



# LAREDO & WEBB COUNTY

## AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

### **POLICY COMMITTEE**

#### **VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES**

**MAY 17TH, 2021**

LIVE WEB LINK: <http://laredotx.swagit.com/live>

PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNEL: Spectrum TV channel 1300

#### **I. CHAIRPERSON TO CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Mayor Saenz called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

#### **II. CHAIRPERSON TO CALL ROLL**

Graciela Briones, LWCAMPO Staff, called roll and verified a quorum existed.

#### **Regular members present:**

Honorable Pete Saenz, Mayor and LWCAMPO Chairperson

Honorable Tano E. Tijerina, Webb County Judge

Honorable Jesse Gonzalez, Webb County Commissioner, Pct. 1

Honorable John Galo, Webb County Commissioner, Pct. 3

Honorable Ruben Gutierrez, Jr., City Councilmember District V

Honorable Dr. Marte A. Martinez, City Councilmember, District VI

Honorable Vanessa Perez, City Councilmember District VII

David M. Salazar, Jr., P.E., TxDOT District Engineer

Humberto "Tito" Gonzalez, P.E., Private Sector

#### **Ex-Officio members not present:**

Honorable Judith Zaffirini, State Senator, District 21

Honorable Richard Raymond, State Representative, District 42

Honorable Tracy O. King, State Representative, District 80

#### **Staff present:**

J. Kirby Snideman, City Planning/LWCAMPO Staff

Graciela Briones, City Planning/LWCAMPO Staff

Juan Mendive, City Planning/LWCAMPO Staff

Julio Niño, City Planning/LWCAMPO Staff

Jason Hinojosa, City Planning/LWCAMPO Staff  
Angie Quijano, City Planning/LWCAMPO Staff

**Guests:**

Robert A. Eads, City Manager's Office  
Riazul Mia, City Manager's Office  
Ramon Chavez, City Engineering Department  
Danny Magee, City Traffic Safety Department  
Roberto Rodriguez, TxDOT  
Sara Garza, TxDOT  
Luis Perez Garcia, Webb County Engineering  
Guillermo Cuellar, Webb County Engineering  
Melisa Montemayor, HNTB, Inc.  
Antonio Rodriguez, HNTB, Inc.  
Douglas Howland, RMA

**III. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

Speakers are required to fill out witness cards, which must be submitted to MPO Staff no later than 15 minutes after the start of the meeting. Speakers shall identify themselves at the microphone. Comments are limited to three (3) minutes per speaker. No more than three (3) persons will be allowed to speak on any side of an issue. Should there be more than three (3) people who wish to speak on a specific issue, they should select not more than three (3) representatives to speak on their behalf. The presiding officer may further limit public on the interest of order or time. Speakers may not transfer their minutes to any other speaker. Comments should be relevant to City business and delivered in a professional manner. No derogatory remarks shall be permitted.

There were no citizen comments.

**IV. ITEMS REQUIRING POLICY COMMITTEE ACTION:**

**A. Approval of the minutes for the virtual meeting held on April 19th, 2021.**

Dr. Martinez made a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting held on April 19th, 2021.

Second: CM. Gutierrez  
For: 9  
Against: 0  
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

**B. Discussion with possible action on a letter of support requested by Webb County for a Grant Application to the Texas Department of Transportation – Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program 2021 for the improvements of sidewalks in the City of Rio Bravo, Texas.**

Kirby Snideman, MPO Director, stated that only governmental agencies or those that were in agreement with a governmental organization were eligible to apply for said program funds.

Dr. Martinez made a motion to approve the item.

Second: CM. J. Gonzalez  
For: 9  
Against: 0  
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

**C. Discussion with possible action on the Hachar-Reuthinger road project.**

Guillermo Cuellar, Webb County Engineering, stated that Webb County had submitted the required files regarding the project for TxDOT review.

David Salazar, TxDOT, stated that the most important part at the moment was to move forward so that TxDOT could get the agreements in place and be able to proceed with the production of the plans and continue with the letting date. He stated that the main goal was to start with the agreements for the commencement of the project.

Humberto Gonzalez, TxDOT, stated TxDOT had already received executed Advance Funding Agreements (AFA's) from both, the City and the County; and TxDOT would take over the development of the plans on the City side for the Hachar-Reuthinger portion. As for the County side, Mr. Gonzalez stated TxDOT already had their consultant on board to complete the pending environmental clearance items and as soon as these items were attained, it would allow the City to complete the transfer of the Right-of-Way (ROW). Once the City had legal rights to the property, TxDOT would look into doing a transfer of roadways with the City of Laredo. He further mentioned that the TxDOT agreement showed that the City was responsible for the development of the entire Plans, Specifications, and Estimates (PS&E) to let the project.

**D. Discussion with possible action on the adoption of the proposed LWCAMPO Independent MPO Plan.**

Kirby Snideman, MPO Director, gave a brief presentation on the proposed item. He provided a history of how the idea of a more independent MPO had previously been initiated and discussed by the Policy Committee since 2019.

He provided an overview detailing the elements of the proposed independent plan. He described some advantages and disadvantages of being under the current structure. Furthermore, Mr. Snideman presented a recommended staff organizational chart and a proposed timeline for the transition if the plan was approved.

Mayor Saenz stated his concerns regarding the item. He stated he was aware that the MPO becoming independent was something that needed to happen. But, he also asked when the employees under the MPO needed to decide whether they would want to stay with the City or move forward with the transition of the County taking over as the fiscal agent.

Mr. Snideman stated that the proposed plan would not create any employee vacancies. MPO staff would be fully working for the MPO. He further mentioned that the City would not lose employees because said employees were already working under the MPO and regardless of who the fiscal agent would be, all expenses would be reimbursed. Mr. Snideman stated that the City could still remain as the fiscal agent. However, he mentioned that the reason for recommending to change the fiscal agent was so that the MPO could start a fresh relationship with the County. He further stated that it was possible to maintain the City as the fiscal agent by entering into Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that clearly detail roles and responsibilities of each party.

Dr. Martinez asked Mr. Snideman if he could elaborate on the concerns or issues he was having with the City as the fiscal agent that was leading him to propose changing the fiscal agent. He also asked what projects or what was he working on that he was not able to accomplish during his two years as MPO Director. Dr. Martinez stated the committee had not heard about said change before and wanted to know what the issue was and why the concerns had not been previously brought to the attention of this committee.

Mr. Snideman stated that about a year and a half ago he had proposed a work plan that the Policy Committee adopted with a budget that set aside how much the MPO Director could pay the candidates he selected to be hired. He stated it was very difficult to hire qualified candidates. He also stated he was not able to hire a very well qualified candidate above the minimum amount within the approved salary range. He stated that because the MPO has to follow the City's hiring process, he was only authorized to hire the candidate with the minimum pay.

Mr. Snideman stated that if the MPO would transfer to the County, there would be Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) written into the contract stating that human resources nor administration for the County would have authority over the MPO. The MPO would answer directly to the Policy committee.

Dr. Martinez asked if there were any projects that were not able to go through or any granting opportunity that was missed because of the way the MPO was set up.

Judge Tano Tijerina, Webb County, stated this was not the case. However, he also stated he has been supporting the MPO to be independent for many years.

Another example Mr. Snideman gave was that the Transportation Set-Aside program which were funds that the MPO received every year that could be spent on creative projects to encourage alternative transportation. He stated there had been a call for projects for said program funds and the MPO received very few submittals. He stated he wanted to do another call for projects where the MPO actively would go out the community for said call for projects. By doing that, the MPO would better evaluate how the funds would be spent.

CM. Vanessa Perez, thanked Mr. Snideman for all the work that he has done and understood the conflicts he was having. She also stated she believed Mr. Snideman was not to blame because he was just trying to protect his job. She encouraged the City to take the examples Mr. Snideman gave and take them into consideration and see that this might be for the best interest of the greater good overall.

CM. Galo stated he was concerned about the transition but also said he was open to look at the options.

Mr. Snideman stated that whether the City or the County would stay as the fiscal agent, there would be MOUs in place to stipulate that Policy Committee would be in charge of the MPO, not any other administration.

CM. Gutierrez stated he agreed for the MPO to become independent. He stated there were still a lot of questions to be answered and recommended to have those questions answered before voting on the item.

Judge Tijerina stated that the proposed structure was very well planned and should not create any issues, and was ready to move forward with the transition.

CM. Gutierrez made a motion to **table** the item.

Second: Dr. Martinez  
For: 2  
Against: 7

Motion died

Robert Eads, City Manager, expressed his concerns. He stated he would have liked to be made aware of said agenda item before the meeting. He stated he had reached out to Mr. Snideman Friday night to inquire about this agenda item as he hadn't previously been advised. He would have liked for Mr. Snideman to address it with him prior to the meeting.

Judge Tijerina made a motion to **adopt** the proposed LWCAMPO Independent MPO Plan.

Second: CM. Galo  
For: 9  
Against: 0

Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Snideman stated it did not bind anyone to do anything. It simply allowed staff to move forward with working on future agenda items that would be brought to the Policy committee for a decision.

David Salazar, TxDOT, thanked Mr. Snideman for his tremendous job and stated TxDOT was in full support of whatever direction the MPO committee decided to go. He also stated Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and division would be there for said transition and to answer any questions.

**E. Discussion with possible action on the appointment of an Interim MPO Director separate from the Interim City of Laredo Planning Director who was appointed by the Laredo City Council.**

Mr. Snideman recommended Mr. Juan Mendive for Interim MPO Director. He stated he was very confident Mr. Mendive would do an outstanding job as Interim MPO Director.

Mr. Mendive introduced himself and stated that he was willing to play a role for the MPO and contribute to the team and have the MPO succeed.

CM. Galo made a motion to **accept** Mr. Snideman's recommendation and named Mr. Juan Mendive as the Interim MPO Director.

Second: Judge Tijerina  
For: 9  
Against: 0

Motion carried unanimously

**F. Receive public testimony and initiate a 10-day public review and comment period, for the following proposed amendment(s) of the MPO Bylaws:**

- 1. Article II, Section 2.3 Membership, Terms and Administration, shall be amended to allow a permanent Director for the MPO separate from the City of Laredo Planning Director who is appointed by City Council.**

CM. Galo made a motion to **open** the public hearing and **initiate** a 10-day public review and comment period, for the following proposed amendment(s) of the MPO Bylaws:

1. Article II, Section 2.3 Membership, Terms and Administration, shall be amended to allow a permanent Director for the MPO separate from the City of Laredo Planning Director who is appointed by City Council.

Second: CM. Perez  
For: 9  
Against: 0

Motion carried unanimously

**V. REPORT(S) AND PRESENTATIONS (No action required).**

**A. Status report by the Regional Mobility Authority (RMA).**

Antonio Rodriguez, HNTB, Inc., representing the RMA provided a status report via email which read as followed:

1. Killam Industrial Blvd. Turn Lanes – Construction start date is anticipated for the month of July. The reason for the delay is due to a lag in time for the ordering of the signal poles in the project. This lag in time from the ordering to the arrival of signal poles is an issue that is being seen on various street projects across the state.
2. Los Presidentes (Cuatro Vientos to Brownwood) – Construction has commenced. Our first construction progress meeting was 5/11/21. The team is preparing their first change order for the project to incorporate the concrete pavement into the project from Cuatro Vientos to Brownwood and match the pavement section from Cuatro Vientos to Concord Hills. A forthcoming change order will be developed to include a traffic signal into the project at Concord Hills as passed by City Council resolution on 4/26/21. Regarding the Cuatro Vientos Acceleration/ Deceleration Lane project, the 90% plans were submitted to TxDOT on the week of the 5th of May. The project is scheduled for letting in October of this year.
3. Vallecillo Road – Chairman Brown is scheduled to meet with Transportation Commissioner Chairman Bruce Bugg to discuss the Vallecillo Road project on 5/25/21.
4. Other Items – The WCCL RMA will have their May Board Meeting on 5/19/21.

**VI. DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

Mr. Snideman thanked the City and the MPO for allowing him to work as both, the Planning Department and MPO Director.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

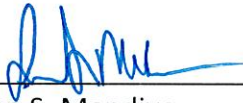
CM. Gutierrez made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:10 p.m.

Second: CM. Perez

For: 9

Against: 0

Motion carried unanimously



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Juan S. Mendive  
Interim MPO Director



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Pete Saenz, Mayor and LW-CAMPO  
Chairperson