



# LAREDO & WEBB COUNTY

## AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

### SPECIAL POLICY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 8TH, 2022

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

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

Judge Tano Tijerina, called the meeting to order at 1:35 P.M.

#### II. CHAIRPERSON TO CALL ROLL

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

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

Honorable Tano E. Tijerina, Webb County Judge

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

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

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

Honorable Vanessa Perez, City Councilmember, District VII (joined the meeting at 1:36 p.m.)

Honorable Jesse Gonzalez, Webb County Commissioner, Pct. 1 (joined the meeting at 1:37 p.m.)

Honorable Pete Saenz, Mayor and LWCAMPO Chairperson (joined the meeting at 1:40 p.m.)

##### **Regular members not present:**

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

Honorable John Galo, Webb County Commissioner, Pct. 3

Judge Tijerina made a motion to excuse members not present.

Second: Cm. Gutierrez

For: 4

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  
Julio Niño, LWCAMPO Planner  
Angie Quijano, LWCAMPO Administrative Assistant

**Others:**

Jose Ceballos  
Luis Perez Garcia, Webb County Engineering  
Sara Garza, TxDOT  
Roberto Rodriguez, TxDOT  
Sid Mielke, Structural Engineering Associates (SEA)  
Robert J. Garza, Transit El Metro  
Kent Richard, City Bridge Department  
Yvette Limon, City Bridge Department

**III. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

Speakers are required to fill out witness cards, which must be submitted to MPO Staff no later than 1:45 p.m. the day 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 MPO business and delivered in a professional manner. No derogatory remarks shall be permitted.

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

- A. Receive public testimony and approve Resolution No. MPO 2022-02, adopting the following proposed amendment(s) of the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):

1. **Addition** of project CSJ 0922-33-213 intended to provide for preliminary engineering and construction for the expansion of the World Trade Bridge consisting of 8 lanes by building a new 8 lane bridge adjacent to the existing bridge for a total of 16 lanes after completion of the project. The estimated construction cost is \$12,000,000 with an estimated total project cost of \$16,000,000. The project sponsor is the City of Laredo and the proposed letting date is FY2024.
2. **Revision** of project CSJ 0922-33-166 for the construction of Hachar-Reuthinger Road. **Purpose** of amendment is to update the project description to read “new location construction of 4-lane divided highway” to adequately describe the initial construction phase(s).
3. **Revision** of project CSJ 0922-33-165 for the construction of Hachar-Reuthinger Road. **Purpose** of amendment is to update the project description to read “new location construction of 4-lane divided highway” to adequately describe the initial construction phase(s).
4. **Revision** of project CSJ 0922-33-165 for the construction of Hachar-Reuthinger Road. **Purpose** of amendment is to revise the existing funding amounts. Funding amounts will be adjusted to increase Category 7 funds from \$26,796,901 to \$28,431,178 and add \$2,341,935 allocated to the project through Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act (CRRSAA) funds.
5. **Revision** of project CSJ 0086-01-073 for the widening of SH 359 from 4.06 miles east of SL 20 and 8.935 miles east of SL 20. **Purpose** of amendment is to revise the existing funding amounts. Funding amounts will be adjusted to include \$7,000,000 in Category 11 funds.
6. **Revision** of project CSJ 0086-14-089 for the reconstruction of existing 6-lane highway to proposed 6-lane freeway with 3-lane frontage roads from 0.51 miles south of Shiloh Dr. to International Blvd. **Purpose** of amendment is to revise the existing funding amounts. Funding amounts will be adjusted to include \$2,605,222 in Category 11 funds and decrease Category 10 funds from \$9,000,000 to \$4,285,269.
7. **Revision** of project CSJ 0086-14-088 reconstruction of existing 6-lane highway to proposed 6-lane freeway with 3-lane frontage roads at University Blvd. to Shiloh Dr. **Purpose** of amendment is to revise the existing funding amounts. Funding amounts will be adjusted to replace \$11,500,000 in Category 4 funds with Category 2U funds, increase Category 10 funds from \$8,500,000 to \$22,000,000, and include \$11,894,778 in Category 11 funds.

8. **Revision** of project CSJ 0086-14-079 for the construction of US 59 interchange at University Blvd. **Purpose** of amendment is to revise the existing funding amounts. Funding amounts will be adjusted to include \$2,514,639 in Category 10 funds.
9. **Revision** of project CSJ 0086-14-076 for the construction of US 59 interchange at Shiloh Dr. **Purpose** of amendment is to revise the existing funding amounts. Funding amounts will be adjusted to include \$10,356,549 in Category 10 funds.
10. **Revision** of project CSJ 0086-14-075 for the construction of US 59 interchange at Del Mar Blvd. **Purpose** of amendment is to revise the existing funding amounts. Funding amounts will be adjusted to include \$4,346,123 in Category 10 funds.
11. **Reprogramming** of project CSJ 0018-06-185 for the construction of a new direct connector (#3) south I-35 to east I-69W. **Purpose** of amendment is to remove this project from the 2021-2024 TIP as the updated letting date for this project has been changed to FY 2026 and is outside of the current TIP years.
12. **Revision** of project CSJ 0086-14-086 for the reconstruction of existing 6-lane divided highway to proposed 6-lane freeway facility with a section including 3-lane frontage roads from US 59 to 0.4 miles north of E. Corridor Rd. (airport). **Purpose** of amendment is to revise the existing funding amounts. Funding amounts will be adjusted to increase Category 12 funds from \$15,600,000 to \$29,290,676.
13. **Revision** of project CSJ 0086-14-078 for the construction of US 59 interchange at Jacaman Rd. **Purpose** of amendment is to revise the existing funding amounts. Funding amounts will be adjusted to increase Category 12 funds from \$17,000,000 to \$21,742,567.
14. **Revision** of project CSJ 0086-14-077 for the construction of US 59 interchange at airport. **Purpose** of amendment is to revise the existing funding amounts. Funding amounts will be adjusted to include \$16,418,996 in Category 12 funds.

Cm. Perez joined the meeting at 1:36 p.m.

Cm. J. Gonzalez joined the meeting at 1:37 p.m.

Judge Tijerina made a motion to **open** the public hearing.

Second: Cm. J. Gonzalez

For: 6

Against: 0

Motion carried unanimously

Mayor Saenz joined the meeting at 1:40 p.m.

Judge Tijerina stated that the latest Laredo Bridge System Master Plan study he has from 9/23/2021 has never been presented to the MPO committee. He stated, one of the concerns he had in regards to the expansion of the World Trade Bridge was that that on page 201 of the study it stated that the alternative did not provide an improvement to reduce congestion at the Point of Entry (POE) regarding total volume through crossings and waiting times. He further stated that besides the project going from \$12M to \$16M, he did not understand why the MPO would keep pushing for said project when in reality, the monies could be used somewhere else. He also stated that if the outcome of the studies that usually cost \$400K-\$500K, is not going to be taken into consideration, then it was an injustice for the people of Webb County and the City of Laredo for spending of monies that we might not have to.

Mayor Saenz briefly provided his comments about the proposed expansion of World Trade bridge and the proposed construction of bridge 4-5. He further asked the consultant to approach the podium to elaborate on the topic.

Sid Mielke, Structural Engineering Associates, stated that the purpose for the City to have brought the project to the MPO was because the rules have changed relative to presidential permitting and it would apply to any presidential permit that has or will be issued in the coming future. He continued stating that with the changing of the rules in 2019, there were some changes on the way presidential permit issues were developed and it was not defined which agency was going to be the lead agency for environmental clearance. After an investigation some years ago, it was determined that Federal Highway Administration was willing to step forward and be the lead agency for the environmental clearance for an international bridge project. GSA or CBP did not desire to be in that role. Therefore, in order for Federal Highway Administration to be a part of an international bridge project, there has to be a methodology for the federal highways to be able to participate. Such methodology was determined in coordination with dealing with federal highways that a small sum of federal construction money would be assigned to the project. This allowed the Federal Highway Administration to take the role to be the lead and reviewers for the environmental clearance process. He further mentioned that he agreed that the expansion of the bridge itself if nothing changes, it won't help the port processing more vehicles but all the projects ongoing that are planned and some already funded will contribute to the expansion of processing through World Trade Bridge.

David Salazar, TxDOT, stated that he is aware of the \$1M already setting aside for this \$16M project but, if a year goes by and the project is not funded, he asked if the project would then be removed from the Unified Transportation Plan (UTP). He also stated this would be a good time to be looking as to where the rest of the monies will come from.

Mr. Mielke stated that the City of Laredo stated publicly that all of the remaining funds would be funded through the City of Laredo. He stated that the City of Laredo had already identified all the funding and was already stated in the presidential permit application. He stated that this participation of funding was needed for the Federal Highway to be the reviewer of the environmental clearance for the project. He further explained that the bridge currently has 8 lanes total and the proposed expansion will bring another 8 lanes and the expansion will improve the processing time of trucks through World Trade Bridge.

Yvette Limon, Bridge Director, stated all three projects combined and all the efforts that TxDOT was doing outside of the Loop would increase the flow through the port. She stated all the trucks that enter the port do not necessarily go straight to the exit. There are processes that happen within the port that would allow an even flow to the exit and out on to Loop 20 I-69 west. The new expansion project would allow Custom Border Projection (CBP) to process non-fast, non cp pad cargo shipments.

Mr. Mielke stated to conclude his participation that what they recommended to the City and the City is asking the MPO for this project to be listed the current TIP, the MTP and the allocation of up to \$1M dollars for FHWA be able to review the environmental clearance.

Jose Ceballos stated he was there to ask the MPO committee to support the resolutions as revisions to the 2021-2024 TIP and, was also in support of items IV-A-1, 2, 3, and 4 as well as the revision to the 2020-2045 MTP, item IV-B-1 supporting the expansion of the World Trade Bridge.

Judge Tijerina left the meeting at approximately 2:35 p.m.

Cm. J. Gonzalez made a motion to close the public hearing and approve Resolution No. MPO 2022-02, adopting the following proposed amendment(s) of the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Second: Cm. Perez

For: 6

Against: 0

Motion carried unanimously

B. Receive public testimony and approve Resolution No. MPO 2022-03, adopting the following proposed revision(s) of the 2020-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP):

1. **Addition** of project CSJ 0922-33-213 intended to provide for preliminary engineering and construction for the expansion of the World Trade Bridge consisting of 8 lanes by building a new 8 lane bridge adjacent to the existing bridge for a total of 16 lanes after completion of the project. The estimated construction cost is \$12,000,000 with an estimated total project cost of \$16,000,000. The project sponsor is the City of Laredo and the proposed letting date is FY2024.
2. **Revision** of *Appendix A – Short Range Projects Identified in the MTP and Listed in the TIP* as necessary to incorporate and reflect the proposed revisions to the 2021-2024 TIP.

Cm. J. Gonzalez made a motion to **open** the public hearing.

Second: Cm. Perez  
For: 6  
Against: 0

Motion carried unanimously

No public comments were provided.

Cm. J. Gonzalez made a motion to **close** the public hearing and **approve** Resolution No. MPO 2022-03, adopting the following proposed revision(s) of the 2020-2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

Second: Cm. Gutierrez  
For: 6  
Against: 0

Motion carried unanimously

C. Discussion with possible action to cancel the February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022 regularly scheduled Policy Committee meeting.

Cm. J. Gonzalez made a motion to **cancel** the February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022 regularly scheduled meeting.

Second: Cm. Gutierrez  
For: 6

Against: 0

Motion carried unanimously

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

- A. Discussion on potential transportation improvement opportunities on FM-1472 (Mines Rd.) within Laredo and Webb County in coordination with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (Mayor Saenz).

Mayor Saenz stated he requested to put the item on the agenda as a result of his conversation with the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Alejandro Mayorkas. He stated Mr. Mayorkas asked what were the needs our city in terms of border security. He also stated one of the variants was the Mines Road area. He stated there was a possibility to incorporate Mines Road to the Eagle Pass Border Patrol sector and with the help of Webb County and the Laredo Border Patrol sector, with a road tied to the river and would serve as a border security road. He stated Mr. Mayorkas liked the idea and will try to push the idea on his side. Mayor Saenz stated he would try and do the same thing.

Cm. Gutierrez left the meeting at 2:41 p.m.

Jose Ceballos requested to be included as part of these meetings with stakeholders.

Mr. Mendive stated that this item was added at the request of the Mayor and that this was a good forum to discuss the issue, the location of the roadway is outside of the MPO boundary.

David Salazar, TxDOT, stated that the route in question is a viable route. He stated the route definitely needed to be looked at. He stated the first step would be a feasibility study to check if it is feasible and what would benefit from it. He also stated that the project sponsors would also need to talk to the land owners. He stated that a good faith effort meeting with the entities from that area would be a good start.

Cm. Perez suggested forming some kind of coalition or resolution and to also include stakeholders. She also suggested to possibly ask the Department of Homeland Security to provide the funding for the feasibility study.

Cm. J. Gonzalez asked if creating the coalition would fall under the City and/or County or if it could be done through the MPO as it appears to be out of the MPO scope. Mr. Mendive confirmed that it is outside the scope of the MPO and Mr. Salazar agreed.



**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

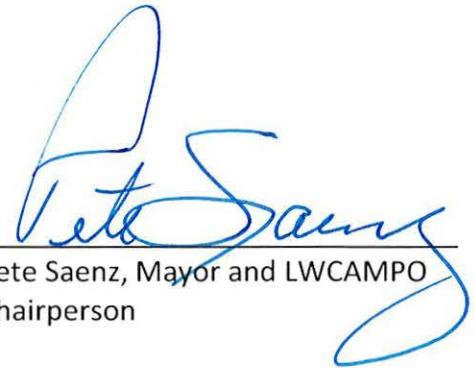
Cm. J. Gonzalez made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:49 p.m.

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

Motion carried unanimously



Juan S. Mendive  
Interim LWCAMPO Director



Pete Saenz, Mayor and LWCAMPO  
Chairperson