



# LAREDO & WEBB COUNTY

## AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

### POLICY COMMITTEE

#### MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 20TH, 2021

LIVE WEB LINK: <http://laredotx.swagit.com/live>  
PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNEL: Spectrum TV channel 1300

- **CHAIRPERSON TO CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Mayor Pete Saenz, called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

- **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 Vanessa Perez, City Councilmember, District VII

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

Honorable Dr. Marte A. Martinez, City Councilmember, District VI (joined the meeting at 1:36 p.m.)

David M. Salazar, Jr., P.E., TxDOT District Engineer (joined the meeting at 1:42 p.m.)

**Regular members not present:**

Honorable Ruben Gutierrez, Jr., City Councilmember, District V

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

Second: Judge Tijerina

For: 6

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

**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, LWCAMPO Interim Director  
Graciela Briones, LWCAMPO Planner  
Jason Hinojosa, LWCAMPO Planner  
Julio Niño, LWCAMPO Planner  
Angie Quijano, LWCAMPO Administrative Assistant

**Others:**

Grezia Barrera, City Manager's Office  
Danny Magee, Traffic Safety Department  
Teclo Garcia, Economic Development  
Favio Rodriguez, City Engineering Department  
Guillermo Cuellar, Webb County Engineering  
Victoria Villarreal, Webb County Planning  
Sara Garza, TxDOT  
Roberto Rodriguez, TxDOT  
Bill Frawley, Texas A & M Transportation Institute (TTI)  
Jed Brown, RMA  
Melisa Montemayor, HNTB, Inc.  
Eddie Bernal, Transit, El Metro  
Jose Almazan, UISD

- **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.

- **ITEMS REQUIRING POLICY COMMITTEE ACTION:**

**A. Approval of the minutes for the meeting held on September 15th, 2021.**

Cm. Galo made a motion to **approve** the minutes of September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Second: Judge Tijerina

For: 6

Against: 0

Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously.

### **B. Discussion with possible action on the River Road project.**

Mr. Juan Mendive, Interim LWCAMPO Director, provided some information regarding this project after he had done some research on previous meetings from years back. The project had some Right-Of-Way (ROW) issues and showed different alignments. Mr. Mendive further introduced Mr. Jason Hinojosa from LWCAMPO staff who had prepared some maps for the presentation on this item.

Mr. Hinojosa made a brief presentation with several maps that showed some proposed routes.

Cm. John Galo mentioned that the Medina Family had presented a proposed route behind the La Bota development closer to the Rio Grande River.

Mr. Mendive mentioned that the MPO Technical Committee had made a recommendation to explore options for relief route of FM1472 and possibly work with the RMA.

Cm. Perez, stated Mr. Joe Medina had initiated talks with all the landowners to get the donations needed for the R.O.W. She stated she believed some ownership might have changed over the past two years.

Mayor Saenz asked if this was the road called Medina-River Rd.

(Mr. David Salazar join the meeting at 1:43 P.M.)

Cm. Galo asked if this was the latest proposal and if it shown on their master plan.

Mr. Hinojosa answered this was what the MPO had produced and yes, it is part of the developer's master plan.

Dr. Martinez asked if the road will be built to same standards as other roads in the area. He further stated he wanted to make sure that what is being asked for developments to give was going to be in line with the future thoroughfare that is expected to transit said area.

Mr. Hinojosa stated there was a recent plat that had been submitted for Aquero Middle School which will be along Aquero Boulevard to provide a 90-ft ROW back to back but only building half the section.

Dr. Martinez stated we need to make sure that it was very clear to the Planning Department of what was anticipated for the potential route for said road. He further asked what would be the process or studies that need to be done to establish the actual route of choice for the road.

Mr. Hinojosa responded that there are a lot of requirements for on-system roads but if this is handled as off-system or local street, environmental clearances and dedication of ROW will be needed.

Mr. Mendive stated that initially the idea and the way the RMA identifies this road is as non-commercial route. He further stated it was proposed as a relief route and that was the reason the item was presented to see if that was still how the Committee would like to proceed. He also stated that was staff's recommendation, the Technical Committee's recommendation and how the RMA study shows it.

Dr. Martinez asked that in terms of funding, if we were to work this through TxDOT, if there were additional requirements. And if it was more feasible to obtain funds from TxDOT to build this road.

David Salazar, TxDOT, stated there were some future Category 7 MPO dollars that could be allocated for this project if those were the wishes of the Committee. He further stated TxDOT currently does not have a mechanism to bring in on-system roadways. He also stated TxDOT was already stretching it with bringing Hachar-Reuthinger. He stated it was a viable route but there were certain priorities within the city that needed to be considered and category 7 monies were committed up to FY23.

Judge Tijerina expressed his concerns with the connection and asked if Aquero Boulevard was large enough to handle the amount of people that were going to be on that road.

Mr. Hinojosa stated it was a 90 ft. road and the goal with this phase was to connect it immediately after World Trade Bridge.

Dr. Martinez asked the RMA to provide their input as they had previously stated they were interested and willing to assist with funding for new projects.

Jed Brown, RMA, stated that when the RMA did the study back in 2019, there was considerable input from stakeholders, and the different master plans were also taken into consideration. He further stated the RMA would love to participate in looking at the

project being discussed, with the MPO. He also mentioned that the RMA could possibly help in getting things along to start the process for the construction of this project. He stated he would put this item on next RMA board meeting agenda.

Cm. Perez suggested to include Mr. Joe Medina and Border Patrol in future discussions for said project.

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

David Salazar, TxDOT asked Roberto Rodriguez, TxDOT staff to give a brief summary on this item.

Mr. Rodriguez stated TxDOT had received the schematic and environmental draft document from the County. He stated TxDOT was working on the Plans, Specifications and Estimates (PS&E) and already had a consultant on board starting the development of the PS&E. He also stated TxDOT had agreed with the City to develop the R.O.W. map for the roadway. Once such map is ready, it would be sent to the City so the R.O.W. acquisition process can start. He stated that the environmental study was expected to be cleared in about 6 months and few more months for the City to have completed the ROW. The cost estimate for a 4-lane divided highway based on the existing schematic is \$52.4M and based on the current Advanced Funding Agreements (AFAs) there are only \$50M and therefore, there is still some additional funding needed.

Cm. Galo asked if this was a 4-lane divided with frontage.

Mr. Rodriguez explained this project is the actual frontage road. Its two lanes in each direction. One way on each side and in the future, it will be the construction of the middle. And, expected to have this project ready to let in May 2023 to go on actual letting August 2023.

Cm. Perez asked if it was possible to move some monies around to possibly shave off one year of the project.

Mr. Rodriguez stated some of the items were critical. One of those items was the R.O.W. acquisition and the environmental clearance.

Mr. Salazar mentioned that the additional funds were welcome and if they would become available, it didn't necessarily mean they would speed up the project by a year as there were still processes that TxDOT needed to go through including the environmental clearance. He further stated TxDOT had received the draft environmental clearance on May 21st and it still has to be completed. Once the environmental process is completed, the R.O.W. cannot be started until the environmental R.O.W. is cleared.

Cm. Galo asked if the environmental was supposed to be done in December.

Mr. Rodriguez said that based on the scheduled it should be done in March.

Mr. Galo recommended to maybe break up the project into phases.

Mr. Salazar stated he didn't recommend to break up the project in phases because this would probably increase the cost from the contractor.

**D. Presentation and update by Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) on the ongoing MPO Process Review, with possible action.**

Bill Frawley, Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI), gave a brief presentation regarding the ongoing MPO Process Review. He stated he's been having work group sessions with members of MPO agencies and appropriate Staff on the ongoing process review. He stated the review purpose was to look at the relationship between the MPO and fiscal agent, as well as to look at the existing organizational chart and hierarchy. He also mentioned the MPO Bylaws were also reviewed to discuss what the Bylaws allow and prohibit, and what might need to be changed and the process for these changes is to look at other TMAs and MPOs of similar size. There's also another document called TxDOT Planning Agreement Contract that had been analyzed for possible modifications. He stated that an issue that came up in previous meetings was the fiscal agent for the MPO. He stated that based on conversations with the Mayor and County Judge, other City leaders and MPO staff, everyone agreed that is best to leave the City of Laredo as the fiscal agent. If the City stayed as the fiscal agent, there will be the need to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) stating what the responsibilities and roles of the fiscal agent and the MPO would be. As part of the process review, the necessary staff, not only the number of employees but the talents, skills and abilities of each member, and also office space/location needs are also being studied.

Mr. Frawley further stated that the main goal for this process was to ensure an efficient process that was in compliance with federal and state requirements, resulting in success for the MPO. He stated progress to date included development of a staff level working group consisting of MPO, TxDOT, and FHWA staff, and overall MPO status had been identified, which shows where the MPO is now, with some hiring and some staff being assigned/reassigned and that MPO is functioning how it should with a good path to continue forward.

Mr. Frawley also stated he had worked with the Laredo MPO in the past under different Directors and he has always been provided with more knowledge of not only the history of the MPO but the community and how things are developing. He stated we have provided staff with "MPO 101" training, and there will be more to come. He further reported that this update had been presented to the Technical Committee on what had been accomplished. And, after several conversations with Mayor, County Judge, Laredo Management and Planning leadership, it had been determined that all parties want to

have the best possible MPO, Webb County had no desire to become the fiscal agent, and leadership wanted what is best for MPO Staff.

Mr. Frawley mentioned that a Bylaws amendment was also developed to have separate City of Laredo Planning Director and LWCAMPO Director. It was also identified that there is consensus for MPO Director report to Policy Committee, and for the Committee to hire, terminate, evaluate or discipline Director and, that MPO staff would report directly to MPO Director. He also mentioned that LWCAMPO has a relatively new, but eager and energetic staff that is very promising for the MPOs future.

Mr. Frawley stated that the next steps to present suggested Bylaws and Planning contract amendments to the Technical Committee, and then present the recommendations made by the Technical Committee to the Policy Committee. Additional steps include to review staffing needs, develop appropriate job descriptions, as well as, to review office space needs and other options. And, ultimately to document the entire process and outcomes.

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

- A. Update and discussion on the availability of additional federal funds for use on highway infrastructure programs sub-allocated to urbanized areas with a population over 200,000 through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Appropriation Act (CRRSAA).**

Mr. Mendive gave a brief presentation on the item which read as follows:

**Summary:**

The Coronavirus Response and Relief Appropriation Act (CRRSAA) provided additional federal funds for use on highway infrastructure programs. Texas received \$967.7 million, of which approximately \$164.1 million is designated for use in urbanized areas with a population greater than 200,000. The Laredo urbanized area has been allocated \$2,341,935. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) play a role in coordinating with TxDOT to select and program projects with these funds.

**Notes:**

- Project must meet the eligibility requirements for urban areas with population > 200,000 (same as Cat 7)
- Available for obligation now through 09/30/2024
- Once obligated, funds must be spent by 09/30/2029.
  - After this date, any unexpended balance of obligated CRRSAA funds will be cancelled.

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

Jed Brown, RMA, gave a brief presentation on the item which read as follows:

- FM 1472 and Killam Industrial Blvd. Turn Lanes – NTP for the contractor was provided by TxDOT at the end June. Currently, Anderson Columbia was 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 11/24/21.
- Los Presidentes (Cuatro Vientos to Brownwood) – Construction is ongoing. Our 4<sup>th</sup> construction progress meeting occurred on 10/5/21. Currently, the project is scheduled for completion in June 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 currently being advertised for construction.
- Vallecillo Road – We are monitoring the progress of federal funding for this project.
- Other Items:
  - The WCCL RMA conducted their October Board Meeting on 10/5/21.
  - The WCCL RMA is anticipating a Board meeting for the month of November and December.
- **DIRECTOR's COMMENTS**

Mr. Mendive gave the following report:

- 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.
- The MPO continues to monitor new developments related to the World Trade Bridge expansion and the proposed International Bridge 4/5. Amendments to the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the 2020-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) may be necessary as these projects advance.
- The MPO continues to seek opportunities to collaborate with stakeholders in the Laredo-Webb County metropolitan area in our efforts to plan for an effective and sustainable regional transportation system. MPO staff recently initiated conversations with the City of Laredo Planning Department and United Independent School District about data sharing opportunities. Data on land use, development patterns, and transportation patterns supports the MPO in our planning and forecasting activities to address the current and future transportation needs of the



region. The MPO will continue reaching out to other stakeholders (i.e. Laredo Independent School District) to identify data sharing or other collaborative opportunities.

- MPO staff is nearing completion of an updated draft of our Public Participation Plan. Once a draft is completed, a required 45-day public comment and review period will need to be initiated prior to final adoption. A presentation will be provided to the Technical and Policy Committee prior to initiating the public comment period.
- Upcoming regularly scheduled meetings:
  - Active Transportation Committee - October 27, 2021 (virtual)
  - Technical Committee – November 9, 2021
  - Policy Committee – November 17, 2021
- MPO and El Metro continue meeting with the consultants conducting the Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA). As part of this effort, MPO staff is helping El Metro identify potential sites for a transit hub in South Laredo. 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.
- ADJOURNMENT

Cm. Dr. Martinez made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:46 p.m.

Second: Cm. Galo  
For: 5  
Against: 0  
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

  
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Juan S. Mendive  
Interim LWCAMPO Director

  
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Pete Saenz, Mayor and LWCAMPO  
Chairperson