LAREDO & WEBB COUNTY
AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

POLICY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
March 20, 2024

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

I. CHAIRPERSON TO CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Judge Tano E. Tijerina, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM.

II. CHAIRPERSON TO CALL ROLL

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

Regular members present:

Honorable Tano E. Tijerina, Webb County Judge and LWCAMPO Chairperson
Honorable Dr. Victor D. Treviño, Mayor, LWCAMPO Vice-Chairperson (left meeting at 1:40 PM)
Honorable Melissa R. Cigarroa, City Councilmember, District III
Honorable Ruben Gutierrez Jr., Mayor Pro-Tempore, District V
Honorable Vanessa Perez, City Councilmember, District VII (joined meeting at 1:38 PM)
Honorable John Galo, Webb County Commissioner, Pct. 3
Honorable Jesse Gonzalez, Webb County Commissioner, Pct. 1
Mr. Epigmenio "Epi" Gonzalez, P.E., TxDOT District Engineer
Mr. Jed A. Brown, Member-At-Large

Regular members not present:

CM. Gutierrez, made a motion to **excuse** members not present.

Second:	CM. Galo
For:	8
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 S. Mendive, LWCAMPO Director
Graciela S. Briones, LWCAMPO Planner III
Julio A. Niño, LWCAMPO Planner III
Eduardo Bernal, LWCAMPO Planner III
Adriana A. Vigil, LWCAMPO Administrative Assistant

Others:
Ramon Chavez, COL Engineering
Arnold Lozano, COL Economic Development
Joaquin Rodriguez, COL Attorney's Office
Jose Ollervides, COL Mayor's Office
Eloisa Mascorro, COL El Metro Transit
Jeffery Gonzalez, COL Traffic
Juan C. Villarreal, COL Traffic
Roberto Rodriguez, TxDOT
Luis M. Villarreal, TxDOT
Fernando Martinez, TxDOT
Adelaido Uribe, Webb County Judge's Office
Guillermo Cuellar, Webb County Engineering
Victoria Villarreal, Webb County Planning
Anthony Garza, Webb County Consultant
Melissa Montemayor, WC-CL RMA/LJA Engineering
Blasita J. Lopez, WC-CL RMA/LJA Engineering
Jason Rodriguez, LJA Engineering
Orlando Navarro, Killam Development

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.

Mr. Charles Martens, gave a public comment on his concerns with the traffic safety in the City of Laredo. Mr. Martens, stated there were problems driving around in the city. He stated that Laredo is limited in access with only 2 North and South corridors which were Loop 20 and IH 83 and a few that run East to West. He also stated that citizens, school buses, and industries are cramming into the few routes mentioned. Mr. Martens, stated that he was there to work together to find a solution. He further stated that he had been appointed to be a member of the Traffic Committee for the City of Laredo, but

unfortunately the Committee no longer meets. He commented that the traffic light system in Laredo, had been set up by consultants that count vehicles. He further stated that the traffic has been backing up into the neighborhoods and once they get on the few access roads they were stacking up in all the intersections. Mr. Martens, stated that funding is needed to study the traffic lights system so the traffic flows smoother. Mr. Martens, stated that before the 3rd bridge was built the transportation was using IH 35 to go in and out of Mexico. He also stated that one of the vital routes in Laredo was the toll road built to relief some traffic. Mr. Marten, stated that in the past 8 years he had seen several projects that had not been executed. He stated that the River Road the Hachar-Reuthinger and the Vallecillo Road had not made any progress until recently. Mr. Marten thanked Judge Tijerina and the Policy Committee for the opportunity to visit and speak on the traffic issues of the city.

IV. ITEMS REQUIRING POLICY COMMITTEE ACTION:

A. Approval of the minutes for the meeting held on February 21, 2024.

CM. Gutierrez, made a motion to **approve** the minutes of February 21, 2024.

Second:	Mr. Brown
For:	8
Against:	0
Abstained:	0

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Presentation with possible action on Resolution No. MPO 2024-04 supporting the Vision Zero Program and the development of the Vision Zero Webb Laredo Safety Action Plan.

Juan Mendive, MPO Director, gave a brief background on the Vision Zero Webb Laredo Safety Action Plan. He stated the item was presented hoping the Resolution be adopted, supporting the Vision Zero program and the development of the Safety Action Plan making a pledge to zero fatalities by 2040.

Jason Rodriguez, LJA Engineering gave a presentation on the Vision Zero Program and the development of the Vision Zero Webb Laredo Safety Action Plan. He stated the RMA in collaboration with the City of Laredo received a Federal Planning grant for Safe Streets and Roads for All. He continued by stating that one of the purposes for the study was to have a plan in place to be able to access further funds to implement projects throughout the community. He also stated that one of the recommendations of the Active Transportation Committee was to have a Safety Action Plan in place.

Mr. Rodriguez also stated that the process had started back in September of 2023 looking at the analysis of where and how crashes have occurred. He stated a Dashboard was created that showed data on crashes throughout the city.

Mr. Rodriguez stated there was a kick off ceremony on February 29th at the downtown US Post office grounds, and on February 14th the RMA adopted a pledge to reach zero fatalities and serious injuries on Webb County and City of Laredo roadways by 2040. He continued by stating that City Council had already made the pledge and they were asking the Policy Committee members to make the pledge as well.

Mr. Brown, stated the goal was to develop a great plan that would eventually lead to the community receiving funds for construction activities around the city as part of implementation of the plan. He continued by stating that the amounts mentioned by Mr. Rodriguez were a $2 million grant that had a 20% match, which means the RMA received $1.6 million from the Federal Government to perform the study, and the RMA and the City of Laredo to contribute with $200,000.00 each. Mr. Brown also stated that they were moving fast to obtain results and present them to the Policy Committee, City Council and County Commissioner's Court.

CM. Galo, asked what was that the RMA was aspiring to do through the development of the plan. He asked if this would help in having safe intersections and/or stop people from driving distracted. He stated that even if there were autonomous driving cars there would still be fatal accidents. CM. Galo asked Mr. Rodriguez where the dollars would be targeted.

Mr. Rodriguez, stated that the grant Mr. Brown had mentioned was specifically for infrastructure, but the plan would include safe roads, and other parts of the plan would be safe road users, post-crash care, safe vehicles. He continued by stating that there would be public campaigns that would help educate people understand how not to be distracted drivers and understand the rules of the road. Mr. Rodriguez stated, that the goal was to instill a culture of safety throughout the community and it was a shared responsibility as Engineers, Planners, staff, drivers to achieve the goal.

CM. Galo, stated that he would like to see those dollars targeted in dangerous intersections and other traffic issues around the city.

Judge Tijerina, asked if the $2 million were for studies or for actual infrastructure.

Mr. Rodriguez, stated that it was a comprehensive plan to implement projects and how all the agencies work together to reach the goal. He also stated that the money was not for infrastructure. He continued by stating that once the plan is finished, $10 to $12 million of federal monies could be accessed for infrastructure.

CM. Cigarroa, shared an idea of what the vision is as it had been expressed in other communities since there has been other cities that had adopted the Vision Zero Plan which is a National program. CM. Cigarroa, stated that in 2019 Hoboken, New Jersey was designated as a Vision Zero City to create safer streets with a focus on a safe systems approach. She continued by sharing several projects Hoboken, New Jersey developed in 2023, and the substantial decrease in pedestrians/bicyclists injured in collisions with vehicles, among others. She also stated that their traffic related deaths were now at zero, indicating that a Vision Zero City and the goal was possible to achieve. CM. Cigarroa, expressed how happy she was that the RMA had taken this Vision Zero Plan on and were working towards the goal.

CM. Gutierrez, stated that the intersection that has the most accidents in the City of Laredo was on Del Mar and McPherson. He asked Mr. Rodriguez, what the plan would do on an intersection like that one. CM. Gutierrez continued by stating that no matter how much lighting, or traffic signs they add, most accidents occur because of people's actions while driving a vehicle. He also stated that advocacy or public service announcements were simply not enough. CM. Gutierrez stated that people had asked him if the accidents on the Loop 20 were due to being poorly constructed. He stated that it was not the roads but the way the people drive.

CM. Gutierrez, asked Mr. Rodriguez if he really thought a city of our size that continues to grow about 8-12 percent every single year could reach a goal of zero fatalities. He stated that they city simply could not keep up with the infrastructure. He also asked Mr. Rodriguez, what the $2 million would be used for.

Mr. Rodriguez, stated they were trying to work with many different agencies including TxDOT, the City of Laredo, the MPO, Webb County, and the school Districts to put a realistic plan that could actually be implemented within the community with the human infrastructure to run the city. He stated that would be the first step to help layout a plan and figure out what needs work and how to improve.

CM. Gutierrez, stated that technology and communication was one of the main problems.

CM. Perez, stated that it was good to have big goals that might seem impossible to obtain they help get people to talk about the topic about how to prevent road deaths. She also stated that even though the plan would require a lot more money it was good to have something to work towards and show the community that with their participation they will try to make safer streets and get to the Vision Zero goal.

CM. Galo, stated that to have a goal is a great idea, he just wouldn't want to see the money go into ad campaigns, he stated he would like to see projects get done like Hoboken did.

CM. Perez, stated that they needed a study first in order to get to that point of getting projects done.

Judge Tijerina, asked when the last time a study like that was done.

Mr. Rodriguez, replied that in Laredo there had not been a study to the extent they were going. He stated that there had been a precursor study that the Active Transportation did that helped them learn what was needed.

Judge Tijerina, asked Mr. Rodriguez how much were they going to spend on the study.

Mr. Rodriguez, stated that the grant afforded $2 million total.

Judge Tijerina, stated that Cameron County being at a 550,000 population only spent $400,000.00 on a study where in Laredo there was half that population and we were going to spend $2 million on a similar study.

Mr. Mendive, stated that the RMA and the City of Laredo were awarded the $2 million through the grant.

Mr. Brown, stated that they could have asked for up to $5 million.

Judge Tijerina, stated that the money should be used wisely.

CM. Gutierrez, stated that the Laredo Police Department could help in getting data for the studies. He stated that the data would help on the needs for the Vision Zero Plan.

Mr. Mendive, stated they were working with the Police Department and they had formed 2 working groups, he also stated they were also working with the school districts to get that data. He also stated that in the dashboard they could actually visualize that data and that was an example of the study they were doing and what they were able to do with that grant money. He also stated they were able to work with subconsultants to produce the dashboard that would help everyone in the community and to empower other departments by providing the resources that they needed to accomplish the goal. He stated that it was about bringing all the data together and finding out what improvements could be done and other needs.

Mr. Mendive, stated that the study would also recommend any other resources or funding needed for positions for example more Police personnel.

CM. Cigarroa, stated that Hoboken, New Jersey began their Vision Zero Plan in 2019 and within 4 years they were able to achieve the goal of zero deaths. She stated that perhaps a bigger study would be needed since we have 18,000 trucks that run through the city streets, making it a very unique position. She further stated that in the end the study would identify high crash networks, safe systems for our streets and the entire traffic network. She stated she expected that with the MPO's help it could be a very comprehensive analysis that would be implemented and executed to help reduce those number of deaths and related accidents in the community.

Mr. Mendive, reminded the Committee that the item was the Resolution to support the Vision Zero program, the development of the Safety Action Plan and to make the pledge to zero by 2040. He also stated that the RMA received that funding in cost sharing with the City of Laredo. Mr. Mendive, stated that when the grant was applied for it was specifically for Safety Action Planning and it had to be done in order to qualify for implementation funds from the Federal Highway Administration. He further stated that if there was no Safety Action plan than they could not apply for future rounds for the implantation funds.

CM. Galo, asked who was awarded the grant.

Mr. Mendive, stated the Webb County City of Laredo Regional Mobility Authority (WC-CL RMA) were the grant applicants and were awarded with $2 million.

Mr. Brown, stated that the RMA had an interlocal agreement with the City of Laredo to share the cost. He also stated that it was not only the RMA doing the study but also consultants that formed the team to work on the Vision Zero study.

CM. Gutierrez, made a motion to support the Vision Zero Program and the development of the Vision Zero Webb Laredo Safety Action Plan.

Second:	CM. Cigarroa
For:	8
Against:	0
Abstained:	0

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Discussion with possible action to provide a Letter of Support requested by the City of Laredo Fire Department for the 2023 Staffing Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant application from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Judge Tijerina, made a motion to provide a Letter of Support to the City of Laredo Fire Department for the 2023 Staffing Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant application from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Second:	CM. Gonzalez
For:	8
Against:	0
Abstained:	0

Motion carried unanimously.

D. Discussion with possible action on the Hachar-Reuthinger Road project.

Ramon Chavez, City Engineer presented a brief status report and stated that the letting date continued to be for May 2024.

Mr. Chavez, stated that on the land acquisition, 8 of the 9 parcels had already been approved by City Council either to accept the charitable donation or to purchase the land.

Judge Tijerina, asked if the City was going to acquire the land by eminent domain on the last parcel that was missing.

Mr. Chavez, stated that the land would be acquired by eminent domain and the parcel was a 24-acre tract out of the total 479 acres that were being acquired.

CM. Galo, asked if everything else had been completed as far as the letting.

Mr. Gonzalez, TxDOT stated that the plans had already been 100% complete. He also stated that TxDOT submitted a Construction Management Plan for some utilities that still needed to be adjusted. He continued by stating that when the utilities were not adjusted prior to letting a Construction Management Plan had to be submitted to demonstrate that the utility conflicts would no have an impact on their contractor.

Mr. Gonzalez, also commented that the acquiring of the parcels still needed to be finalized.

Mr. Chavez, stated that the City was still working on the closing documents to acquire the parcels.

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

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

Mr. Jed Brown, RMA presented the following report part of the packet:

WC-CL RMA March 2024 Status Report to LWCAMPO

1. **Vision Zero Webb Laredo Safety Action Plan** – The work began in September 2023. The first formal public engagement will begin in February 2024. Action was taken by the WC-CL RMA Board on adopting a pledge to zero fatalities and serious injuries on roadways in Webb County by 2040. Other agencies such as Laredo City Council, LWCAMPO Policy Committee, Webb County and School Districts will be invited to take the pledge as well. Completion of the study is anticipated for December 2024. The RMA will host a press conference on Feb. 29, 2024 at the downtown U.S. Post office grounds to publicly launch the Safety Action Plan and reintroduce Vision Zero, including the commitment and promote a survey. The RMA Board has adopted the pledge to reach zero fatalities and serious injuries on Laredo and Webb County roadways by 2040 on February 14, 2024, and Laredo Council adopted the same pledge on March 18, 2024, and now we would like to invite the LWCAMPO Policy Committee to do the same. We will host a public open house and stakeholders' workshop on April 23 and 24, 2024 respectively.

2. **Vallecillo Road** – The draft ROW parcel plats and strip map are anticipated for completion in March. Environmental studies are currently ongoing with field visits commencing in late March. Traffic Forecast modeling is currently ongoing and the draft report is anticipated for completion in mid- April. The drainage analysis of the project is ongoing with the draft report to be completed by the end of March. The proposed geometry (horizontal and vertical) is complete. We provided a status update to the TxDOT Laredo District on February 28, 2024. The final schematic submittal is anticipated to be provided to the Laredo District in mid-May 2024. The RMA is projecting a Fall 2025 Letting of the project. The RMA executed its funding agreement with the Killam Company on March 4, 2024 and is amending its Inter Local Agreement with the City of Laredo. The City of Laredo is commencing the development of the ROW agreement with the Killam Company. As the project sponsor, the executed Advanced Funding Agreement (AFA) is solely between the TxDOT Laredo District and the RMA. The RMA is also awaiting the AFA Amendment from TxDOT to account for the updated funding for the project.

3. **Vallecillo Overpass** – In order to advance the schedule of the project, the WC-CL RMA has come to an agreement with the TxDOT Laredo District for the development of the Overpass project. The WC-CL RMA will undertake the design of the project, provide up to $1M in funding for the design of the project and control the project schedule. TxDOT will design the remaining half of the project through a department design contract. The agreement will be codified via a separate Advanced Funding Agreement. The RMA, County and City will meet with the TxDOT Laredo District to discuss the project on March 19, 2024.

4. **Concord Hills (Wormser Road/ Lomas Del Sur to Los Presidentes)** – The RMA will sponsor and lead the design and construction of a new location 1.3 mile, 2-lane minor arterial roadway extension from Los Presidentes to Wormser Road/ Lomas Del Sur within a nominal ROW width of 90' in partnership with the City. The RMA has committed $1 million to the development of the project. The project will provide a parallel route to Cuatro Vientos and provide additional access to the new Laredo Sports Complex and the

Municipal Water Park. The sponsorship and implementation are subject to the negotiation of an Inter Local Agreement (ILA) between the City and the RMA. The RMA is working with the City to finalize the construction cost estimate for the project and complete the ILA for the project. The RMA recommitted its support in funding on the project February 14, 2024 at the February Board Meeting.

5. **Springfield Phase I, II, and IV** – Similar to Springfield Phase III, the RMA has committed up to $1 million to the City to assist with the funding of the construction of Phase IV of the project from Hospitality Drive to Bob Bullock Loop. The sponsorship and implementation are subject to the negotiation of an Inter Local Agreement between the City and the RMA. The RMA has spoken to TxDOT, and TxDOT has agreed to construct the tie-in for Phase IV within their ROW along Bob Bullock at their cost. The RMA will fund the construction of the City ROW section from Hospitality Drive to TxDOT ROW.

6. **North Laredo and Cuatro Vientos Transportation Reinvestment Zones (TRZ)** - The WC-CL RMA hosted a TRZ workshop on July 19, 2023, to review the TRZ study and implementation process with the City. A second workshop was conducted on 8/28/23. The RMA is awaiting execution of the ILA with the City to commence the North Laredo TRZ Study. The City notified the WC-CL RMA on 2/13/24 that the City will move forward with drafting and distributing the ILA to the WC-CL RMA and commence the project.

7. **FM 1472 and Killam Industrial Blvd. Turn Lanes** – Project is pending final walk-through, and TDLR inspection and final Close-out Construction Change Order. Project is 99+% complete.

8. Other Items:
   - RMA will have their next Board meeting in the Spring.

VI. DIRECTOR's COMMENTS

Juan Mendive, MPO Director presented the following report part of the packet:

Director's Report March 20, 2024

1. The upcoming Transportation Management Area (TMA) Planning Certification Review is scheduled for June 25-26, 2024. The TMA certification review is required every 4 years and is conducted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

2. The consultants for the 2025-2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) will meet with the Technical Committee on April 4th. A public meeting is scheduled for May 22nd to gather input on issues and needs from the public. We will provide additional details as they become available and will share the invite and flyer once ready.

3. The development of the 2025-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is underway in coordination with TxDOT and El Metro. The new TIP must be entered to TxDOT's STIP portal by July 1st. A draft TIP will be presented to the Policy Committee at the May meeting to initiate a comment period with final approval expected at the June meeting.

4. A total of four proposals were received for the Microtransit Feasibility Study programmed in our FY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program. The next step is to meet with the evaluation committee to score the proposals.

5. MPO Director and one planner will be attending the 2024 National Planning Conference in Minneapolis, MN from April 13th-16th.

6. Texas Transportation Commission Meetings:
   - March 18, 2024 (9:00 AM)
   - March 27, 2024 (11:00 AM)
   - March 28, 2024
   - April 25, 2024
   - May 23, 2024

   Upcoming Texas Transportation Commission meetings and agendas can be found on the following link: https://www.txdot.gov/about/leadership/texas-transportation-commission/meeting-dates-agendas.html.

7. Upcoming regularly scheduled MPO meetings:
   - Active Transportation Committee – March 27, 2024
   - Technical Committee – April 4, 2024
   - Policy Committee – April 17, 2024

VII. ADJOURNMENT

CM. Gutierrez, made a motion to **adjourn** the meeting at 2:21 PM.

Second:	CM. Perez
For:	8
Against:	0
Abstained:	0

Motion carried unanimously.

Juan S. Mendive, AICP
LWCAMPO Director

Webb County Judge Tano E. Tijerina
LWCAMPO Chairperson