



LAREDO & WEBB COUNTY

AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

POLICY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2021

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

PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNEL: Spectrum TV channel 1300

I. CHAIRPERSON TO CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Judge Tijerina, LWCAMPO Vice-Chairperson 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.

Cm. John Galo made a motion to excuse members not present.

Second:	Cm. Gonzalez
For:	5
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

Motion carried unanimously

Regular members present:

Honorable Tano E. Tijerina, Webb County Judge
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
Humberto "Tito" Gonzalez, P.E., Private Sector

Regular members not present:

Honorable Pete Saenz, Mayor and LWCAMPO Chairperson
Honorable Jesse Gonzalez, Webb County Commissioner, Pct. 1
David M. Salazar, Jr., P.E., TxDOT District Engineer

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

LWCAMPO Staff present:

Juan Mendive, Interim Director
Graciela Briones, Planner
Jason Hinojosa, Planner
Julio Niño, Planner
Angie Quijano, Administrative Assistant

Others:

Ramon Chavez, City Engineering Department
Danny Magee, Traffic Safety Department
Guillermo Cuellar, Webb County Engineering
Sara Garza, TxDOT
Roberto Rodriguez, TxDOT
Jesus Saavedra, TxDOT
Eduardo Bernal, Transit, El Metro
David Vidal Treviño, Daniel B. Hastings

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 meeting held on August 18th, 2021.

Dr. Martinez made a motion to approve the minutes for the meeting held on August 18th, 2021.

Second: Cm. Gutierrez
For: 5
Against: 0
Abstain: 0

Motion carried unanimously

B. Receive public testimony and approve Resolution No. MPO 2021-10, adopting the following proposed amendment(s) of the MPO Bylaws:

1. Article II, Section 2.3(a), entitled Administration, shall be amended as follows:

Remove - "The City of Laredo Planning Director shall act as the Transportation Planning Director for the MPO."

Add - "The MPO shall be led by a full-time MPO Transportation Planning Director."

Cm. Galo made motion to **close** the public hearing and **approve** Resolution No. MPO 2021-10, adopting the proposed amendment(s) of the MPO Bylaws.

Second: Cm. Dr. Martinez

Cm. Dr. Martinez asked what was going to happen with respect to salaries and how finances would be covered for the MPO?

Juan Mendive, Interim MPO Director responded that the amendment to the Bylaws was done to reflect the current situation of having a separate director for the Planning Department and a separate Interim MPO Director. This was the first step identified during the process review and the next will be to update the planning agreement in place. And, in terms of finances, the monies are available for the MPO to hire a permanent Director. Therefore, the next step will be for City Human Resources to create a Full-Time position (FT).

Cm. Galo asked if the MPO has been separated from the City.

Mr. Mendive, stated that there was not a separation but, the action the Policy committee had previously taken was to undergo an MPO process review. He stated that the separation that has happened is that the MPO and the Planning department now have separate directors. He also stated that the MPO directors supervised all MPO Staff. He stated that if the City of Laredo remain as the fiscal agent the position for the MPO Director would need to be created. Mr. Bill Frawley from the Texas Transportation Institute would be at next month's meeting to give an update on the MPO Process.

Humberto Gonzalez, TxDOT, stated there would also need to be another agreement between the fiscal agent and the new MPO Director and have provided guidance to the City of Laredo on said agreement.

Mr. Mendive stated said Bylaws change would reflect the current situation and it's a step in that direction of being more independent. The next step would be changing the Planning Agreement to say that the Policy committee supervises the MPO Director.

Judge Tijerina stated for the record that he had never been uncomfortable with the City of Laredo being the fiscal agent. He clarified that he was very comfortable with the way things are and the City of Laredo being the fiscal agent. He was in favor of the MPO Director being on its own.

Cm. Perez joined the meeting at 1:38 p.m.

For: 6
Against: 0
Abstain: 0

Motion carried unanimously

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

Humberto Gonzalez, TxDOT, stated that TxDOT the planned letting date was August 2023. That is when the Category 7 funds would become available and are funds that have been allocated by the MPO for that project. He stated TxDOT was working on the environmental assessment that was pending and the consultant is already on board and started the design of the project.

Cm. Perez wanted clarification due to an issue with the name that highways have to be named after the number but only city municipalities can change it.

Ramon Chavez, City Engineer, stated documentation was received by Webb County on July 28th and at the last City Council meeting of September 7th, City Council approved Resolution 2021-R-213 expressing the support to designate a street name for the six-lane divided highway as Hachar-Reuthinger road.

Mr. Gonzalez, TxDOT clarified that the roadway will get a designated number once is in the highway system.

Cm. Perez asked if the environmental study was done sooner, if there was a possibility to let the project in 2022.

Mr. Gonzalez, TxDOT, stated that the project right now is sitting in 2023 because \$6.3 million dollars will be rolling over because that is what the MPO had allocated in

Category 7 funds every year. In 2023 would be when that full balance would be available. He further stated they can explore the options of maybe borrowing the funds from another MPO but was something that needs to be further discussed.

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

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

Jed Brown, Chairman of the RMA provided an update on their projects. He stated that the RMA has approximately \$9.5M allocated to the RMA that they have not tapped into and those monies could be used to expediate the Hachar-Reuthinger.

Also, the following written report from Antonio Rodriguez, HNTB, Inc., representing the RMA, was submitted via e-mail and was included in the packet:

1. FM 1472 and Killam Industrial Blvd. Turn Lanes – NTP for the contractor was provided by TxDOT at the end June. Currently, Anderson Columbia is working from Big Bend to South of Killam Industrial Blvd. The Killam Turn Lanes portion of the project and the northern portion of the project is scheduled to commence on 10/24/21.
2. Los Presidentes (Cuatro Vientos to Brownwood) – Construction is ongoing. The 3rd construction progress meeting occurred on 8/19/21. Currently, the project is scheduled for completion in May 2022. The schedule by the contractor is being updated to reflect the high amount of inclement weather encountered during the summer months. Regarding the Cuatro Vientos Acceleration/ Deceleration Lane project, all TxDOT Laredo District Comments have been addressed. The project is scheduled for letting in October of this year.
3. Vallecillo Road – Progress of federal funding for this project is being monitored.
4. Other: City of Laredo conducted the Springfield Phase III Bid Opening. The apparent low bidder provided a bid of \$4.2M. The WCCL RMA is contributing \$2M for the implementation of the project.

Cm. Dr. Martinez spoke about the proposed location in the south for the new international bridge. He asked if the connection of Loop 20 all the way to Rio Bravo was in the future plans of TxDOT and/or RMA.

Mr. Brown responded the RMA has always agreed on the need for the expansion of World Trade Bridge and an additional international bridge.

Cm. Galo asked at what point could the environmental process be started on the pending projects that the MPO could give direction to the RMA to task them with the environmental.

Cm. Gonzalez, TxDOT, stated in order to get environmental clearance, the project had to be funded and financially constrained.

Dr. Martinez stated his concerns on the access of Unitec. He stated that if there is not a way to figure out how to get increased access in and out, it would limit the ability to develop in said area. He stated he hoped the RMA would be able to discuss the issue at their next Board meeting.

B. Update from the City and/or County on any plans they have to improve the internal roadway infrastructure and circulation at Unitec Industrial Park.

Danny Magee, Traffic Director, gave a brief presentation on the item. He stated he was tasked by City Council to look into some short-term solutions on said area. He stated that there were only one and a half entrances. The other entrance was so much blocked by train that it's really almost useless half the time. He stated his idea was that truck movement needed to cut down on the Carrier's interchange. He also stated his idea was to put in direct connector to go over the rail road tracks and come down to where you come to a traffic signal. He stated the idea would work but some decisions would have to be made in order to commit to project.

David Vidal Treviño, Daniel B. Hastings, stated his concerns regarding the item. He stated that a lot of the owners would most likely not be very happy on not being able to turn left on South Unitec to get to their facilities and have to around the long way. He stated that explanations would have to be given to the property owners on what needed to be done.

C. Presentation by City of Laredo Engineering Staff on City sponsored projects listed in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Ramon Chavez, City Engineering gave a brief presentation on the item which was included in the packet for the Calton Rd. grade separation and the Flecha lane realignment.

VI. DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Juan Mendive, Interim MPO Director, stated that the Director's Report was included in the meeting packet and provided a brief overview.

1. As part of the MPO Process Review, Bill Frawley of Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) visited with MPO staff on September 7th and September 8th. Topics of discussion included potential changes to the existing Planning Agreement between the MPO, TxDOT, and the City of Laredo (Fiscal Agent), necessary next steps to make any changes to the agreement, training needs, and staff composition. Mr. Frawley also met with Technical Committee members and provided an update of the Process Review during the Technical Committee meeting.

Next Steps:

- MPO staff will continue maintaining frequent communication with Bill Frawley and provide any requested information or documents.
 - Mr. Frawley will attend the October 20, 2021 Policy Committee Meeting and provide an update. During this visit, he will make additional time to meet with staff.
2. On August 24, 2021, we were informed that the audit of the Laredo Webb County Area MPO by TxDOT is programmed for FY22 and should begin in November 2021. Additional updates will be provided as they become available.
 3. The Technical Committee meeting was held in-person (with a virtual option) on September 7, 2021 at the El Metro Conference Room. The MPO would like to thank El Metro for graciously hosting us and their continued partnership.
 4. As part of the Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) being conducted by consultants for El Metro, two network planning workshops were held with MPO and El Metro staff on August 19th and August 26th. MPO and El Metro continue meeting with the consultants virtually on a regular basis. The COA is intended to evaluate both the current fixed route and paratransit bus services, and provide recommendations to improve the system's overall service, efficiency, effectiveness, and connectivity.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

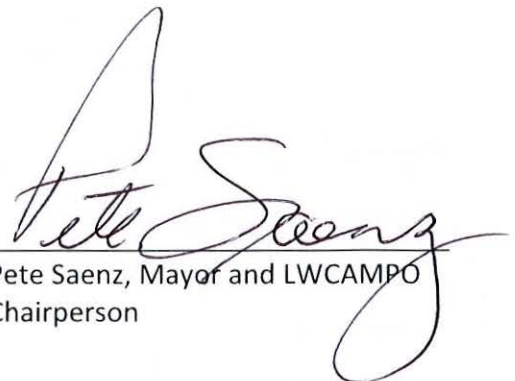
Judge Tijerina made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:55 p.m.

Second: Cm. Gonzalez
For: 6
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously



Juan S. Mendive
Interim MPO Director



Pete Saenz, Mayor and LWCAMPO
Chairperson