeks to implement effective highway safety counter measures and change the current driving culture to reduce the human and societal costs of motor vehicle traffic crashes, deaths, and injuries on public roads. This document is updated every 5 years. The current SHSP is shown at the following web-link: <https://www.texasshsp.com/>. Several emphasis areas shown in the SHSP include: Distracted Driving; Intersection Safety; Pedestrian Safety; Impaired Driving; Older Road Users; Speeding; and Roadway and Lane Departure.

In Chapters 4 through 8, the 2045 MTP addresses operational and management strategies to improve the performance of the existing system to relieve congestion and enhance the safety and mobility of people and goods in the Laredo region. One of the five focus-group roundtables used in the preparation of the 2045 MTP focused on safety and security in the planning process. The Safety, Security, and Resiliency Roundtable served to provide a forum for public and private agencies focused on the environmental sustainability, safety, and security of residents to discuss how the transportation system can best address emergency response and preparedness issues, border control and security, and environmental and resiliency issues over the next 25 years.

The Laredo MTP-2045 planning process directly reflects the goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets as they are available and described in other State and public transportation plans and processes. For example, the MPO has incorporated goals from the Texas Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), Texas Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), the current statewide Texas Transportation Plan 2040 (TTP) into the 2045 MTP and the Laredo MPO Transportation Improvement Program FY 2019-2022 (TIP).⁵

To support progress towards approved highway safety targets, the 2020-2045 Laredo MTP includes investments for safety improvements. The fiscally constrained 2020-2045 Laredo MTP recommends \$2,100,462 of investments in safety projects and programs through Category 8 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) funds safety funds allocated to the TxDOT Laredo District from FY 2020-2045. These funded safety projects are expected to contribute to the achievement of the safety performance targets.⁶

⁵ SOURCE: Chapter 11, page 11-4, 2045 MTP.

⁶ SOURCE: Chapter 11, page 11-4 to 11-5, 2045 MTP.

Several of the primary goals and objectives associated with the development of the 2045 MTP focus on promoting safety in the planning process. The 2045 MTP (Vision, Goals, and Objectives, page 3-15) indicate that the three safety-related goals for the current plan include:

- Supporting projects that address existing and identified safety or security needs
- Supporting projects, programs, and strategies that advance safe and secure travel for all users.
- Continue coordination with TxDOT to meet federal safety performance targets.

According to the TxDOT Crash Records Inventory System (CRIS) data collected on December 6, 2019, 28,450 crashes occurred within the Laredo MPO area from January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2018. Table 4-7 of the 2045 MTP shows the number and rate of fatalities and serious injuries along with the number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries. TxDOT provides the data to calculate these measures for the Laredo MPO area dating back to the year 2015. Figure 4-10 of the 2045 MTP identifies the top 20 intersections with crash occurrences in addition to fatal crash locations.⁷

Available CRIS crash data shows that in recent years the roadway network in the Laredo MPO region is safer to travel on in comparison to statewide averages. Globally, the highest volume roadways in the region suffer from serious injury and fatality rates that are lower than TxDOT's 2019 targets for five federal safety performance measures, and it is even safer on other roadways in the region.⁸ However, crashes are still frequent, with vehicles traveling in the same direction being the most likely to collide and left turns being a frequent cause of collisions. This suggests that the steps that the City of Laredo, TxDOT, and US DOT can take to reduce the number of car collisions and ameliorate their severity are traffic calming measures, improved sight distances, lower speed limits, and improved signal timing.⁹

According to TxDOT's Crash Records Inventory System (CRIS), there are a total of 468 pedestrian related crashes, and a total of 162 bicycle related crashes that occurred within the Laredo MPO area during the years 2014 through 2018. The location of fatal crashes and bicycle and pedestrian crashes is shown in Figure 6-3 of the 2045 MTP. Among these crashes, 24 pedestrian fatalities were recorded, and one fatal bicycle related crash was recorded. A high number of bicycle or pedestrian crashes occurred in the downtown area and near the Gateway to the Americas bridge, with other clusters in South Laredo near a cluster of public schools and around Mines Road, which hosts dangerous freight traffic. The cluster downtown is due to the very high numbers of pedestrians using the downtown sidewalk network. Locations with multiple crashes could indicate where the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians should be improved. At these locations, future roadway projects to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety should be advanced according to the 2045 MTP.¹⁰

⁷ SOURCE: Chapter 4, page 4-25, 2045 MTP.

⁸ SOURCE: Chapter 4, page 4-30, 2045 MTP.

⁹ SOURCE: Ibid.

¹⁰ SOURCE: Chapter 6, page 6-6, 2045 MTP.

To address bicycle and pedestrian safety issues, In June 2017, FHWA in partnership with the Laredo MPO held a two-day educational workshop titled “Designing for Bicyclist Safety” hosted by the FHWA Texas Division and FHWA Resource Center. The workshop served to educate local transportation design and implementation authorities on best practices for bicycle facility design and implementation within the region. The workshop provided participants with background on bicycle safety and crash statistics, design guidance and best practices for on-road bicycle facilities and intersection design treatments, tools for implementation within a variety of contexts, and facilitated discussion on existing bikeways and current design challenges in the region.

As part of the Performance Based Planning Process under MAP-21 and the FAST Act, the Laredo MPO adopted its PM-1 safety targets in FY 2018. Safety performance management is intended to ensure that safety improvements guide funding priorities to advance the national goal for safe roadways. The FHWA established the safety performance measures (PM1) to carry out the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), effective April 14, 2016. The five safety performance measures to evaluate fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads are:

1. Number of fatalities.
2. Rate of fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.
3. Number of serious injuries.
4. Rate of serious injuries per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.
5. Number of combined bicycle and pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries.

Safety performance targets are provided annually by TxDOT to FHWA for each of the safety performance measures shown above. Current statewide safety targets address calendar year 2019 and are based on an anticipated five-year rolling average (2015-2019). Texas statewide safety performance targets for 2019 are included in Table 12-2 of the 2045 MTP. The Laredo MPO adopted the annual Texas statewide safety performance targets on January 22, 2019 and again on February 18, 2020. However, as part of the FY 2020 certification review process, the Federal Review Team did not note any safety efforts or related studies underway as part of the current FY 20 UPWP. Further, during the certification review the Federal Review Team did not note active engagement of the MPO as part of the recent SHSP update efforts or subcommittees associated with the Highway Safety Improvement (HSIP) activities, as well as the current City of Laredo’s Vision Zero planning efforts within the region.

Recommendation:

- Encourage the full involvement of the Laredo MPO as part of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) update, Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) activities, and City of Laredo’s Vision Zero planning efforts and related subcommittees to better integrate safety into the transportation planning process. Consider the incorporation of UPWP work tasks related to safety improvements, as needed in the area.

Finding

The Laredo MPO substantially meets the safety planning requirements of the FAST Act as part of the metropolitan planning process per 23 CFR 450.306 and 450.324.

CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROCESS (CMP)

Regulatory Basis

A CMP applies to transportation management areas (TMAs) and is a systematic approach for managing congestion through a process that “provides for safe and effective integrated management and operation of the multimodal transportation system, based on a cooperatively developed and implemented metropolitan-wide strategy, of new and existing transportation facilities eligible for funding under title 23 U.S.C., and title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 via travel demand reduction (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs such as a carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), job access projects, and operational management strategies.” [23 CFR 450.322 (a)]

Federal legislation and regulations require a CMP in TMAs (23 U.S.C. 134(k)(3); also see 23 CFR 450.322 (a)). The CMP must be developed and implemented as a metropolitan-wide strategy for all areas of the TMA. Federal legislation allows State laws, rules, or regulations to constitute the CMP if approved by the Secretary (23 U.S.C. 135(j); also see 23 CFR 450.322 (g)). 23 CFR 450.322(d) mandates that the CMP shall include:

- *Methods to monitor and evaluate the **performance of the multimodal transportation system**, identify the causes of recurring and non-recurring congestion, identify and evaluate alternative strategies, provide information supporting the implementation of actions, and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented actions;*
- *Definition of **congestion management objectives and appropriate performance measures** to assess the extent of congestion and support the evaluation of the effectiveness of congestion reduction and mobility enhancement strategies for the movement of people and goods. Since levels of acceptable system performance may vary among local communities, performance measures should be tailored to the specific needs of the area and **established cooperatively by the State(s), affected MPO(s), and local officials in consultation with the operators of major modes of transportation in the coverage area, including providers of public transportation;***
- *Establishment of a coordinated program for **data collection and system performance monitoring** to define the extent and duration of congestion, to contribute in determining the causes of congestion, and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of implemented actions. To the extent possible, this data collection program should be coordinated with existing data sources (including archived operational/ITS data) and coordinated with*

operations managers in the metropolitan area;

- *Identification and evaluation of the anticipated performance and expected benefits of appropriate **congestion management strategies** that will contribute to the more effective use and improved safety of existing and future transportation systems based on the established performance measures. The following categories of strategies, or combinations of strategies, are some examples of what should be appropriately considered for each area:*
 - *Demand management measures, including growth management and congestion pricing;*
 - *Traffic operational improvements;*
 - *Public transportation improvements;*
 - *ITS technologies as related to the regional ITS architecture;*
 - *Where necessary, additional system capacity.*
- *Identification of an **implementation** schedule, implementation responsibilities, and possible funding sources for each strategy (or combination of strategies) proposed for implementation; and*
- *Implementation of a process for **periodic assessment of the effectiveness of implemented strategies**, in terms of the area's established performance measures. The results of this evaluation shall be provided to decision-makers and the public to provide guidance on selection of effective strategies for future implementation.*

Current Status

The Laredo MPO adopted its Congestion Management Plan in response to MAP-21 requirements in January 2014, approximately eighteen months after the Laredo MPO was designated as a TMA on July 18, 2012. The adopted Congestion Management Plan (CMP) provides data on congestion-related performance metrics adopted by the MPO to better understand the root causes of congestion, and the effectiveness of various strategies in reducing congestion. Information such as travel times, travel speeds, total delay, volume to capacity ratios, and accident rates collected on the CMP network are utilized to inform the existing conditions analysis and aid in the selection of short- and long-term strategies.

Additionally, the Laredo MPO's current TIP project selection criteria provide an additional link between project implementation and data collected as part of the CMP and MTP by allocating 30 points toward the weighted scoring procedures for congestion-related projects.¹¹ Recognizing the need to incorporate more quantifiable objectives, in addition to statements of priority, the MPO developed measurable objectives that tie back to the guiding principles. These objectives were brought to the Technical and Policy Committees for comment. The Technical and Policy Committees concurred with the objectives, which were then incorporated

¹¹ SOURCE: 2045 MTP, page 10-26.

into the CMP. The formally adopted vision statement is as follows: *“Develop a transportation system that offers safe, efficient, and affordable travel choices for people and goods, while supporting economic development and long-term quality of life.”*

The adopted CMP goals and objectives include:

- Goal #1: Provide a safe transportation system.
Promote policies and projects that reduce the number and severity of vehicle collisions.
- Goal #2: Provide an efficient transportation system.
Encourage a proactive approach to addressing future transportation needs;
and
Promote policies and projects that reduce travel delay;
- Goal #3: Provide affordable travel choices for people and goods.
Promote the increase of viable, affordable travel choices for people and goods;
Promote policies and programs to increase transit ridership on existing services; and
Promote awareness of multimodal facilities.
- Goal #4: A transportation system that promotes economic vigor and long-term quality of life.
Promote the efficient and effective connection of people, jobs, goods and services;
Promote the minimization of environmental impact and improved environmental quality; and
Promote the unique identities and qualities of neighborhoods, communities, and its region.

Performance measures represent an objective method for determining the degree of success of a project, program, or initiative in achieving a stated goal or objective. As such, they are a critical element of the congestion management process. Presently, the MPO has identified a toolbox of performance measures that are available to the MPO based on available data sources. These CMP performance measures include:

- Average travel speed;
- Average travel time;
- Average travel rate;
- Total delay;
- Volume to capacity ratios;
- Level of service;
- Accident rates; and
- Congestion Indices.

The Laredo MPO has been continuously coordinating with TxDOT obtaining the most current average daily traffic (AADT) volumes on the “on-system” network segments, which TxDOT compiles and processes annually. Initial data collection efforts revealed several challenges associated with the scale of the CMP network due to lack of “off-system” traffic data. The MPO has been relying on its travel demand model, past experiences, and previously conducted studies, such as the McPherson Road Mobility and Capacity Study and the Del Mar Corridor Study, to assess the appropriateness and anticipated impacts of various congestion management strategies.

These two completed traffic congestion studies will help to provide additional congestion improvement data to support other similar type of urban mobility strategies within the region. Strategies identified as part of the congestion management process have been incorporated into the Management and Operations portion of 2045 MTP adopted in FY 2020. Community context and public involvement have played an important role in determining the types of strategies that are appropriate for a specific corridor, facility, or intersection.

At the regional level, CMP strategies have been implemented through their inclusion in the MTP and TIP. The MPO has implemented several ways to integrate the CMP analysis into the regional prioritization of strategies. The MPO currently uses a prioritization scoring element that gives weight to the relative congestion levels on a specific corridor based on its CMP performance measures in its project selection criteria for the 2045 MTP (and FY 19-22 TIP). At the corridor level, the CMP has been implemented through more detailed corridor studies and project development efforts.

Studies evaluating strategies such as bicycle and pedestrian improvements and operational improvements may be implemented by the MPO using a variety of funding sources, including Federal funding streams such as the Metropolitan Planning funds, Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG), National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) funds, as well as through state or local funding or other discretionary funding sources. One example is the development of the Active Transportation Plan, to be released later this calendar year by the Laredo MPO.

Collaboration and coordination among a wide range of stakeholders – MPO planners, State DOT planning and operations staff, transit agencies, local governments, and the private sector – is an important foundation for an effective CMP. Within the metropolitan transportation planning process, these partners can work together to develop regional objectives for congestion management, define performance measures, share and analyze data, and identify potential strategies. The MPO has worked closely with the Technical Committee throughout the development of the current CMP. The Technical Committee is comprised of 24 agency representatives including: TxDOT, the City of Laredo's Transit, Airport, Bridge, Engineering, and Traffic Departments, Webb County's Planning, Engineering, and Rural Transit Agencies, the South Texas Economic Development Council, the Federal Highway Administration, local school

districts, and private sector representatives including Kansas City Southern Railroad, Union Pacific Railroad, and from local area freight transportation providers.

Additionally, the MPO has utilized the 2045 MTP update process to solicit feedback from the public regarding their perceptions of congestion on the transportation system. At the first public workshop for the 2045 MTP update, participants were asked to identify the location of congested corridors or intersections located within the metropolitan planning area. The anecdotal evidence gathered at this first public workshop completed in CY 2019 was used in order to evaluate the degree of accuracy by which technical processes were used to develop congestion countermeasures (based upon how it was perceived effective by the users of the transportation system).

The approved MTP includes Project Evaluation Criteria which awards points based on level of congestion and weighting is provided by the MPO if the project is a product of the congestion management process. The MPO Policy Committee approved the Congestion Management Process on January 21, 2014. The Laredo area Congestion and Delay Study was then completed in March of 2015. The study produced a variety of recommendations including the retiming/synchronization of all network signals. The Committee approved the allocation of \$600,000 of CBI funds for the project. It was added as a TIP Grouped project CSJ 0922-33-158 to be let and authorized for implementation in August of 2016.

Chapter 11 of the current 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) discusses the summary of the congestion management process and how the CMP has been integrated into the project selection process. A total of 20 recommendations to mitigate congestion were identified in the 2015 Congestion and Delay Study and were incorporated into the identification of projects for further scoring and evaluation in the 2045 MTP. Two of the congestion relief projects resulting from the CMP effort are shown below from page 10-29 of the 2045 MTP in the fiscally constrained project listing.

Enhancing Capacity and Operation						
CMP-1	FM 1472	From Loop 20 To Pan American Blvd	Replace all traffic signal hardware and provide optimized traffic signal timing	\$526,500	7	Operational congestion management
CMP-2	BU 59 (Saunders St)	From I-35 To Loop 20	Replace all traffic signal hardware and provide optimized traffic signal timing	\$842,400	8	Operational congestion management

Several goals of the 2045 MTP are CMP-related including the management of congestion by supporting projects, programs and strategies to maintain or improve travel time reliability and congestion. Another major goal mentioned in the 2045 MTP includes addressing critical congestion management plan (CMP) network interstate and highway bottlenecks as a priority and improving system operations through technology applications.

Three highway projects shown in the 2045 MTP's unfunded project needs list include CMP-related purposes including FM 1472 from Loop 20 To Pan American Blvd (replace all traffic signal hardware and provide optimized traffic signal timing) at an estimated cost of \$405,000. Another CMP-related project shown in the 2045 MTP includes BU 59 (Saunders St) from I-35 To Loop 20 (replace all traffic signal hardware and provide optimized traffic signal timing at an estimated cost of \$648,000. A third CMP-related project shown in the 2045 MTP is a facility improvement on Del Mar Boulevard from IH 35 to Loop 20 which involves a widening to six lanes and upgrade traffic signal hardware and traffic signal timing for three intersections between Springfield and San Dario (recommendation from the CMP planning process) for an estimated cost of \$19.6 M. Post-evaluations of these proposed CMP projects will be completed by the MPO in the future, as projects get added to the CMP network and are open to traffic. The Laredo MPO is considering use of TTI's Congestion Management Process Assessment Tool (COMPAT) Tool to show INRIX travel time delays across the entire CMP network. The COMPAT Tool may be a cost-effective way to measure the before and after affects of congestion management improvements funded and implemented within the MPO planning area boundary.

One of the types of traffic operational improvements identified within the CMP includes ITS. The use of ITS is highlighted on pp 15-16 of the current CMP. For example, the 2045 MTP includes in Chapter 9 a discussion on how Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies advance transportation safety, security, and mobility by integrating innovative communications technologies into transportation infrastructure and vehicles. Further the 2045 MTP suggests that ITS encompasses a broad range of both wireless and traditional communications-based information and electronic technologies. The use of ITS enables transportation operators to make informed and coordinated decisions that lead to more efficient travel. Within the Laredo region, ITS has been implemented through TxDOT, the City of Laredo, and El Metro. TxDOT has implemented various ITS technologies to monitor traffic safety and security across the region. These ITS technologies include dynamic message signs (DMS), closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, lane control signals, highway advisory radios, speed detectors, and video image vehicle detection systems (VIVDS). Additionally, a railroad coordination system called the Wireless Advisory Railroad Network (WARN) is in place to inform drivers of closures at railroad crossings.

As discussed on page 13 of the current CMP, the TxDOT Laredo District operates the South Texas Regional Advance Transportation Information System (STRATIS), which serves as a traffic management center (TMC) for the region. Working in cooperation with local agencies, TxDOT provides a data connection between STRATIS and the City of Laredo TMC for sharing of CCTV camera feeds and control. This system also allows the City of Laredo TMC to view messages placed on the DMS by TxDOT. Further, TxDOT also provides the City of Laredo 911 Dispatch Center with its CCTV camera images. The City of Laredo has implemented a variety of ITS technologies to enable more efficient travel on the region's roadways and international border crossings. The City of Laredo has implemented CCTV cameras on arterial streets, synchronized traffic signal systems, improved vehicle detection capabilities, and a TMC connected to the TxDOT STRATIS.

As part of the STRATIS system, page 13 of the current CMP indicates the use of installed cameras along the international border crossings. At these major crossing, the City of Laredo

has installed cameras linked to an online system that posts images of the Laredo side and the Mexico side of crossings at the four bridges to show the current traffic at the border crossings. This camera system allows the public to make better informed decisions when planning cross border travel. The system can be viewed at:

<http://www.ci.laredo.tx.us/bridgesys/Cameras/bridge4cam.html>. Some of the international bridges also have an ITS technology for the electronic payment of border crossing tolls through an automatic vehicle identification system. The urban transit agency within the City of Laredo, El Metro, has implemented the ITS technology of electronic fare payment on all buses. In addition, El Metro has implemented automated vehicle location (AVL) and security cameras to the transit fleet. AVL identifies the spatial location of buses along transit routes. AVL data is used to communicate wait times at bus stops to customers via Real Time or Google Map Transit.

As part of a “mock” certification review completed on November 14-15, 2019 the Federal Review Team recommended that the Laredo MPO continue to work with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) in obtaining Congestion Management Process Assessment Tool-COMPAT (at <https://compat.tti.tamu.edu/>) in order to document congested facilities and corridors within the metropolitan planning area boundary as part of the CMP process. The Federal Review Team indicated that the use of INRIX data from the TTI COMPAT Tool is recommended to show travel time delays for freight and single-occupant vehicles within the CMP network. The Federal Review Team also suggested that the Laredo MPO share the results of the COMPAT Tool (including maps and data visualizations) with private freight providers and shippers to ground truth the INRIX data with actual network performance and user needs.

In addition, the Federal Review Team encouraged the update of the regional ITS architecture, as shown in the current CMP (page 14, CMP), within the MPO planning area to support the congestion management process. The data collected and projects identified thru the City of Laredo’s ITS Master Plan is considered a valuable source of operations data for input into the congestion management process (page 14, CMP). As part of this virtual review, the Federal Review Team encouraged the update of the regional ITS architecture, as shown in the current CMP (page 14, CMP), within the MPO planning area to support the congestion management process. The last ITS architecture update was noted as complete in January of 2005 (page 14, CMP).

The Federal Review Team also indicated the need to relate the CMP process and outputs to the PM-3 system reliability goals and targets established by the MPO policy board in May of 2019. The Federal Review Team also suggested that the Laredo MPO include a listing of CMP-related surface transportation projects and programs (e.g., traffic signal timing programs, etc.) in the PM-3 discussion within the 2045 MTP and TIP update documents.

Recommendations

- As part of the existing Congestion Management Process (CMP) and previously conducted travel time delay study (2013), work with TxDOT TPP Traffic Analysis Section and Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) to obtain and incorporate current traffic data sources (e.g., INRIX data and COMPAT Tool) as part of the next CMP update. The

MPO should continuously monitor its congestion levels through this data and identify areas of high congestion as part of its CMP and TIP/MTP project selection process.

- Ensure that public transit-related improvements are evaluated along with highway-related demand management (TDM/TSM, ITS, etc.) and traffic operational improvements as part of the next CMP update.

Finding

The Laredo MPO substantially meets the Congestion Management Plan (CMP) requirements of 23 CFR 450.322 of the FAST Act metropolitan planning regulations. However, it is recommended that the MPO continuously identify areas of high congestion as part of its CMP and TIP/MTP process.

FREIGHT AND INTERMODAL PLANNING

Regulatory Basis

The FAST Act specifically calls for the need to address freight movement as part of the transportation planning process (Reference: 23 U.S.C. Section 134 and 23 CFR 450.306). The FAST Act left the basic framework of the planning process largely untouched. However, the statute introduced critical changes to the planning process by requiring States, MPOs, and public transportation operators **to link investment priorities to the achievement of performance targets** that they would establish to address performance measures in key areas such as safety, infrastructure condition, congestion, system reliability, emissions, and freight movement.

23 U.S.C. 134(a) Metropolitan transportation planning section indicates that:

It is in the national interest to encourage and promote the safe and efficient management, operation, and development of surface transportation systems that will serve the mobility needs of people and freight and foster economic growth and development within and between States and urbanized areas, while minimizing transportation related fuel consumption and air pollution through metropolitan and Statewide transportation planning processes identified in this chapter; and encourage the continued improvement and evolution of the metropolitan and Statewide transportation planning processes by MPOs, State departments of transportation, and public transit operators as guided by the planning factors identified in subsection (h)(as shown below) and section 135(d).

Three of the ten planning factors in the FAST Act identified within title 23 U.S.C. include freight-related provisions that should be addressed as part of the metropolitan and Statewide transportation planning process as follows (Reference: 23 U.S.C. 134(h) and 23 CFR 450.306):

(h) SCOPE OF PLANNING PROCESS—

(1) IN GENERAL— The metropolitan planning process for a metropolitan planning area under this section shall provide for consideration of projects and strategies that will—

(A) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;

(D) Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;

(F) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;

23 CFR part 450 and 490 include freight-related terms and definitions:

23 CFR 450.104 The term “freight shippers” means any entity that routinely transport cargo from one location to another by providers of freight transportation services or by their own operations, involving one or more travel modes.

23 CFR 450.104 The term “provider of freight transportation services” means any entity that transports or otherwise facilitates the movement of goods from one location to another for others or for itself.

23 CFR 490.101 “National Performance Management Research Data Set (NPMRDS)” means a data set derived from vehicle/passenger probe data (sourced from Global Positioning Station (GPS), navigation units, cell phones) that includes average travel times representative of all traffic on each mainline highway segment of the National Highway System (NHS), and additional travel times representative of **freight trucks** for those segments that are on the Interstate System. The data set includes records that contain average travel times for every 15 minutes of every day (24 hours) of the year recorded and calculated for every travel time segment where probe data are available. The NPMRDS does not include any imputed travel time data.

23 CFR 490.601 The purpose of this subpart is to implement the requirements of 23 U.S.C. 150(c)(6) to establish performance measures for State Departments of Transportation (State DOTs) and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to use to assess the national freight movement on the Interstate System.

Current Status

The Laredo MPO is located within the I-35 corridor which provides an international gateway between the United States and Mexico. Freight and intermodal planning are a critical part of ensuring that these international border movements continue to bring goods, people, and products safely and efficiently for economic purposes. The selection of freight and intermodal planning as a “high-risk” planning area highlights the importance of the Laredo I-35 corridor as a major freight corridor hub in the United States. The FAST Act provided for a new National Highway Freight Network (NHFN). The designation of the NHFN serves to strategically direct federal resources and policies toward improved performance of highway portions of the freight transportation system. The NHFN includes four subsystems of roadways.

- Primary Highway Freight System (PHFS): The most critical highway portions of the US freight transportation system.
- Other Interstate portions not on the PHFS: The remaining Interstate highways not included on the PHFS. These routes provide important continuity and access to freight transportation facilities.
- Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFCs): Public roads not in an urbanized area that provide access and connection to important freight facilities
- Critical Urban Freight Corridors (CUFCs): Public roads in urbanized areas that provide access and connection to important freight and intermodal facilities

Within the Laredo MPO area, there are 19 miles of the PHFS as part of the NHFN. The other NHFN subsystems are not represented within the Laredo MPO region.

Roadways on the NHFN in the Laredo MPO region, shown in Figure 4-3, include: IH-35 as far as the end of its Interstate Highway designation at Victoria Street; US 59 from IH-35 east to Bartlett Avenue; and the Bartlett Ave / Maher Avenue connection to the industrial area on the west side of the Laredo International Airport at Pappas Street.

In addition to the NHFN designation, the FAST Act also provided for a new National Multimodal Freight Network (NMFN). The purpose of the NMFN is to:

- Strategically direct resources toward improved system performance for the efficient movement of freight
- Inform freight transportation planning
- Assist in the prioritization of Federal investments
- Evaluate and support investments to achieve national goals

An Interim National Multimodal Freight Network (Interim NMFN) was established in 2016 for public comment, and the public comment period ended in February 2018. The Interim NMFN consists of the NHFN, the freight rail systems of Class I railroads, public ports of the United States that have total annual foreign and domestic trade of at least 2,000,000 short tons, the inland and intracoastal waterways of the United States, Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and coastal and ocean routes along which domestic freight is transported, the 50 airports located in the United States with the highest annual landed weight, and other strategic freight assets such as railroad connectors and border crossings. Components of the NMFN within the Laredo MPO area are mapped in Figure 4-4. These components include:

- Airports: Laredo International Airport (LRD)
- Border Crossings: Lincoln-Juarez/Bridge #2
- Highways: 19 miles total consisting of the NHFN designations of I-35, US 59, Bartlett Avenue, and Maher Avenue
- Railways: 40 miles total consisting of KCS and Union Pacific (UP) railroads

Figure 4-3: National Highway Freight Network Roadways



Source: USDOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics GIS Data

Figure 4-4: National Multimodal Freight Network



Source: USDOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics GIS Data

Of the 29 international roadway border crossings between the US and Mexico in the State of Texas, four are in the Laredo MPO area and collectively make up the City of Laredo International Bridge System. They are as follows, from south to north (See Figure 4-6 from 2045 MTP):

- The Juarez-Lincoln International Bridge (Bridge #2) consists of eight lanes and is reserved for buses and non-commercial auto traffic.
- The Gateway to the Americas International Bridge (Bridge #1) consists of four lanes with two pedestrian walkways and is open to all traffic.
- The World Trade International Bridge (Bridge #4) is a 14-lane bridge reserved solely for commercial traffic.

- The Laredo Columbia Solidarity Bridge (Bridge #3) consists of eight lanes and is open to all traffic.

Due to the status of Laredo as the premier trade hub between Mexico and the US, travel from Mexico to the US and vice versa is critical to the economy of Laredo. There is a proposed fifth border crossing, the Laredo V International Bridge, that is intended to relieve commercial traffic at the World Trade International Bridge. Currently more work on planning and constructing the bridge is pending submission of one consolidated application from Webb County and the City of Laredo and approval from Mexican officials. All four bridges in the Laredo Bridge System, except for the Gateway to the Americas Bridge, offers a “Laredo Trade Tag” (LTT), which is based on an Automatic Vehicle Identification (AVI) system and enables both commercial and non-commercial customers an alternative form of toll payment.

The trucking industry plays a vital role in the movement of freight through the region. Texas Roadway Inventory obtained from the TxDOT website was used in calculating trends in truck traffic in the region. The Texas Roadway Inventory contains various truck percentages and total ADT for the year 2017. Truck percentages were thus applied to total ADT counts to obtain truck traffic. The location with the highest observed truck volumes in 2017 was along I-35 between Del Mar Boulevard and International Boulevard. Table 4-5 of the 2045 MTP (next page) shows the locations with the highest truck ADT for the year 2017 and the associated truck volumes along with their proportion of total traffic. Around the freight hubs on the north side of Laredo on IH 35, US 59, and State Loop 20, trucks are a very large percentage of total traffic, ranging from 26% to 60% at count locations.

Table 4-5: High Truck Traffic Volume Locations

Roadway	Location	Truck 2017 Traffic	Total 2017 Traffic	% Truck Traffic
I-69/US 59	From Riverbank Dr to Mines Rd (FM 1472)	12,639	21,220	59.60%
I-35	From US 83 to Uniroyal Dr	10,272	23,427	43.80%
I-69/US 59	From Mines Rd (FM 1472) to I-35	15,919	47,335	33.60%
I-35	From Uniroyal Dr to Bob Bullock Loop (Loop 20)	13,958	44,993	31.00%
Loop 20 (Bob Bullock Loop)	From I-35 to McPherson	12,002	45,810	26.20%
US 83	From Market St to Jaime Zapata Memorial Hwy (TX 260)	5,245	38,292	12.70%
I-35	From Bob Bullock Loop (Loop 20) to Mines Rd (FM 1472)	5,439	57,726	9.40%
I-35	From Mines Rd (FM 1472) to Del Mar Blvd	5,769	101,004	5.70%
I-35	From Mann Rd to US 59	5,621	105,458	5.30%
I-35	From Del Mar Blvd to Mann Rd	5,848	113,378	5.20%

Source: TxDOT, Transportation Planning and Programming Division

This causes a variety of issues, including conflicts between trucks and vehicles, poor safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, poorly accommodated turning movements, pollution impacting the environment and the health of residents, and poor pavement quality. Currently, there is no region-specific comprehensive freight master plan in place; however, statewide freight plans consider Laredo freight needs such as the Texas Freight Mobility Plan and the International Border Master Plan. Given the large part that freight plays in the continued economic vitality of the region, the number of interests and multimodal owners of transportation infrastructure, and the freight network's associated impacts on safety and infrastructure conditions now and into the future, developing a regional master freight plan to complement and enhance statewide planning efforts has been highlighted as an identified need as mentioned earlier in this report.

Currently, a representative of the Kansas City Railroad, and the Union Pacific Railroad, as well as a representative of the freight logistics community sit on the MPO Technical Committee and are consulted on all action items going before the Policy Committee. Furthermore, during the development of the update of the long-range 2045 MTP, the MPO held a round table discussion with the freight community to get their perspective on the state of the network, community needs, and thoughts on the projects proposed for programming.

Until very recently, staffing limitations have constrained the development of said freight advisory committee, however in June of 2020 the MPO was able to acquire a long-range planner who duties will include the coordination of said committee once it is formed and adopted. Due to the importance of freight movement in the Laredo MPO area, the MPO has programed the development of a long-range freight plan in Subtask 5.1 of the 2021 Unified Planning Work Program. The study is intended to provide a comprehensive review of freight movement in the area, and provide short, mid-range and long-term recommendations for infrastructure improvements. The study should serve as a long-term investment guide for freight mobility improvements in the region.

Commendations

- Commend the Laredo MPO for the programming of planning funds for the development of a regional long-range freight plan as part of the FY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program. This study will provide a comprehensive review of freight movement in the area and provide a short, medium, and long-term investment guide for freight mobility improvements in the region.

Finding

The Laredo MPO substantially meets the freight planning requirements as part of its metropolitan planning process per 23 CFR 450.306.

Performance Based Planning & Programming (PBPP)

Regulatory Basis

The regulations implementing the MAP-21 and FAST Act (including the requirements for PBPP) were published May 27, 2016 and became effective on June 27, 2016. The planning rule had a phase-in date of May 27, 2018 (or two years after the publication date). [23CFR 450.340]

23 CFR 450.306(d)(2) states that each MPO shall establish performance targets that address the performance measures established under 23 CFR 450, where applicable, to use in tracking progress towards attainment of critical outcomes for the region of the MPO. In addition, selection of performance targets by an MPO shall be coordinated with the relevant State and public transportation operators to ensure consistency, to the maximum extent practicable, with the targets those entities establish under 23 CFR 490 and 49 U.S.C 5326(c) and 5329(d), respectively.

23 CFR 450.306(d)(3) states that each MPO shall “establish the performance targets under paragraph (d)(2) not later than 180 days after the date on which the relevant State or provider of public transportation establishes the performance targets.”

23 CFR 450.306(d)(4) states that “an MPO shall integrate in the metropolitan transportation planning process, directly or by reference, the goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets described in other State transportation plans and transportation processes, as well as any plans developed under 49 U.S.C chapter 53 by providers of public transportation, required

as part of a performance-based program...” The regulation lists a series of plans that are among those the MPO must integrate into its planning process (23 CFR 450.306(d)(4)(i)-(viii)).

1. The State asset management plan for the NHS and the Transit Asset Management Plan;
2. Applicable portions of the Highway Safety Improvement Program, including the Strategic Highway Safety Plan;
3. The Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan;
4. Other safety and security planning and review processes, plans and programs as appropriate;
5. The CMAQ performance plan;
6. Appropriate (metropolitan) portions of the State Freight Plan;
7. The congestion management process;
8. Other State transportation plans and transportation processes required as part of a performance-based program.

23 CFR 450.324(f)(3) requires that the **MTP shall contain** at a minimum a **description of the performance measures and performance targets** used in assessing the performance of the transportation system in accordance with subsection 450.306(d).

23 CFR 450.324(f)(4) requires that the **MTP shall contain** at a minimum a **system performance report** and subsequent updates evaluating the condition and performance of the transportation system with respect to the performance targets described in subsection 450.306(d), including progress achieved in meeting the performance targets and, for MPOs that elect to develop multiple scenarios, an analysis of how the preferred scenario has improved the conditions and performance of the transportation system and how changes in local policies and investments have impacted the costs necessary to achieve the identified performance targets. 23 CFR 450.324(h)(i) indicates that “an MPO may, while fitting the needs and complexity of its community, voluntarily elect to develop multiple scenarios for consideration as part of the development of the MTP”.

Under 23 CFR 324(h)(i)(1), an MPO that chooses to develop multiple scenarios under this paragraph is encouraged to consider potential regional investment strategies for the planning horizon; assumed distribution of population and employment; a scenario that, to the maximum extent practicable, maintains baseline conditions for the performance measures identified in subsection 450.306(d) and measures established under 23 CFR 490; a scenario that improves the baseline conditions for as many of the performance measures identified in subsection 450.306(d) as possible; revenue constrained scenarios based on the total revenues expected to be available over the forecast period of the plan; and estimated costs and potential revenues available to support each scenario.

23 CFR 450.324(h)(2) indicates that in addition to the performance areas identified in 23 U.S.C 150(c) and in 49 U.S.C 5326(c) and 5329(d), and the performance measures established under 23 CFR 490, MPOs may evaluate scenarios developed under this paragraph using locally-developed measures.”

Consideration of performance measures and targets in the planning process also takes place when the TIP is updated. Under 23 CFR 450.326(d), the TIP “...shall include, to the maximum extent practicable, a description of the anticipated effect of the TIP toward achieving the performance targets identified in the metropolitan transportation plan, linking investment priorities to those performance targets.”

Current Status

The MAP-21 and FAST Act requires that the State DOT and MPO establish targets for safety, bridge/pavement, and congestion/reliability. As part of this certification review, the Federal Review Team checked to ensure that the established targets for PM-1 (Safety), PM-2 (Bridge/Pavements), and PM-3 (Congestion/Reliability) have been adopted and used by the MPO to monitor progress towards national and statewide goals.

Table 7.1 FAST Act Performance Measure Summary

NATIONAL GOAL AREA	RULEMAKING CATEGORY	PERFORMANCE MEASURE
Safety	Safety	Number of Fatalities
		Rate of Fatalities
		Number of Serious Injuries
		Rate of Serious Injuries
		Number of Non-Motorized Fatalities and Non-Motorized Serious Injuries
Infrastructure Condition	Infrastructure	Percentage of Pavements in Good Condition (Interstate)
		Percentage of Pavements in Poor Condition (Interstate)
		Percentage of Pavements in Good Condition (Non-Interstate NHS)
		Percentage of Pavements in Poor Condition (Non-Interstate NHS)
		Percentage of Bridges in Good Condition (NHS)
		Percentage of Bridges in Poor Condition (NHS)
System Reliability	System Performance	Percent of Reliable Person-Miles Traveled (Interstate)
		Percent of Reliable Person-Miles Traveled (Non-Interstate NHS)
Freight Movement & Economic Vitality	System Performance	Truck Travel Time Reliability (TTTR) for the Interstate System
Environmental Sustainability	System Performance	Total Emissions Reduction
Congestion Reduction	System Performance	Annual Hours of Peak Hour Excessive Delay (PHED) Per Capita on the National Highway System (NHS)
		Percent of Non-Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) Travel

Source: Federal Highway Administration

Chapter 11 of the 2045 MTP addresses the performance-based planning and programming requirements for PM-1 (Safety), PM-2 (Bridge/Pavement), and PM-3 (System Performance), including targets associated with Transit Asset Management (TAM). For 1) PM-1 Safety Targets; 2) PM-2 Pavement & Bridge Targets; and 3) PM-3 System Reliability Targets the adoption date for all 3 was originally January 22, 2019.¹² Since the MPO has adopted the TxDOT statewide targets for PM-1, PM-2, and PM-3, efforts to update the Tri-Party MOU with current safety, pavement/bridge, and system-reliability targets released by TxDOT has been successfully documented and amended into the MOU by the MPO within its Appendix section.

The 2045 MTP states that the Laredo MPO recognizes the importance of linking goals, objectives, and investment priorities to stated performance objectives, and that establishing this link is critical to the achievement of national transportation goals and statewide and regional performance targets.

Table 11-2: Safety (PM1) Performance Conditions and Adopted Performance Targets

2019 Safety Targets	Number of Fatalities (FARS / CRIS / ARF DATA)	Rate of Fatalities (FARS / CRIS / ARF DATA)	Number of Serious Injuries (FARS / CRIS DATA)	Serious Injury Rate (CRIS DATA)	Total Number of Bicycle & Pedestrian Fatalities and Serious Injuries (FARS / CRIS DATA)
2015	3,582	1.39	17,110	6.63	2,036
2016	3,776	1.39	17,602	6.49	2,301
2017	3,726	1.36	17,546	6.39	2,148
2018	3,891	1.46	18,130	6.64	2,309
2019	3,980	1.47	18,367	6.60	2,394
2019 Target as a 5-Year Average	3,791	1.414	17,751	6.550	2,237.6

Table 11-3: Safety (PM1) Performance in the Laredo MPO Area

Year	Fatalities (No.)	Fatalities (Rate)	Serious Injuries (No.)	Serious Injuries (Rate)	Fatalities and Serious Injuries (Bike/Ped)
2015	13	0.84	101	6.54	17
2016	27	1.76	87	5.77	21
2017	22	1.47	86	5.73	17
2018	29	1.67	56	3.23	15

The Laredo MPO policy board adopted the original PM-1 (Safety) targets on January 22, 2019 (and again on February 18, 2020). The values in Table 11-3 (from the 2045 MTP) display safety performance within the Laredo MPO area. Crash data was collected from the TxDOT Crash Records Inventory System (CRIS) on December 6, 2019. In January 2020, the Laredo MPO policy board adopted the 2020 safety targets released by the TxDOT as a five-year moving average.

¹² The PM-1 (Safety) targets were again adopted on February 18, 2020 since these are annual targets.

These updated 2020 safety targets are shown in the Tri-Party MOU between the MPO, El Metro, and TxDOT as part of the Appendix Section of the MOU document.

Safety performance for the fatality rate was better than the target value for 2015 but exceeded the target for 2016, 2017, and 2018. Performance for the serious injury rate has been shown to be significantly better than the adopted target for each year. The Laredo MTP-2045 planning process directly reflects the goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets as they are available and described in other State and public transportation plans and processes, the Texas Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP), the Texas Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), the current statewide Texas Transportation Plan 2040 (TTP), and the Laredo MPO Transportation Improvement Program FY 2019-2022 (TIP).

To support progress towards approved highway safety targets, the 2020-2045 Laredo MTP includes investments for safety improvements. The fiscally constrained 2020-2045 Laredo MTP recommends \$2,100,462 of investments in safety projects and programs through Category 8 Safety funds allocated to the TxDOT Laredo District from FY 2020-2045. These funded safety projects are expected to contribute to the achievement of the adopted safety performance targets.

The FHWA published the Pavement and Bridge Condition Performance Management Final Rule which established performance measures to evaluate the condition of pavement and bridges on the National Highway System (NHS) and the Interstate System in relation to the State of Good Repair (SGR), effective May 20, 2017. This second FHWA performance measure rule (PM2) established six performance measures:

1. Percent of Interstate pavements in good condition.
2. Percent of Interstate pavements in poor condition.
3. Percent of non-Interstate National Highway System (NHS) pavements in good condition.
4. Percent of non-Interstate NHS pavements in poor condition.
5. Percent of NHS bridges by deck area classified as in good condition.
6. Percent of NHS bridges by deck area classified as in poor condition.

Pavement Condition Measures

The pavement condition measures represent the percentage of lane-miles on the Interstate or non-Interstate NHS that are in good condition or poor condition. FHWA established five metrics to assess pavement condition: International Roughness Index (IRI), cracking percent, rutting, faulting, and Present Serviceability Rating (PSR). For each metric, a threshold is used to establish good, fair, or poor condition.

Pavement condition is assessed using these metrics and thresholds. A pavement section is in good condition if three metric ratings are good, and in poor condition if two or more metric ratings are poor. Pavement sections that are not good or poor are considered fair.

The pavement condition measures are expressed as a percentage of all applicable roads in

good or poor condition. Pavement in good condition suggests that no major investment is needed. Pavement in poor condition suggests major reconstruction investment is needed due to either ride quality or a structural deficiency.

Bridge Condition Measures

The bridge condition measures represent the percentage of bridges, by deck area, on the NHS that are in good condition or poor condition. The condition of each bridge is evaluated by assessing four bridge components: deck, superstructure, substructure, and culverts. FHWA created a metric rating threshold for each component to establish good, fair, or poor condition. Every bridge on the NHS is evaluated using these component ratings. If the lowest rating of the four metrics is greater than or equal to seven, the structure is classified as good. The first performance period began on January 1, 2018 and runs through December 31, 2021. The second four-year performance period will cover January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2025, with additional performance periods following every four years. The PM2 rule requires states and MPOs to establish two-year and four-year performance targets for each PM2 measure. Current two-year targets represent expected pavement and bridge condition at the end of calendar year 2019, while the current four-year targets represent expected condition at the end of calendar year 2021.

States establish targets as follows:

- Percent of Interstate pavements in good and poor condition – four-year targets.
- Percent of non-Interstate NHS pavements in good and poor condition – two-year and four-year targets.
- Percent of NHS bridges by deck area in good and poor condition – two-year and four-year targets.

MPOs establish four-year targets for each measure by either agreeing to program projects that will support the statewide targets or setting quantifiable targets for the MPO's planning area that differ from the state targets. TxDOT established current statewide two-year and four-year PM2 targets on June 21, 2018. **The Laredo MPO adopted the Texas statewide PM2 targets on January 22, 2019.** On or before October 1, 2020, TxDOT will provide FHWA a detailed report of pavement and bridge condition performance covering the period of January 1, 2018, to December 31, 2019. During this time, TxDOT and the Laredo MPO will have the opportunity at that time to revisit the four-year PM2 targets.

To support progress towards TxDOT's statewide pavement and bridge performance targets, the 2020-2045 Laredo MTP includes investments that will maintain pavement and bridge condition performance. Investments in pavement and bridge condition could include pavement replacement and reconstruction, bridge replacement and reconstruction, new bridge and pavement capacity, and system resiliency projects that improve NHS bridge components.

The fiscally constrained 2020-2045 Laredo MTP recommends \$27,580,509 of investments for pavement and bridge condition through Category 1 Preventative Maintenance and Rehabilitation and Category 6 Bridges funds allocated to the TxDOT Laredo District. The funded projects are expected to contribute toward achieving pavement and bridge condition performance targets. No quantitative or qualitative analysis has been completed by the MPO to show the movement towards meeting the adopted PM-2 targets as part of the TIP or MTP yet. However, the performance monitoring and reporting of bridge and pavement targets and other trend data will be reviewed as part of the next round of TIP and MTP updates.

The FHWA published the Travel Time Reliability Final Rule (PM3), which established performance measures to evaluate the performance of the NHS and freight movement on the Interstate System, effective May 20, 2017. This performance measure rule established three roadway system performance measures applicable to the Laredo MPO:

National Highway System Performance:

1. Percent of person-miles on the Interstate system that are reliable.
2. Percent of person-miles on the non-Interstate NHS that are reliable.

Freight Movement on the Interstate:

3. Truck Travel Time Reliability Index (TTTR).

National Highway System Performance Measures

The two system performance measures assess the reliability of travel times on the Interstate or non-Interstate NHS system. The performance metric used to calculate reliability is the Level of Travel Time Reliability (LOTTR). LOTTR is defined as the ratio of longer travel times (80th percentile) to a normal travel time (50th percentile) over all applicable roads during four time periods (AM peak, Mid-day, PM peak, and weekends) over the hours of 6 AM to 8 PM. The LOTTR ratio is calculated for each segment of applicable roadway, essentially comparing the segment with itself for the four time periods.

A segment is deemed to be reliable if its LOTTR is less than 1.5 during all four time periods. If one or more time periods has a LOTTR of 1.5 or above, that segment is unreliable. The measures are expressed as the percent of person-miles traveled on the Interstate or non-Interstate NHS system that are reliable, requiring several data calculations to convert from LOTTR to person-miles. Person-miles considers the number of people traveling in buses, cars, and trucks over these roadway segments. To determine total person miles traveled, the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on each segment is multiplied by average vehicle occupancy. To calculate the percent of person miles traveled that are reliable, the sum of the number of reliable person miles traveled is divided by the sum of total person miles traveled. Performance for the PM3 measures is assessed and reported over a four-year performance period. For the PM3 measures, the first performance period began on January 1, 2018 and will end on December 31, 2021. TxDOT reported baseline PM3 performance and targets to FHWA and will report updated performance information at the midpoint and end of the performance period. The second four-year performance period will cover January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2025, with additional

performance periods following every four years. The PM3 rule requires state DOTs and MPOs to establish two-year and four-year performance targets for each PM3 measure. For all targets, the current two-year and four-year targets represent expected performance at the end of calendar years 2019 and 2021, respectively.

States establish targets as follows:

- Percent of person-miles on the Interstate system that are reliable – two-year and four-year targets.
- Percent of person-miles on the non-Interstate NHS that are reliable – four-year targets.
- Truck Travel Time Reliability – two-year and four-year targets.

MPOs establish four-year targets for the System Performance and Freight Movement by either agreeing to programs and projects that will support the statewide targets or setting quantifiable targets for the MPO's planning area that differ from the state targets.

TxDOT enlisted the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) to establish a statewide methodology and recommend future year travel time reliability performance targets for all MPOs within Texas. **The Laredo MPO adopted the TxDOT statewide PM3 targets on January 22, 2019.**

TxDOT will provide FHWA on or before October 1, 2020 a detailed report of PM3 performance covering the period of January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019. TxDOT and the Laredo MPO will have the opportunity at that time to revisit the four-year PM3 targets.

The Laredo MPO recognizes the importance of linking goals, objectives, and investment priorities to stated performance objectives, and that establishing this link is critical to the achievement of national transportation goals and statewide and regional performance targets. As such, the 2020-2045 Laredo MTP planning process directly reflects the goals, objectives, performance measures, and targets as they are available and described in other State and public transportation plans and processes; specifically, the Texas Freight Mobility Plan, the current statewide Texas Transportation Plan 2040 (TTP), and the Laredo MPO Transportation Improvement Program FY 2019-2022 (TIP). At this time, however, the MPO has not yet documented its monitoring and evaluation of travel time reliability projects with its adopted PM-3 targets. This MPO monitoring and evaluation data and trend-lines will be reviewed by FHWA and FTA as part of the next round of TIP and MTP updates.

Another major goal of the 2045 MTP adopted by the Laredo MPO Policy Board was to promote an efficient Network and system operations to maintain travel time reliability and reduce congestion in moving people and goods within and throughout the region.¹³ The project selection criteria directly awards 30 points to those proposed highway improvements that includes elements that specifically improve the operational efficiency of the transportation system. In addition, those proposed highway improvements that improve travel time reliability

¹³ SOURCE: Page 10-23, Chapter 10, 2045 MTP.

or truck travel time reliability, as measured by adopted TxDOT performance measures are ranked accordingly under the current project selection process used by the Laredo MPO.¹⁴

Transit Asset Management

MAP-21 and later the FAST Act mandated the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to develop a rule establishing a strategic and systematic process of operating, maintaining, and improving public capital assets effectively through their entire life cycle. Under the Transit Asset Management (TAM) Final Rule, the FTA established four performance measures to approximate the State of Good Repair for four categories of transit capital assets (Table 11-6). These performance measures will help El Metro to quantify the condition of their assets and help facilitate target setting that supports local funding prioritization.

Table 11-6: Transit Asset Management Performance Measures

Asset Category	FTA established Performance Measure
Rolling Stock	Percent of revenue vehicles exceeding Useable Life Benchmark (ULB)
Facilities	Percent of facilities rated under 3.0 on the Transit Economic Requirements Model (TERM) scale
Equipment	Percent of non-revenue service vehicles exceeding ULB
Infrastructure	Percent of track segments under performance restriction (Not applicable to the Laredo MPO)

Table 11-7: Transit Asset Management Performance Targets Adopted by Laredo MPO

Performance Measure	Performance Target
% of revenue vehicles met or exceeded useful life benchmark (ULB)	75% of vehicles should be within their ULB
% of equipment assets met or exceeded useful life benchmark (ULB)	75% of equipment should be within their ULB
% of assets/facilities with condition rating below 3.0 on FTA TERM Scale	75% of facilities rated on an FTA TERM scale of 3.0 or above

In January 2017, the Laredo MPO Policy Advisory Committee adopted the Transit Asset Management Performance Targets listed in Table 11-7. These performance targets are applicable to El Metro. The Laredo MPO, TxDOT, and El Metro have signed an MOU defining roles and responsibilities related to the performance-based planning and programming process in compliance with the FAST Act. To support progress towards the TAM targets, the 2020-2045 Laredo MTP devotes resources to projects that will invest in transit assets. The fiscally constrained 2020-2045 Laredo MTP recommends \$12,864,100 of investments for TAM through Category 5339 Buses and Bus Facility funds allocated to the El Metro through FTA. The funded projects are expected to contribute toward achieving the TAM targets.

In November 2019, the FTA and FHWA performed a “mock” certification review and suggested that the Laredo MPO update its tri-party MOU per 23 CFR 450.314(h) to include currently adopted PM-1/PM-2/PM-3 performance targets and measures as part of the “3-C”

¹⁴ SOURCE: Page 10-25, Chapter 10, 2045 MTP.

metropolitan planning process. The Laredo MPO has successfully completed this activity and now has a tri-party MOU among TxDOT, MPO, and Regional Transit Operator (El Metro) that includes updated appendices showing the most recently adopted performance targets for the region for PM-1/PM-2/PM-3 and TAM. During the FY 20 TMA Certification Review, the Laredo MPO was reminded of the upcoming deadline for incorporation of the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) safety performance targets into the next MTP and TIP update is **July 20, 2021.**

Also, during the FY 20 TMA Certification Review, the Federal Review Team found that the MPO needs to provide additional documentation of progress to achieving its adopted TAM targets as part of future MTP/TIP updates. During the virtual TMA Certification Review, the Federal Review Team found that the Laredo MPO has an excellent ongoing interagency coordination and consultation process with TxDOT, El Metro regional transit provider, as part of its Transportation Performance Measure (TPM) target and goal-setting efforts. The Laredo MPO also meets with Nuevo Laredo, Mexico on a monthly basis and as part of the bridge master plan development. The Laredo MPO is planning to host over the next year, a border cities conference for all cities along the U.S./Mexico international border.

Commendations

- Commend the Laredo MPO for its ongoing interagency coordination and consultation efforts with TxDOT, El Metro regional transit provider, as part of Transportation Performance Measure (TPM) target and goal-setting efforts. The Laredo MPO also meets with Nuevo Laredo, Mexico on a monthly basis and as part of the bridge master plan development. The Laredo MPO is planning to host over the next year, a border cities conference for all cities along the U.S./Mexico international border.
- Commend the Laredo MPO for the development of the tri-party Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for performance-based planning and programming, and periodic updating of the appendix of this document to identify new targets as updated by TxDOT and subsequently adopted by the MPO Policy Board.

Recommendations

- The 2020-2045 Laredo MTP identifies the TAM targets for the metropolitan area, but, unlike with the PM-1, PM-2, and PM-3 measures, does not identify actual (baseline) conditions for consideration relative to the targets. In the next update of the MTP, the system performance report should include baseline TAM conditions, as well as progress achieved in meeting the TAM targets in comparison with the system performance information currently provided.
- The 2021 – 2024 TIP contains a general statement that the transit projects in the TIP are intended to support achieving the TAM targets. For the next TIP update, it is recommended that a fuller description be provided of how the applicable projects would support achievement of TAM targets.

- Please work with El Metro to meet the deadline for MPO documentation of the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) safety performance targets by **July 20, 2021**. After this effective date, all STIP/TIP and MTP updates must show written documentation of the PTASP targets and MPO regional efforts to monitor progress toward these adopted safety performance targets.

Finding

The Laredo MPO has substantially met the performance-based planning and programming requirements of the FAST Act metropolitan planning regulations per 23 CFR 450.306.

MPO STAFFING AND TRAINING

As part of the on-site TMA Certification Review, the Federal Review Team and participants discussed various ways to improve and enhance the MPO's in-house technical capacity and overall unit performance. This area was determined to be "high-risk" by the Federal Review Team because the Laredo MPO has historically had insufficient staff to perform specific in-house technical tasks including regional modeling, GIS mapping, and other responsibilities, so outsourcing was commonplace as part of their UPWP work program.

To improve its in-house technical capacity, the Laredo MPO has recently hired new staff to provide better oversight of short- and long-term metropolitan transportation planning, including two new transportation planners and a GIS specialist. With these new staff members in-place the Laredo MPO has strengthened its role as a provider of GIS data, maps, regional modeling, freight and border information, as well as other technical information to the Transportation Policy Board and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). With the addition of new planning staff, the MPO is poised to become a more effective regional entity in providing leadership and direction for the regional transportation-related challenges facing Laredo. The Texas A&M Transportation Institute (Bill Frawley) assisted the Laredo MPO by performing a management review that indicated staffing level needs for the region in FY 20.

The Federal Review Team suggested that the MPO better utilize the technical resources of the FHWA and FTA, as well as the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI). The FHWA Texas Division, in conjunction with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute provide free MPO 101 basic training to the MPO policy board members and staff, as well as other technical assistance services upon request. In addition, the Federal Review Team recommended that the Laredo MPO assess and prioritize future training needs for purposes of addressing safety-related transportation planning, value capture, freight (truck parking) and other EDC-related training and peer exchanges available through FHWA HQ's and Resource Center, and FTA subject matter experts. These future training needs and requests should be made through the FHWA Texas Division Office planning liaison via the TxDOT Transportation Planning & Programming Division.

Commendation

- Commend the Laredo MPO for development of new staff positions that will assist the region's in-house modeling and data collection capabilities and activities, strengthen freight and border planning, and improve short and long-range transportation planning

efforts. These MPO staffing needs were identified as part of the recent Texas A&M Transportation Institute's management review.

Recommendation

- Suggest the Laredo MPO utilize the technical resources of the FHWA Texas Division & FHWA Resource Center, and FTA. The FHWA and FTA provide free training and technical assistance related to safety planning and related UPWP tasks, freight modeling and data, value capture tools and techniques, establishment of MPO peer exchanges, MPO 101 basic training to the Policy Board members and MPO staff, and other technical assistance as needed in conjunction with TxDOT and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.

Finding

The Laredo MPO staffing has been greatly expanded prior to the time of this review in order to support the metropolitan planning efforts underway within the MPA boundary. Additional staffing for short- and long-range planning, Active Transportation, freight and border planning, and GIS as well as traffic demand modeling will be enhanced within the region with these additional staff members.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENDATIONS

This section of the certification report provides FHWA and FTA an opportunity to document comments regarding strengths, weaknesses, areas for improvement, and any possible corrective actions that result from the planning certification review. The Federal Review Team did not identify any corrective actions as part of this TMA Certification Review and offers the following pertaining to notable strengths and recommendations for improvement for the Laredo MPO.

Commendations

1. Commend the Laredo MPO (in conjunction with the City of Laredo) for the development of innovative public outreach initiatives including topic-focused "Planning Nights", use of social media outlets (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), Active Transportation Committee efforts, establishment of evening MPO meeting times, hosting of roundtable meetings.
2. Commend the Laredo MPO for the programming of planning funds for the development of a regional long-range freight plan as part of the FY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program. This study will provide a comprehensive review of freight movement in the area and provide a short, medium, and long-term investment guide for freight mobility improvements in the region.

3. Commend the Laredo MPO for development and hiring of new staff positions that will assist the region's in-house modeling and data collection capabilities and activities, strengthen freight and border planning, and improve short and long-range transportation planning efforts. These MPO staffing needs were identified as part of the recent Texas A&M Transportation Institute's management review.
4. Commend the Laredo MPO for its ongoing interagency coordination and consultation efforts with TxDOT, El Metro regional transit provider, as part of Transportation Performance Measure (TPM) target and goal-setting efforts. The Laredo MPO also meets with Nuevo Laredo, Mexico on a monthly basis and as part of the bridge master plan development. The Laredo MPO is planning to host over the next year, a border cities conference for all cities along the U.S./Mexico international border.
5. Commend the Laredo MPO for the development of the tri-party Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for performance-based planning and programming, and periodic updating of the appendix of this document to identify new targets as updated by TxDOT and subsequently adopted by the MPO Policy Board.

Recommendations

1. Encourage the Laredo MPO to incorporate efforts including the "Planning Nights" events and current use of social media outlets into an updated Public Participation Plan (PPP). Consider undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the PPP more frequently than every five years as new innovative public engagement techniques are found effective within the region. Use the updated PPP techniques to help support future MTP updates and ensure that traditionally underserved populations are engaged as part of this planning effort.
2. Encourage the full involvement of the Laredo MPO as part of the State Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) update, Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) activities, and City of Laredo's Vision Zero planning efforts and related subcommittees to better integrate safety into the transportation planning process. Incorporate UPWP work tasks as needed in this area.
3. Suggest the Laredo MPO utilize the technical resources of the FHWA Texas Division & FHWA Resource Center, and FTA. The FHWA and FTA provide free training and technical assistance related to safety planning and related UPWP tasks, freight modeling and data, value capture tools and techniques, establishment of MPO peer exchanges, MPO 101 basic training to the Policy Board members and MPO staff, and other technical assistance as needed in conjunction with TxDOT and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI).
4. As part of the existing Congestion Management Process (CMP) and previously conducted travel time delay study (2013), work with TxDOT TPP Traffic Analysis Section and Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) to obtain and incorporate existing traffic data sources (e.g., INRIX data and COMPAT Tool) as part of the next CMP update. The MPO should

continuously monitor its congestion levels through this data and identify areas of high congestion as part of its CMP and TIP/MTP project selection process.

5. Ensure that public transit-related improvements are evaluated along with highway-related demand management (TDM/TSM, ITS, etc.) and traffic operational improvements as part of the next CMP update.
6. The 2020-2045 Laredo MTP identifies the TAM targets for the metropolitan area, but, unlike with the PM-1, PM-2, and PM-3 measures, does not identify actual (baseline) conditions for consideration relative to the targets. In the next update of the MTP, the system performance report should include baseline TAM conditions, as well as progress achieved in meeting the TAM targets in comparison with the system performance information currently provided.
7. The 2021 – 2024 TIP contains a general statement that the transit projects in the TIP are intended to support achieving the TAM targets. For the next TIP update, it is recommended that a fuller description be provided of how the applicable projects would support achievement of TAM targets.
8. Recommend that the MPO work with El Metro in order to meet the deadline for documentation of the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) safety performance targets is **July 20, 2021**. After this effective date, all STIP/TIP and MTP updates must show written documentation of the PTASP targets and MPO regional efforts to monitor progress toward these adopted safety performance targets.

FHWA/FTA JOINT CERTIFICATION ACTION

In accordance with 23 CFR Part 450, 49 CFR Part 613, and 23 CFR 450.336(b), the FHWA and FTA are required to jointly determine that the metropolitan transportation planning process in the Laredo MPO metropolitan planning area is being carried out in accordance with relevant metropolitan planning requirements. Upon review and evaluation of the Laredo MPO metropolitan transportation planning process, FHWA and FTA have jointly determined that the area substantially meets the requirements of 23 CFR Part 450 and 49 CFR Part 613.

REFERENCES CITED

- 23 U.S.C. 134
- 49 U.S.C. 5303
- 23 CFR 450
- Laredo Website - <http://www.laredompo.org/> with various reports posted, including:
 - FY 2020-21 Unified Planning Work Program
 - 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan
 - FY 2019-22 Transportation Improvement Program
 - FY 2021-24 Transportation Improvement Program
 - Congestion Management Process
 - Public Participation Plan

APPENDIX

List of Participants in the Federal Certification Review

Name	Agency	Email Address
Charlie Goodman	FTA HQ's Office of Planning	Charles.goodman@dot.gov
Tony Ogboli	FTA Region 6 (Fort Worth)	Tony.ogboli@dot.gov
Michael Leary	FHWA Texas Division	Michael.leary@dot.gov
Jose Campos	FHWA Texas Division	Jose.campos@dot.gov
Kirk D. Fauver	FHWA Texas Division	Kirk.fauver@dot.gov
Ed Burgos-Gomez	FHWA Texas Division	ed.burgos-gomez@dot.gov
Megan Dere	FHWA Texas Division	Megan.dere@dot.gov
Kirby Snideman	Laredo MPO	jksnideman@ci.laredo.tx.us
Vanessa Guerra	Laredo MPO	vguerra@ci.laredo.tx.us
Jason Hinojosa	Laredo MPO	jhinojosa@ci.laredo.tx.us
Graciela Briones	Laredo MPO	gbriones@ci.laredo.tx.us
Juan Mendive	Laredo MPO	jmendive@ci.laredo.tx.us
Joe Jackson	El Metro Transit	jjackson@ci.laredo.tx.us
Claudia San Miguel	El Metro Transit	csanmiguel@ci.laredo.tx.us
Roberto Rodriguez, III	TxDOT Laredo District	Roberto.rodriguez@txdot.gov
Tito Gonzales	TxDOT Laredo District	Humberto.Gonzalez@txdot.gov
Sara Garza	TxDOT TPP	Sara.garza@txdot.gov
Bill Frawley	Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI)	w-frawley@tamu.edu
Matt Miller	Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI)	m-miller@tti.tamu.edu

Federal Review Team Members

- Charlie Goodman, FTA HQ's Office of Planning
- Tony Ogboli, FTA Region 6
- Michael Leary, FHWA Texas Division
- Jose Campos, FHWA Texas Division
- Kirk Fauver, FHWA Texas Division
- Ed Burgos-Gomez, FHWA Texas Division
- Megan Dere, FHWA Texas Division

Public Input and On-Line Web Survey

There were no general public comments received by the Federal Review Team as part of either the public listening session (via 1-888 call-in teleconference number) held on August 26, 2020 or the on-line web survey made available to the general public for 30-days as part of this virtual TMA certification review. A copy of the FHWA-FTA public listening session teleconference announcement is shown later in this Appendix section. A copy of the FHWA-FTA public input form available on-line for 30-days (until September 30, 2020) after the completion of the virtual portion of the TMA certification review is also shown within this Appendix section.

Interviews with Elected MPO Officials

The Federal Review Team interviewed three elected officials in conjunction with this TMA certification review, they all currently serve on the MPO transportation policy board. All three elected officials had positive comments on how well the Laredo MPO is currently serving the Webb County and City of Laredo urbanized area. One interview was conducted on the morning of August 26th, and the second and third interviews with elected officials were conducted on the morning of Day #2 (August 27th) of the review. Each of the elected officials have served three to seven years on the Laredo MPO's transportation policy board.

One elected official recommended that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) play a stronger role in the technical development of planning issues and help prioritize decisions in order to assist and advise the MPO transportation policy board. Often the technical decision-making is left to the MPO Transportation Policy Board (with very little input from the TAC), however his assertion was that the technical analysis and decision-making should highlight the best solution to a transportation problem, thus providing clear paths toward formal adoptions and approval actions by the MPO policy board. This would assist in streamlining the decision-making process and reduce the length of debates and technical questions raised during the MPO policy board meetings.

Another elected official suggested that the quorum requirement under the current MPO policy board bylaws be changed from a minimum of nine to just five member votes. This would assist the MPO policy board in meeting quorum vote requirements and avoid meetings in which no quorum is present as per the current MPO adopted bylaws. Reducing the number of agenda topics and length of meetings would also assist the MPO policy board in being more effective and efficient. Some MPO meetings extend out to 3 to 4 hours in length and many on the policy board think this is much too long for purposes of meeting objectives in the transportation planning process.

Additional basic MPO 101 training was highlighted as a future training need by the elected officials interviewed by the Federal Review Team. This would be helpful particularly for new policy board members, who often are totally unfamiliar with the multitude of transportation terms, planning acronyms, and modeling techniques. The issue of the lack of Federal and state funding revenue sources was raised during the interviews with the elected officials. The region of Laredo serves as a primary international gateway for freight movements from Mexico into

the U.S. The revised Federal or state DOT's apportionment formula could be improved to include freight volumes, number of border crossings, and freight tonnage in the actual weighting criteria. The interviewed elected officials did agree that the interagency communication and coordination among the TxDOT, MPO, and El Metro Transit Authority has improved over the last few years.



FHWA-FTA MPO CERTIFICATION REVIEW AGENDA

LOCATION: via Microsoft Teams

DATE(S): August 26-27, 2020

Wednesday, August 26, 2020 (Day #1)

Start Time	Review Topics	Discussion Lead
8:30-9:00 AM	Microsoft Teams Check-in/Test of IT System	ALL
9:00-9:10 AM	Purpose and Introductions	FHWA-FTA
9:15-10:15 AM	Public Participation Process	FHWA-FTA
10:15-11:00 AM	EJ/Title VI Evaluation Process	Megan Dere, FHWA
11:00-11:30 AM	Safety in the Planning Process	Ed Burgos, FHWA
11:30-12:30 PM	LUNCH	
12:30-1:30 PM	Congestion Management Process (CMP) Process	Mike Leary, FHWA
1:30-2:30 PM	Freight and Intermodal Planning	FHWA-FTA
2:30-3:30 PM	Transportation Performance Management (TPM)	Jose Campos, FHWA
3:30-4:00 PM	MPO Staffing Needs & Update	ALL
4:00-4:30 PM	Interview with Dr. Marte Martinez (City Councilman)	FHWA-FTA Only
4:30 PM	Adjourn (Day #1)	

➤ **PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION (AUGUST 26, 2020): 5:00 PM-7:00 PM (Central Time)**

Teleconference No.: 1-888-684-8852

Passcode: 7007726#

Thursday, August 27, 2020 (Day #2)

Start Time	Review Topics	Discussion Lead
9:00-9:30 AM	Interview with Judge Tano E. Tijerina (Webb County Judge, Co-Chair MPO Policy Board)	FHWA-FTA Only
9:30-10:00 AM	Future MPO Training Needs	Laredo MPO/FHWA/FTA/TTI
10:00-10:30 AM	Interview with Mayor Pete Saenz (Chairperson of Laredo MPO Policy Board)	FHWA-FTA Only
10:30-11:00 AM	FHWA-FTA Recommendations and Summary of Review	FHWA/FTA
11:00-11:30 AM	Close Out of Review and Next Steps	FHWA/FTA



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

FHWA–FTA Public Listening Teleconference for the Laredo MPO Certification Review

August 26, 2020

5:00 PM-7:00 PM

Teleconference No.: 1-888-684-8852

Passcode: 7007726#

Background: The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are required to jointly certify the metropolitan transportation planning process for Transportation Management Areas (TMA) every four years under federal law. As part of this TMA Certification Process, the FHWA and FTA invite public comments on the metropolitan planning process for the Laredo Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Several key metropolitan planning issues will be discussed and presented during this teleconference scheduled for August 26, 2020 from 5-7:00 pm.

Public Listening Session Objectives:

- Provides the general public an opportunity to give comments and input into the “3-C” metropolitan transportation planning process for the Laredo MPO planning region.
- Better understand the metropolitan transportation planning (“3-C”) process and how improvements can be made to produce transportation planning products that meet FAST Act compliance and other federal-aid planning requirements.
- Learn about how the MPO transportation planning process works within the Laredo metropolitan planning region.
- Understand how improved public participation and interagency involvement can help to develop better transportation planning products that meet the needs of the traveling public in the Laredo MPO region.
- Discuss and brainstorm on opportunities to become more involved and engaged in the Laredo MPO transportation planning process, to make a positive difference in the quality of life within the region.

Target Audience:

General public, private shippers and freight operators, transit users, and bicycle/pedestrian users.

Registration: Free, no cost for participation. For written public comments, please see the Laredo MPO website at: <http://www.laredompo.org/> for electronic public input forms, or you may send your written comments by Wednesday, September 30, 2020 to:

Kirk D. Fauver
FHWA Texas Division

300 E. 8th Street,
Austin, Texas 78701

E-mail: kirk.fauver@dot.gov

PH: 512-536-5952

or

Tony Ogboli

FTA Region 6

819 Taylor Street, Room 14A02
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

E-mail: tony.ogboli@dot.gov

PH: 817-978-0566





Public Input Form

For the Laredo MPO Metropolitan Planning Certification Review

Purpose: The following public input form will be used by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA Region 6) as part of their formal certification review of the transportation planning process in the Laredo Metropolitan Planning Area on August 26-27, 2020.

The transportation planning process is conducted by the Laredo Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Texas Department of Transportation, FTA, FHWA, El Metro, as well as other planning partners within the region.

The FHWA/FTA joint planning certification review is conducted every four (4) years for large metropolitan areas per 23 CFR 450 regulations. On behalf of the U.S. Department of Transportation and the FHWA/FTA planning partners we welcome your timely input and thank you in advance for your assistance in this effort!

Q1) Are you aware of the roles and responsibilities of a metropolitan planning organization? (Y/N)

If you answered **"No"** to the question above then please go to Question #2, else if you answered **"Yes"** to the question above, do you think the MPO is doing an overall good job of providing the public with a reasonable opportunity to provide input and participate as part of the transportation planning process? (Please use specific details/examples, if possible. Use additional space, if required.)



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Q2) Would you like to find out more about the transportation planning process and provide your input regarding issues and concerns within the Laredo MPO planning region via informal teleconference? If so, please feel welcome to attend the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration's public listening session at the following time and date via teleconference. Feel free to call the teleconference number shown below in order to provide your input on the metropolitan transportation planning process.

Time: 5-7:00 PM (Central Time)

Date: Wednesday, August 26, 2020

Teleconference Number: 1-888-684-8852

Passcode Number: 7007726#

You may also provide any additional transportation planning-related comments/issues here:

You may also mail (or e-mail) your written response on how well you think the transportation planning process is working in the Laredo MPO metropolitan planning area from now until the cutoff deadline of COB Wednesday, September 30, 2020 to one of the two federal contact persons listed below:

Federal Highway Administration Texas Division

**Attention: Kirk D. Fauver
300 East 8th Street
Austin, TX 78701**

**PH: (512) 536-5952
Kirk.fauver@dot.gov**

-or-

Federal Transit Administration (Region VI)

**Attention: Tony Ogboli
819 Taylor St Rm 14A02
Fort Worth, TX 76102**

**PH: (817) 978-0566
Tony.ogboli@dot.gov**



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
819 TAYLOR STREET, ROOM 14A02 300 E. 8TH STREET, ROOM 826
FORT WORTH, TEXAS 76102-9003 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701

June 25, 2020

Refer to: HPP-TX

Announcement of the Upcoming TMA Planning Certification
Review of the Laredo and Webb County Area Metropolitan
Planning Organization

Honorable Pete Saenz — Mayor of Laredo
Chairperson, Laredo MPO Policy Board
Laredo City Hall
1110 Houston Street
Laredo, Texas 78040

Dear Mayor Saenz:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) personnel have been working closely with the Laredo and Webb County Area MPO (LMPO) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in order to establish the revised dates for the upcoming Transportation Management Area (TMA) certification review required under title 23 United States Code (USC) 134(k) and 23 CFR 450.336(b).

This letter is to formally advise the MPO Policy Board that the review of the LMPO metropolitan transportation planning process will take place on August 26-27th by virtual remote technologies. We will focus upon several high-risk metropolitan planning areas that will be identified through our ongoing desk audit. A detailed agenda will be provided at a later date.

The previous TMA certification review that was conducted four years ago found that the MPO was fully certified in meeting the requirements of 23 CFR 450 (highway) and 49 CFR Part 613 (transit). As part of this TMA certification review, the FHWA and FTA will be conducting a two-hour long Virtual Public Listening Session via teleconference on August 26th in order to solicit public feedback on the regional transportation planning process within the Laredo metropolitan planning area.

Should you have any questions regarding the upcoming virtual TMA certification review, please contact Kirk Fauver, with the FHWA Texas Division at (512) 536-5952; or Tony Ogboli at FTA at (817) 978-0566. Thank you for your attention and participation in the review of the LMPO metropolitan transportation planning process.

Sincerely yours,



Donald R. Koski, Director
Planning and Program Development
Federal Transit Administration
Region VI



Michael T. Leary, Director
Planning and Program Development
Federal Highway Administration
Texas Division