

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Minutes**

**October 12, 2023**

**I) CALL TO ORDER**

JP Terrazas - Chairman (City of Mission) called the TAC Meeting to order at 10:00 AM. The TAC Meeting was held virtually.

**II) ROLL CALL**

**RGVTAC Representatives in attendance were as follows:**

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT</b>	
<b>ENTITY</b>	<b>VOTING MEMBERS</b>
City of Mission	JP Terrazas, Chairman
Cameron County	Benjamin Worsham, Vice Chairman
City of Brownsville	Absent
City of Edinburg	Tomas D. Reyna
City of Harlingen	Ana Hernandez
City of McAllen	Absent
City of Pharr	Absent
City of San Benito	Johanna Maldonado
Hidalgo County	Absent
Starr County	Absent
TxDot Pharr District	Dora E. Robles
Valley Metro	Nancy Sanchez
Cameron County RMA	Eric Davila
Hidalgo County RMA	Ramon Navarro
Brownsville Metro	Octavio Salazar
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
<b>Guest</b>	
RGVMPO Executive Director	Andrew A. Canon
RGVMPO Assistant Director	Luis Diaz
RGVMPO Staff	

**III) PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments

**IV) CONSENT AGENDA**

**1. Approval of Minutes**

Consideration and Action to Approve the Minutes of September 14, 2023

**Chairman JP Terrazas asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. No corrections or comments were noted to the minutes. Ramon Navarro with HCRMA made a motion to approve the minutes of September 14, 2023. The motion was seconded by Tomas Reyna with the City of Edinburg. Motion carried.**

**2. Discussion and Action on Election of Vice Chairman**

Andrew Canon read a section of the RGVMPO Bylaws outlining the process for electing the Vice Chairman. Then he announced that Vice Chair Benjamin Worsham, Cameron County, would take over as Chairman upon the completion of this item. Andrew Canon also expressed his gratitude to Mr. Terrazas for his two years of service. JP Terrazas thanked Andrew for his kind words and expressed his appreciation for everyone's involvement in the organization. He mentioned that two years had passed quickly and recalled when Pete Sepulveda handed him the position. He thanked Mr. Sepulveda and Mr. Canon for their support and advice. JP Terrazas acknowledged the growth and positive impact of the organization since the merger and appreciated the hard work and dedication of all members. He also expressed gratitude to Andrew for his dedication, as Andrew's last month with the organization approached. JP Terrazas wished Andrew good luck in his future endeavors and expressed hope of seeing him again. He welcomed Mr. Benjamin Worsham as the new Chairman and praised his experience in the community.

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Benjamin Worsham assumed the role of Chairman and announced that the first order of business was nominations for Vice Chairman. He asked for nominations from eligible members present, including those from Hidalgo County areas represented by Hidalgo County RMA, City of Edinburg, and Metro McAllen.

**Nominations for Vice Chairman:**

Ramon Navarro from HCRMA (Hidalgo County RMA)

Tom Reyna from the City of Edinburg

Benjamin Worsham conducted a vote by show of hands. Three members voted for Tom Reyna, and five members voted for Ramon Navarro.

Ramon Navarro clarified that he was serving as a proxy for HCRMA.

Andrew Canon confirmed that this arrangement was acceptable for the TAC committee.

Benjamin Worsham announced that Ramon Navarro was elected as the Vice Chairman, representing the Hidalgo County area.

**3. Call for Volunteers: Subcommittee to evaluate and score RFP Consultants**

Fernando Cantu began by addressing the TAC members, explaining the purpose of his request. He stated that he needed volunteers for the RFP process and specified that the subcommittee would be responsible for evaluating consultants for four ongoing contracts. He emphasized the need for enough volunteers and expressed the hope that more members would step forward this time. Fernando mentioned that he was looking for seven members to volunteer for the subcommittee.

He outlined the key dates related to the subcommittee's activities, with the most critical date being November 2nd. On this date, the subcommittee would convene to score the consultants and make the selection. Fernando mentioned that on October 30th, he would email all the relevant consultant forms and information to the volunteers in advance so they could review them before the November 2nd meeting. He reiterated that the selection process was time sensitive.

Fernando clarified that the current RFPs included one for the Weslaco Loop alignment study, another for updating the 25-year Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), and a third for the Passenger Rail Feasibility Study. He also mentioned that there might be another RFP for Safe Streets for All in the future.

Andrew Canon suggested that Fernando provide more context about what the RFPs were for to generate more interest among potential volunteers.

Fernando Cantu provided information about the three Request for Proposals (RFPs) that are currently open. He explained that these RFPs were seeking consulting services for various projects. The details of the RFPs were as follows:

The Weslaco Loop Alignment Study, the purpose of this study was to assess the alignment of the loop and determine how to proceed with its development.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Update, which is a 25-year project plan. MTP needs to be revised and brought up to date.

Passenger Rail Feasibility Study of implementing a passenger rail service. This study aimed to assess the viability and potential benefits of introducing a passenger rail system.

Fernando also mentioned that another RFP, related to "Safe Streets for All," might come back after November 2nd. He acknowledged that the number of submissions for these RFPs might be limited based on past experiences, but he encouraged members to keep this in mind.

Andrew Canon shared his perspective, suggesting that participants consider the possibility of receiving fewer submissions than expected. He noted that even though three RFPs might seem like a lot, the actual response rate could be lower based on the organization's track record. He hinted that there might only be one or two submissions for some of these RFPs.

**Chairman Ben Worsham asked if there were any questions or comments, but there were none, so he proceeded to the next agenda item.**

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#### **4. Discussion and Action on FY 23-24 Unified Planning Work Program Amendment on Amendment #1**

Fernando Cantu began by explaining the background of this UPWP amendment. He mentioned that approximately two months ago, a request was made for an amendment to the previous UPWP to allocate funds for a grant that McAllen Metro had received. However, due to certain circumstances, the funds could not be utilized during that period. Therefore, he was now requesting to reallocate those funds.

Fernando provided information about the project for which the funds were being moved. McAllen Metro intended to conduct a comprehensive study to assess current service levels and explore the feasibility of implementing high-capacity transit to exceed the service standards that were in place before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The funding for this project would come from 5307-9A - 5307-Urbanized Area Formula - Discr. Planning (ARPA). McAllen Metro sought \$25,900 in funding for Alliance Transportation Group (ATG). ATG would provide technical support services to assist Metro McAllen during the defined transit planning period, which was set to take place from October 31 to December 31, 2023. This period would focus on the service redesign program for fixed-route service, with implementation scheduled for December.

Fernando mentioned an additional matter not included in the item but present in the agenda packet – the FM509 corridor study. Although the contract for this study was not set to conclude until December, due to the new fiscal year, he proposed rolling over the leftover funds from the previous year's UPWP to continue the contract, which amounted to \$5 million.

**Benjamin Worsham inquired if there were any questions regarding the item. After receiving no questions, he requested a motion to approve item four. Armando Garza from Hidalgo County motioned to approve the item and Nancy Sanchez with Valley Metro seconded the motion.**

**Chairman Benjamin Worsham announced that the motion had passed and thanked Fernando for the presentation.**

#### **5. Discussion and Possible Action regarding FY2019-2020 and FY2021-2022 Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Projects**

Fernando Cantu began by introducing the RFP for "Safe Streets for All." He provided key dates and information related to this RFP:

- The RFP for Safe Streets for All is scheduled to be released on October 29th.
- The deadline for submitting questions regarding the RFP is November 24th.
- The deadline for submitting the actual proposals is December 28th, with the date adjusted to accommodate the year-end holidays.
- The award for the RFP is planned for January 25th.

Fernando mentioned that the RFP would be widely publicized, appearing in newspapers and online to ensure maximum visibility and participation. He also emphasized the importance of the subcommittee's role in reviewing and evaluating the proposals.

Benjamin Worsham thanked Fernando for providing the information and noted that this item was for informational purposes.

#### **6. Discussion and Possible Action to Recommend Planning and Construction Projects for FY2023-2024 Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Funds.**

Rodolfo Zamora began by explaining the purpose of the discussion, which was to discuss and take action on the November 2023 STIP Revision Cycle. He mentioned that revisions and modifications were being made to the short-range and long-range planning and programming tables, including the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). A 30-day public involvement period had been held, and all revisions required approval from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Transportation Policy Board (TPB) members.

Rodolfo mentioned that original documents were sent to all TAC members, and updates were emailed earlier that week. He also stressed that the final approval from the policy board was scheduled for the 25th of the month. He discussed the deadline for uploading projects to the portal and mentioned that revised projects had been updated, with supporting documentation to be uploaded by the end of the day.

Regarding project revisions, Rodolfo explained that nine highway projects and 54 transit projects were being revised, with 31 of the transit projects being brand new additions to the STIP. He highlighted the importance of

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getting everything correct in this last revision cycle for the 2023 to 2026 transit and highway TIP.

Rodolfo discussed adjustments made by the MTP to accurately reflect costs and ensure that local funding matched expenditures appropriately. He explained the adjustments made to account for inflation in letting year costs and clarified the different inflation rates applied in the years to come.

**Benjamin Worsham thanked Rodolfo for his detailed explanation and opened the floor for questions. After receiving no questions, he entertained a motion. Dora Robles with TxDOT made a motion to approve the November 2023 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Revision Cycle. Erick Davila with CCRMA seconded the motion. The motion carried, and the meeting concluded with this item of discussion and action.**

## **7. Discussion on presentation on SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis from RGVMP staff.**

Javier Dominguez began the presentation by providing a recap of the September SWOT Analysis sessions that took place with the Technical Advisory Committee and the Transportation Policy Board on September 14th and September 27th, 2023. He mentioned that the purpose of the presentation was to share some key highlights and findings from the SWOT Analysis.

Due to technical difficulties with the presentation slides, Javier Dominguez briefly shared some of the key highlights verbally.

Ben Worsham asked Javier to share what he remembered from the unavailable presentation.

Javier Dominguez explained that communication was identified as both a strength and a weakness in the analysis. Regionalism and unity were highlighted as strengths.

He noted differences between the Technical Advisory Committee and the Policy Board, such as the need for more staff on the TAC side and the emphasis on cooperation with public transportation and rail companies on the Policy Board side.

Eric Davila inquired about the status of various parts of the SWOT analysis, to which Javier responded that this information would be presented in a future TAC meeting.

Andrew Canon, informed Javier that staff were able to retrieve the PowerPoint so Javier can use them for the presentation to display the presentation slides.

Javier elaborated on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified during the SWOT Analysis, particularly focusing on communication, regionalism, funding, and public participation.

He emphasized the importance of addressing weaknesses and capitalizing on opportunities, such as expanding public participation efforts to reach a broader audience.

**Ben Worsham called for any questions or suggestions from the attendees.**

**A motion to acknowledge the SWOT Analysis presentation was proposed by Erick Davila with Hidalgo County RMA and seconded by Nancy Sanchez with Valley Metro.**

## **8. Presentation and Discussion regarding Federal Fund Utilization: Category 7**

Andrew Canon provided background information, explaining that the Texas Transportation Policy and Programming (TP&P) in Austin proposed a change to the Texas Administrative Code to address unobligated funds in Category 7 statewide. He mentioned that Houston had a significant amount of Category 7 carryover, which had led to this initiative. While most of the focus was on Houston, it required a broad approach.

Andrew Canon presented a timeline and figures related to apportionments in Category 7, highlighting the substantial amount of carryover funds statewide.

The proposed change to the Texas Administrative Code would trigger a conversation when an MPO reached the 200% benchmark on carryover funds. The Texas Administrative Code amendment would involve shifting Category 2 funds from the district to Category 5 (safety) when Category 7 funds remained unspent.

Andrew shared a table showing awarded projects and the extent of carryover, emphasizing the issue's severity in Houston. However, the proposed change would apply statewide. He expressed concerns about moving Category 2 funds to Category 5, stating that it might not effectively address the motivation to spend Category 7 funds. He questioned the logic behind this approach and noted that it needed further consideration.

Dora Robles added that the RGVMP staff had plans to spend over 300% of its funding and would likely avoid

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issues in the short term. She clarified that the funds would be shifted to Category 11.

Andrew Canon emphasized the importance of each local government doing its part to move Category 7 funds efficiently.

Ben Worsham called for questions or comments from attendees, and Eric Davila inquired about the incentives for moving Category 2 funds.

Andrew Canon reiterated that shifting Category 2 funds to Category 5 might not be a suitable solution to motivate Category 7 spending. He encouraged attendees to provide feedback on the proposed Texas Administrative Code amendment through TxDOT's website.

Ben Worsham thanked Andrew and Dora for their input.

## **9. Presentation on Congestion and Delay Study Tier 2 Operations**

Steve Taylor began the meeting by discussing the importance of implementing a maintenance plan for traffic signals, highlighting the need to upgrade and maintain them regularly. He emphasized the challenges faced by cities in terms of budget and staff shortages for maintaining traffic signals.

Benjamin Worsham raised a question about the state's role in operating and maintaining overpass diamond intersections in cities, and TxDOT staff confirmed that they are responsible for maintaining those intersections.

The discussion then shifted to partnerships with TxDOT for corridors adjacent to frontage roads. Steve Taylor explained that in 2016, there was a coordinated effort with TxDOT to address signals, but they mainly focused on interchanges with diamonds.

Benjamin Worsham inquired about the scope of signal timing on Jackson Road, and Steve clarified that the timing extended from Owassa to Edinburg and Pharr.

Jon Ray Bocanegra expressed concerns about the challenges faced by traffic departments in finding personnel to conduct maintenance and repairs on traffic signals. Steve acknowledged the issue and discussed the shortage of staff despite personnel moving between cities in the region.

Ana Hernandez inquired about how far the region is from adopting smart technologies when most departments traffic signals in the region are not equipped with GIS or vehicle detection.

The discussion touched upon the potential future advancements in traffic signal technology, with Steve mentioning that while changes are coming, it will likely take many years to transition to the next big milestone in signal operations.

Steve encouraged the cities to provide feedback and recommendations regarding traffic signal maintenance and operations.

## **10. Discussion on FC (Federal Classification)**

Andrew Canon explained the significance of Federal Functional Classification in determining funding eligibility under Federal-aid programs. Functional classification is also used to describe roadway system performance, benchmarks, and targets. He discussed the challenges faced with Federal Highways (FHWA) regarding functional classification and some of the projects. He mentioned that the Regional Mobility Authority (RMA) was denied functional classification for FM509 due to the project's location outside the MPO's planning area. He expressed concerns about this decision since the MPO's Metropolitan Area Boundary (MAB) extends beyond the planning area. Mr. Canon highlighted that the MPO is engaged in ongoing discussions with FHWA and is working to find a resolution. He emphasized the importance of functional classification in securing funding for projects. He discussed the possibility of a workshop on functional classification involving TxDOT and FHWA. While the initial intent was for a workshop involving the RGVMP, it may expand to include other regions. He mentioned that FHWA has set guidelines, such as designations for new construction projects and the need to report progress on projects.

Eric Davila expressed the need for clarity on the process and engagement in addressing functional classification issues. He also emphasized the importance of avoiding delays in the FHWA and TxDOT review process.

Dora Robles stressed the importance of getting it right the first time to prevent delays and back-and-forth communication. Eric Davila offered the assistance of HCRMA in providing support and answering questions during the review process. Andrew Canon thanked Eric and expressed the hope that the workshop would clarify the process and provide guidance on addressing functional classification concerns.

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Luis Diaz mentioned that the workshop's agenda was still being developed and requested input on specific topics of interest.

Benjamin Worsham thanked Andrew and the participants for the discussion.

**V) RGVMPD Executive Director's Report and Updates**

Andrew Canon began by commending the staff's excellent work, particularly acknowledging Fernando Cantu for his contribution to the budget planning process. He highlighted the dedication and commitment of the staff to achieving their goals.

Andrew presented the current budget status, indicating that they were at 87% expenditure for the current year. He expressed satisfaction with this performance, considering that they typically run slightly below 100% expenditure.

Andrew noted that the budget was on track and mentioned that Fernando would provide a final report once the numbers were finalized by the COG.

Andrew also mentioned the need to discuss combining the November 9th and December 14th TAC meetings into a single meeting on December 30th. This decision aligns with the policy board's earlier approval to have a single meeting. He explained that the December meeting would likely have a light agenda due to the completion of certain projects.

Andrew emphasized that the proposed change would be virtual, and he awaited the advisory committee's decision on this matter.

No questions or concerns were raised regarding combining the November 9th and December 14th TAC meetings into a single meeting on December 30th. The board agreed to change the meeting dates and combine the two meeting days.

**VI) Status Reports**

**A. TxDOT Project Status Report**

Dora Robles began by reporting that all the funds for the 2019 to 2020 TASA (Transportation Alternative Set-Aside) projects had been successfully obligated. She mentioned that three projects were scheduled to let out later in the month, and one had been let the previous month by the City of McAllen. The lowest bidder for the City of McAllen project was still being determined.

Dora also mentioned that two more projects were set to let out in November. She emphasized the importance of working together with local governments and TxDOT to ensure the efficient use of funds.

Dora mentioned that due to inflation, one project, the SH107 project in the Mission area, had to be pushed out to fiscal year 2025. They intend to request additional CAT 2 funds to accelerate the project. She introduced Gabriel Garcia and Nayeli from TxDOT, who were present to discuss the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). Gabriel Garcia and Nayeli proceeded with a presentation on the HSIP, providing information on the program's purpose, eligible projects, funding, and project selection methods. She explained the criteria for targeted projects, systemic projects, and the benefit-cost analysis used for project selection. She highlighted the available funds for the program, emphasizing the opportunity for local governments to participate.

Nayeli explained the eligible countermeasures and the concept of G-match, which covers 100% of construction costs for certain countermeasures. The presentation covered various safety countermeasures and their effectiveness in reducing crashes. Nayeli provided information on the submission process, including required documentation and deadlines.

Andrew Canon inquired about who lets the projects, and Nayeli clarified that the projects are state led.

Benjamin Worsham requested that the presentation be shared with everyone, and Andrew Canon and Nayeli agreed to do so.

Benjamin Worsham also raised a concern about inflation and rising material costs for projects scheduled for fiscal year 2027. Nayeli addressed this concern, explaining that the estimate includes a line for inflation, which is taken into consideration based on the fiscal year.

Gabriel Garcia thanked everyone and assured everyone that the information would be shared through email.

**VII) NEW OR UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

**VIII) ADJOURNMENT:**

**There being no further business to come before the RGV TAC Members, the Chairman called for a motion to adjourn. Ramon Navarro made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:03pm. The motion was seconded by Tomas Reyna from the City of Edinburg, meeting was adjourned.**

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