

Laredo Urban Transportation Study

**Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee
City of Laredo Council Chambers
1110 Houston St. -Laredo, Texas**



MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 18, 2019 MEETING

Regular members present:

Honorable Pete Saenz, Mayor and LUTS Chairperson
Honorable Tano E. Tijerina, Webb County Judge
Honorable Norma “Nelly” Vielma, City Councilmember, District V (joined the meeting at 1:51 p.m.)
Honorable George Altgelt, City Councilmember, District VII
Honorable Jesse Gonzalez, Webb County Commissioner, Pct. 1
Honorable John Galo, Webb County Commissioner, Pct. 3

Regular members not present:

Honorable Dr. Marte Martinez, City Councilmember, District VI
David M. Salazar, Jr., TxDOT District Engineer

Ex-Officio Members Not Present:

Honorable Richard Raymond, State Representative, District 42
Honorable Judith Zaffirini, State Senator, District 21
Honorable Tracy O. King, State Representative, District 80

Staff (Of Participating LUTS Agencies) Present:

City: J. Kirby Snideman, City Planning/LUTS Staff
Vanessa Guerra, City Planning/LUTS Staff
Eduardo Bernal, Transit/El Metro
Ramon Chavez, City Engineering
Danny Magee, City Traffic Safety
Teclo Garcia, Economic Development

State: Humberto “Tito” Gonzalez
Sara Garza, TxDOT
Jesus Saavedra, TxDOT
Fernando Martinez, TxDOT

Others: Julia Wallace, Laredo Morning Times
Luis Perez Garcia, Webb County Engineer
Andy Gonzalez, Killam Development

I. CHAIRPERSON TO CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Saenz called the meeting to order at 1:46 p.m.

II. CHAIRPERSON TO CALL ROLL

Vanessa Guerra, MPO Coordinator, called roll and verified a quorum existed.

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's comments.

IV. ITEMS REQUIRING POLICY COMMITTEE ACTION

A. Approval of the minutes for the meeting held October 21st, 2019.

Judge Tijerina made a motion to approve the minutes of October 21, 2019.

Second: CM. Gonzalez
For: 5
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

CM. Vielma joined the meeting at 1:51 p.m.

B. Receive public testimony and adopt Resolution No MPO 2019-08 amending the FY 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) as follows:

- 1. Removing Subtask 3.2, entitled the MPO Certification Preparation Project, intended to review all current MPO Plans, Programs, Programs, and procedures to ensure compliance with all relevant regulations in preparation for the Federal Certification Review scheduled for April of 2020. FHWA has relayed that the Certification Review process has**

changed and will no longer necessitate external professional services. MPO Staff will be working with Federal Highway Administration, Texas Transportation Institute, and TxDOT District Staff to prepare for the review.

- 2. Adding Subtask 5.3, intended to accomplish a Comprehensive Operational Analysis of the transit system's fixed route bus and American's with Disability's (ADA) demand-response services. The analysis will evaluate the system's current structure and performance, and will develop recommendations to address current and future service needs.**

CM. Altgelt made a motion to **open** a public hearing.

Second: Judge Tijerina
For: 6
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

CM. Galo made a motion to **close** the public hearing and **adopt** Resolution No. MPO 2019-08, approving the proposed amendment(s) of the FY 2020 UPWP.

Second: Judge Tijerina
For: 6
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

- C. Receive public testimony and approve a motion authorizing the award and execution of a contract in the amount of \$24,480 with Nelson NYGAARD for the development of the Active Transportation Plan.**

CM. Galo made a motion to **open** a public hearing.

Second: Judge Tijerina
For: 6
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

CM. Galo made motion to **close** the public hearing and **approve** a motion authorizing the award and execution of a contract in the amount of \$24,480 with Nelson NYGAARD for the development of the Active Transportation Plan.

Second: Judge Tijerina
For: 6
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

D. Discussion with possible action on the future possible re-designation of IH-35 south of Victoria Street (also known as the “Four Block area”) and the re-routing of US-83. (Dr. Marte Martinez).

CM. Galo made a motion to table the item.

Second: Judge Tijerina
For: 6
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

E. Discussion with possible action on the River Road Project.

Mayor Saenz stated he would be calling the property owners to set up a meeting.

F. Discussion with possible action on Hachar-Reuthinger.

Luis Perez Garcia, Webb County Engineer, stated since the last MPO meeting in October, the County had a stakeholders meeting which included the engineering consultant, Webb County personnel, City of Laredo personnel and property owners. He also stated he expects to have the 90 percent submittal completed by the end of November and the 100 percent submittal by the end of December. He stated the TxDOT Environmental Division in Austin had already been reviewing the paperwork that had been submitted. The document proposed was for the Hachar-Reuthinger section. The Plans, Specifications, and Estimate (PS&E), would be going out for Request for Qualifications (RFQ), with the intension of selecting a consultant by January 2020.

CM. Galo stated that if the Right-of-Way acquisition issue was not resolved, he would like to see a map at the next meeting.

G. Discussion with possible action on the name change from Laredo Urban Transportation Study (LUTS) to Laredo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (LAMPO). Note: A name change will require a future MPO By-Laws amendment.

Judge Tijerina stated he would like to include Webb County on the name change.

CM. Galo made a motion for the name change of the MPO to be the Laredo/Webb County Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Second: CM. Gonzalez
For: 5
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

H. Discussion with possible action on the organization and number of Policy Committee member appointments. Discussion of vacant TxDOT appointment to be eliminated or transferred to the City or Webb County. Discussion of a nine member committee versus a five member committee with alternates. Note: A change in member appointments will require a future MPO By-Laws amendment.

Mayor Saenz stated that the growth of the MPO prompted consideration of the organization becoming a separate entity. He also suggested considering and evaluating the possibility of merging the MPO with the MPO's representing the Rio Grande Valley. He requested an item be put on the next agenda to discuss the MPO Staffing, Directorship, and separation.

Kirby Snideman, MPO Director, stated that indeed the MPO was growing and was proceeding in hiring more staff. He suggested further discussion with the MPO Committee on the structure of the MPO.

The Mayor also requested item be put on the next agenda to discuss the possible boundaries or possible merge with another MPO.

Tecló Garcia, City of Laredo Economic Development Director, stated that if the decision was made to merge the MPO with another city, it would take a long time. He stated when the various MPOS in the Rio Grande Valley were merged; there was a significant population gain from the inclusion of Hidalgo, Harlingen, San Benito, and Brownsville.

Judge stepped out of the meeting at 2:26 p.m.

Judge Tijerina stepped back into the meeting at 2:28 p.m.

CM. Vielma made a motion to appoint a representative from Association of Logistics and Forwarding Agents, Inc. (ALFA) to the MPO Policy Board.

Second: Judge Tijerina
For: 6
Against: 0

Abstained: 0
Motion carried unanimously

CM. Galo made a motion to reduce a quorum from a 5 to 4 Policy Committee members for purposes of the Policy Committee meetings.

Second: Judge Tijerina
For: 6
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

The committee directed Staff to amend the By-Laws in order to include the changes to the Policy Committee and quorum threshold.

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

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

Mayor Saenz informed the committee that the RMA had sent a status report via email. The committee also received a hard copy of said status report in their meeting packets.

VI. DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Mr. Snideman stated the MPO would be hiring an Active Transportation Planner who would be working on the Active Transportation Plan.

Judge Tijerina left the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

CM. Galo asked if the IH 35 overpass project would now go over the railroad tracks, or under. Mayor Saenz requested that an item be put on next agenda to address the frontage roads on the Shiloh railroad overpass.

He stated the frontage roads were critical to that project.

Humberto Gonzalez, TxDOT, stated TxDOT was preparing candidate projects for the 2021 Unified Transportation Plan. He stated TxDOT would be providing a list to the MPO and request the MPO Committee prioritize said projects.

Mr. Gonzalez stated that in the future, the frontage roads and main lanes would have access to go over the railroad.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

CM. Altgelt made a motion to **adjourn** the meeting at 2: 49 p.m.

Second: CM. Gonzalez
For: 5
Against: 0
Abstained: 0

Motion carried unanimously

J. Kirby Snideman,
MPO Director

Pete Saenz, Mayor and LUTS
Chairperson