

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday January 9, 2025 - Minutes**

I) CALL TO ORDER

Ramon Navarro – Vice- Chairman (Hidalgo County RMA) called the TAC Meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

II) ROLL CALL

RGVTAC Representatives in attendance were as follows:

| MEMBERS PRESENT | |
|--|-----------------------|
| ENTITY | VOTING MEMBERS |
| Cameron County | Absent |
| Hidalgo County RMA | Ramon Navarro |
| Hidalgo County | Velinda Reyes |
| City of Brownsville | Juan “Jonny” Peña Jr. |
| City of McAllen | Rene Gonzalez |
| City of Edinburg | Tomas D. Reyna |
| City of Harlingen | Luis Vargas |
| City of Mission | Absent |
| City of Pharr | Maria Rangel |
| City of San Benito | Absent |
| Starr County | Absent |
| TxDot Pharr District | Dora E. Robles |
| Valley Metro | Nancy Sanchez |
| Cameron County RMA | Eric Davila |
| Brownsville Metro | Simon Ortiz |
| McAllen Metro | Jon Ray Bocanegra |
| Port of Brownville | Absent |
| Port of Harlingen | Absent |
| Port Isabel-San Benito Navigation District | Absent |
| Cameron County Spaceport Dev Corp. | Absent |
| GUESTS/STAFF | |
| RGVMPO Director | Luis M. Diaz |
| RGVMPO Staff | |

III) PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

IV) CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of January 9, 2025. Vice-Chairman Ramon Navarro asked if there were any corrections to the minutes and no corrections or comments were noted to the minutes.

Dora Robles from TxDOT Pharr District made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, which was seconded by Eric Davila from the Cameron County RMA.

B. RGVMPO 2025 Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Calendar – Request for Approval

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro presented the 2025 RGVMPO Advisory Committee Calendar clarifying that upon review he did not find any conflicts with holidays.

Velinda Reyes from Hidalgo County made a motion to approve the Calendar as presented, which was seconded by Tomas Reyna from the City of Edinburg. The item was unanimously approved.

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C. Discussion and Action to recommend the approval of resolution for RGVMPPO to participate in the FY2025 STBG Partnership.

STBG Partnership: Mr. Diaz explained that the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) Partnership is an initiative by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to prevent the lapse of federal funds. Mr. Diaz highlighted:

- **Fund Swap:** The program involves swapping Category 7 funds (Metropolitan Transportation Planning) with other categories (1, 4, 11, and 12) to maximize the utilization of available funds.
No Impact on Programmed Projects: Mr. Diaz emphasized that this initiative does not affect any programmed projects or take money away from existing budgets.
- **Safety Pot:** The swapped funds are placed in a "safety pot" and can be reimbursed in the future when needed for Category 7 projects.
- **Resolution:** A resolution was included in the meeting packet for the RGVMPPO to formally agree to participate in the partnership.

Ramon Navarro: Asked for clarification on the STBG Partnership and requested that acronyms be fully spelled out for the benefit of new members.

Tom Reyna inquired about the availability of a PowerPoint presentation. Luis Diaz confirmed that the information provided in the packet was sufficient and explained the fund swapping mechanism and the reimbursement process.

Ramon Navarro asked if there had been any negative impacts or concerns since the program was enacted in February of the previous year. Luis Diaz stated that the program has not had any negative effects and is essentially "business as usual." He emphasized that it is a proactive measure to prevent the lapse of federal funds.

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro called for a motion to approve the item. A motion was made by Dora Robles from TxDOT Pharr District. The motion was seconded by Velinda Reyes from Hidalgo County. The motion was unanimously approved.

D. Discussion and Action to recommend approval of the creation of a subcommittee to address TAC Rule concerning STP MM carryover

Luis Diaz presented the recommendation for approval of the creation of a subcommittee to address TAC Rule concerning STP MM carryover, highlighting the following: (detailed information included within the agenda packet)

- The RGVMPPO presented the results of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Rule §16.154(k) concerning carryover limits for Surface Transportation Program Metropolitan Mobility (STP MM) funds (Category 7).
- This rule allows TxDOT to redistribute excess carryover funds to the District's Category 11 (District Discretionary) allocation for safety projects.
- TAC Rule §16.154(k):
 - This rule, adopted by the Texas Transportation Commission on January 17, 2024 (Minute Order 116630), requires an annual review of Category 7 carryover funds.
 - If an MPO carries over more than 200% of its Category 7 allocation from the previous year, TxDOT may reduce the District and MPO's Category 2 carryover (Metropolitan and Urban Corridor Projects) and transfer the excess to the District's Category 11 allocation for safety projects.
 - TxDOT will report proposed redistributions to the Commission and notify impacted MPOs.
- **Purpose:** This rule aims to better manage federal funds, mitigate the risk of funding lapses or rescission, and address potential underutilization of Category 7 funding.

Discussion:

Eric Davila asked for clarification on whether the STBG programming allows the Pharr District to allocate Category 2 funds to Categories 1, 4, 11, and 12. Luis Diaz confirmed that the Pharr District can allocate funds to those categories.

Ramon Navarro sought clarification on whether Categories 1, 4, 11, and 12 are TxDOT categories and if the RGVMPO has any input on their use. Luis Diaz confirmed that those are TxDOT categories and the RGVMPO does not have direct input on their utilization.

Ramon Navarro asked about the anticipated date for receiving the actual table that will be presented before the Policy Board meeting. Dora Robles responded that they have not yet received a date but will follow up with finance.

Velinda Reyes inquired about the list of projects being utilized and whether safety programs are programmable. Dora Robles stated that projects have not been identified because funds have not been transferred. Ramon Navarro clarified that programming safety projects would be a task for the subcommittee.

Dora Robles emphasized the importance of obligating Category 7 funds to avoid impacting Category 2 projects.

Ramon Navarro asked how the subcommittee will be formed (voluntary or appointed). Luis Diaz explained that the subcommittee will be formed during the meeting, with members either volunteering or being appointed by the Chair or Vice Chair. The subcommittee will consist of 5 to 7 members and will focus on programming, project amendments, and project readiness. It will work as an extension of RGVMPO staff to analyze and prevent future carryover and lapsing of funds.

Velinda Reyes asked how the project readiness subcommittee can help with this issue and how it differs from the current subcommittee. Ramon Navarro explained that the subcommittee will focus on justifying projects, ensuring proper documentation, and clearing out any misinformation. Luis Diaz added that the subcommittee will work to receive better information from local governments, utilize a more specific project submittal form, and facilitate project swaps to eliminate carryover.

- Subcommittee Formation:
 - Volunteers:
 - Rene Gonzalez (City of McAllen)
 - Juan Pena (City of Brownsville)
 - Luis Vargas (City of Harlingen)
 - Velinda Reyes (Hidalgo County)
 - Ramon Navarro (HCRMA)
 - Eric Davila (CCRMA)
 - Automatic Member: TxDOT

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro called for a motion to approve the item. A motion was made by Nancy Sanchez from Valley Metro. The motion was seconded by Eric Davila from the Cameron County RMA. The motion was unanimously approved.

E. Amendment to the contract with ATG to include Task 8.

Fernando Cantu provided an overview of the amendment to the contract with ATG to include Task 8 highlighting the following:

- The amendment would add Task 8 to the contract at an additional cost of \$127,802.01.
- Purpose of Task 8: To address recommendations from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) review during the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) certification process.

- Focus:
 - Resolving gaps identified in the current 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).
 - Incorporating essential elements currently missing from the plan:
 - Public Participation Plan (PPP)
 - Limited English Proficiency (LEP) document
- Plan Development: Task 8 will also include activities related to planning development and community engagement.

Discussion:

Dora Robles asked if the original contract was available.

Eric Davila suggested that it would be good to have the original contract available for the board when considering amendments.

Dora Robles stated that the original contract amount was \$334,000. Luis Diaz clarified that the original contract amount was \$338,838.21, with a previous amendment of \$200,000 for travel demand model assistance.

Ramon Navarro asked if the amendment was based on FHWA recommendations. Luis Diaz confirmed that it was.

Eric Davila inquired about the goal of the travel demand model and the \$200,000 amendment.

Tomas Reyna asked if the new items (Task 8) were new issues or if they should have been addressed previously. Luis Diaz explained that the new items were identified during the federal certification in December.

Eric Davila expressed caution about the significant change in scope and suggested that some of the scope could be independently procured for transparency. He acknowledged the need to respond to FHWA.

Ramon Navarro asked for the overall contract amount with the amendments.

Fernando Cantu stated the original amount (\$338,838.21) and the added amount (\$58,204.82).

Tomas D. Reyna expressed concern about the 189% overhead rate. Luis Diaz explained that the overhead rate is a reporting requirement by TxDOT.

Tomas D. Reyna asked for the actual percentage.

Eric Davila commented on the rate negotiation process and mentioned that it is done at the Council of Governments (COG) level.

Tomas D. Reyna reiterated his discomfort with the overhead rate.

Vice Chairman Ramon Navarro called for a motion to approve the change order for Task 8 based on FHWA recommendations. A motion was made by Eric Davila from the Cameron County RMA. The motion was seconded by Nancy Sanchez from Valley Metro. The motion was unanimously approved.

V. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

A. February 2025 STIP Revision.

Rudy Zamora's presentation focused on the upcoming February 2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) revision cycle. He stressed the need to prioritize fiscal constraint, ensuring that sufficient funds are available for programmed projects. The RGVMPO is currently overprogrammed, and staff will work with the district to identify and potentially remove projects that are not sufficiently developed. The newly established subcommittee will also play a role in addressing fiscal constraints. Zamora urged the committee to focus on projects that can realistically go to construction soon and to obligate funds before the end of FY2026. He also provided information on the TIP revision process and the differences between amendments and administrative modifications.

No questions or concerns were raised by the TAC members.

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B. Announcement of PL Project Call UPWP Task 5

Luis Diaz's presentation focused on the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Task 5 Call for Projects that is now open. The deadline for submissions is February 6, 2025. \$77,000 is allocated to Task 5, with an additional \$1.9 million in unobligated funds available. The Call for Planning Project Form on the RGVMPPO website will be used to track submissions.

Task 5 - Special Studies: This task focuses on optimizing the performance of current and future transportation systems. The objectives of this task include developing and utilizing effective management systems, to generate insights and strategies for enhancing transportation facilities. Conduct specialized studies to provide data-driven recommendations for system-level transportation planning.

The Goal is to create an efficient, multi-modal mobility network that improves the overall effectiveness of the transportation system for present and future users in the region.

Jon Ray Bocanegra with the city of McAllen inquired about the breakdown of the qualifying projects.

Fernando Cantu and Luis Diaz agreed to mail out detailed information about qualifying projects and instructions on how to fill out the required documentation.

C. TMA Federal Certification Review Update

Luis Diaz's presentation focused on the RGVMPPO initial recommendations and commendations received from the Transportation Management Area (TMA) Federal Review conducted on December 5-6, 2024.

The review assessed RGVMPPO's metropolitan transportation planning process for compliance with federal requirements.

It took place on December 5-6, 2024, at the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) in Weslaco, Texas.

The last TMA certification review was completed in December 2020.

In May 2021, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a letter certifying the RGVMPPO as substantially compliant with federal regulations (USC 134(k) and 49 USC 1607).

Luis Diaz informed that the list of commendations and recommendations is included within the packet for review.

No questions or concerns were raised by the TAC members.

D. TJKM – SS4A Comprehensive Plan Midway Project Status. (virtual presentation)

TJKM team reviewed the attached presentation included within the agenda packet, highlighting details about the Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RGVMPO) development of a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan.

- The plan is part of the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) initiative.
- The plan focuses on improving road safety in Starr County, Hidalgo County, the City of Harlingen, and the City of Brownsville.
- The update covers the plan's progress, stakeholder engagement, and next steps.
- SS4A Grant Funding: The RGVMPPO received a grant from the SS4A program to develop the region's first Comprehensive Safety Action Plan.
- Focus on Hidalgo County and Pilot Locations: With over 50% of the population residing in Hidalgo County, the plan specifically addresses safety needs in this area. It also identifies key countermeasures and potential pilot locations (Starr County, Hidalgo County, City of Harlingen, and City of Brownsville) for future implementation.
- Current Efforts:
 - Data collection and analysis activities.
 - Identification of key safety issues and countermeasures.
 - Development of the plan's framework and components.

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Jon Ray Bocanegra inquired about a breakdown about transit incidents and if not if there is a way that that can be included at some point. The TJKM team agreed to investigate it and see if the information is within the collision data currently available.

E. Announcement State Transportation Alternatives Project Call

Dora E. Robles provided detailed information about State Transportation Alternatives Project Call. TxDOT hosts workshops to inform local governments (LGs) about their upcoming Transportation Alternatives project call process. The workshops will provide guidance on project call requirements and answer questions.

Dora Robles provided workshop Information such us in person and virtual options.

- In-Person Workshop:
 - Date: January 23, 2025; Time: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 - Location: TxDOT Pharr District Office Conference Center, 600 W. US 83 Expressway, Pharr, TX 78577
- Virtual Workshop:
 - Date: January 6, 2025; Time: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Rene Gonzalez from the city of McAllen inquired about registration for the virtual workshop. Dora Robles referred him to the workshop coordinator, Agustin Ramirez.

F. TxDOT Letting Report

Dora E. Robles reviewed the letting report. Detailed information included within the agenda packet. Dora reminded everyone to continue working with TxDOT's project managers to let projects on time.

Dora also reminded everyone about the march/April deadline for project estimates. Project managers would be sending out requests for such estimates.

G. TxDOT Letting Report

Ramon Navarro informed the board that the Hidalgo County RMA status report is included within the packet, and he is available for any questions or comments.

No questions or concerns were raised by the TAC members.

H. Cameron County RMA Project Status Report

Vice-Chairman Ramon Navarro informed the board that CCRMA representative had to step out, but the report is included within the packet for review and to reach out in case of questions or concerns. No questions or concerns were raised by the TAC members.

VI. NEW OR UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

VII. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the RGVMPO TAC Members, Vice-Chairman Ramon Navarro called for a motion to adjourn. Tomas Reyna with the City of Edinburg made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:17am. The motion was seconded by Velinda Reyes with Hidalgo County, the meeting was adjourned.

Approved: Thursday, February 13, 2025