

# Movilidad del valle

## What's New At the MPO?

The beginning of a new and prosperous year... The HCMPO has many work tasks that need to be addressed and completed in the year 2007! As a quick update, the Multi-Modal study is still in the process and it is expected to be complete by March 15, 2007. ♦ The Fall CMS was awarded in October 2006 and is expected to be complete by February 2007 and right after that the Spring CMS will begin and is expected to be complete by June 2007. ♦ The Citizens Advisory Committee has been meeting the first Wednesday of each month, and for the next few months, the committee will meet on January 3rd, February 7th, and March 7th, at the HCMPO office. Please join us and represent your community. Let your voice be heard, and be active in the transportation planning process. ♦ The HCMPO in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration is proud to

announce that they have been organizing a Border to Border Transportation Conference. This conference is to benefit all MPOs in the nation, other entities, and the international bordering cities that share an international border crossing. If all entities do their transportation planning as a region, many shared goals can become realities at a faster and smoother pace. ♦ After the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the HCMPO and the City of Reynosa, both entities are in the process of signing a finalized agreement to have a Bi-National Planner to assist in combining the transportation planning for both regions and plan for it as a "whole region". ♦ The HCMPO staff is available to discuss technical and policy information with citizens and other interested parties. Feel free in contacting our office at either (956) 618-0803 or via email at [hcmpo@lrgvdc.org](mailto:hcmpo@lrgvdc.org).

### MPO Planning Partners:

- > Alamo, Alton, Donna, Edcouch, Edinburg, Elsa, Granjeno, Hidalgo, Hidalgo County, La Joya, La Villa, McAllen, Mercedes, Mission, Palmhurst, Palmview, Peñitas, Pharr, Progreso, Progreso Lakes, San Juan, Sullivan City, Weslaco and TxDOT

### Ex-Officio Members:

- FHWA, FTA, LRGVDC Transit, Fish & Wildlife, McAllen Transit, Rio Grande Valley Partnership, Weslaco Chamber of Commerce, City of Reynosa Economic Development, Economic Development of Rio Bravo, Gobierno del Estado de Tamaulipas and San Juan Economic Development

## Border to Border Transportation Conference

### *Border to Border Transportation Conference*

*Coming soon to McAllen, Texas*

*The Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization (HCMPO), in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is organizing a border-to-border transportation conference to address transportation issues affecting the Mexico and Canada border regions with the United States*

*Save the date:  
April 17-19, 2007*

*Don't get stuck in traffic and miss out on this opportunity. More information coming soon!*

*To R.S.V.P. or for more information, please contact us at:*



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## From the Director



**Andrew A. Canon,  
HCMPO Director**

Well winter is here and the Holidays have come and gone and, with them, we begin a New Year. The year 2007 promises to be busy for the HCMPO and its staff. With the changing year and seasons, there are also many changes happening at the HCMPO. First of all, allow me to introduce our newest staff member to the HCMPO, Marabeth Fryman. Marabeth is working as a Transportation Planner I. Staff is tasked with meeting the requirements of our latest transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU. The HCMPO, Public Involvement Policy (PIP) will become the Public Participation Plan (PPP). The Congestion Management Study (CMS) will now become the Congestion Management Process (CMP). Finally our Long Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) will need to incorporate new criteria in them to make the

documents compliant to the new bill. Staff has a deadline of July 1, 2007 to secure all the required updates. Changes are also on the horizon for the location of the HCMPO office. Staff is hopeful that groundbreaking will be in January for the new offices located near Business 83 and FM 1015 in Weslaco. HCMPO staff will be housed in a new facility being built by the LRGVDC for their transit offices. This will continue to improve communications for the HCMPO staff and the LRGVDC transit operators since both will be housed in the same facility.

Finally, the HCMPO staff is also preparing for the Border to Border Conference at the new McAllen Convention Center. This conference will cover subject matters that concern planners, the Federal Governments of the U.S.A. as well as Mexico and our business partners. While discussing ideas and concerns of both our southern and northern borders, we are hopeful that this conference will be an annual resource tool to many across the country.

## SURVEYS—to better serve the public...



The HCMPO has developed a couple of surveys to gauge the public's opinion on issues ranging from transportation funding to transit service in Hidalgo County. These surveys will help us better serve the public by acknowledging their concerns and suggestions and incorporating them into the planning process.

The transit survey is intended to collect information on transit service and use in our area. The results of the survey will give us a better understanding of the current quality of service provided by major transit providers. The transit survey collects information on rider demographics, purpose of trip, quality of service and suggestions for improvement. HCMPO staff recently spent some time at the McAllen central bus station conducting face-to-face surveys and received an excellent response from the public. The results of the survey will be presented to the local transit providers in the near future.

The innovative finance survey was created to collect information on several funding options community leaders and planners are

considering. Within the next 25 years, there will be a transportation funding short-fall close to 1 billion dollars. The survey weighs the public's support on the following funding initiatives being considered such as: a ¼ of a penny sales tax increase, a 1% hotel tax increase, a vehicle registration fee increase, and international bridge toll increase. A mass mailing of the survey was recently sent to residences throughout the county. The results of the survey will indicate which funding initiative the public will most likely support, and better inform local leaders as they pursue legislation. Please participate in our innovative finance survey online at [www.lrgvdc.org/hc\\_mpo.html](http://www.lrgvdc.org/hc_mpo.html).

## Upcoming Events

### January 2007

- 1- New Year—Office Closed
- 3—Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting at HCMPO Office 1:30 PM
- 4—Land Use Meeting in McAllen 3:00 PM
- 9—TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 PM
- 15- Martin Luther King, Jr.—Office Closed
- 25- Policy Meeting at TxDOT Office in Pharr 5:30 PM

### February 2007

- 7—Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting at HCMPO Office 1:30 PM
- 8- Land Use Meeting at HCMPO Office 3:00 PM
- 13- TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 PM
- 22- Policy Meeting at TxDOT Office in Pharr 5:30 PM

### March 2007

- 7- Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting at HCMPO Office 1:30 PM
- 8- Land Use Meeting at HCMPO Office 3:00 PM
- 12-14—NADO Conference in Arlington, VA
- 13- TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 PM
- 22-Policy Meeting at TxDOT Office in Pharr 5:30 PM

## HCMPO Policy Committee Member Spotlight

Hidalgo County Commissioner Hector “Tito” Palacios proudly completed his eighth year in office at the end of December 2006. He promptly starts a new 4-year term in January 2007. A native of Pharr, Texas, Commissioner Palacios was raised to lead and help his community.

As a child, Commissioner Palacios attended Pharr-San Juan-Alamo (PSJA) public schools. After graduating from high school in 1957, he attended Pan-American College – the name at the time – while being involved coaching baseball. His college interests included Engineering & Coaching. He worked with Little League for fifteen years, progressing from Assistant Coach to Coach to one of the Officers in the Pony League. Furthermore, he served on the PSJA School Board for nine years and was President of the Board on two occasions. He also served as Mayor of San Juan, Texas for three years, and he accomplished all this while working with the State Department of Human Services, where he retired from in 1993; he worked there for 27+ years. After retiring from the State Department of Human Services, he worked with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) – Region 11, out of Edinburg, for three years.

When asked who inspired him to become who he is today, Commissioner Palacios did not hesitate to say that it all started with his parents being involved in the community and public services. His family was always looking to assist people, and through this

and hard work, his family has come to be established and respected. Brother, Mayor Leo “Polo” Palacios is currently Mayor of Pharr, Texas, his nephew Hector Palacios serves on the PSJA school board, his son Jaime J. Palacios is a County Court at Law Judge and his wife is an Assistant Superintendent for Education/Curriculum with the PSJA school district.

Commissioner Palacios had a humble beginning. The first job he ever held, after getting married, was selling coupons for a photo studio. He later became heavily involved with coaching baseball. If he had the choice to pick one particular and most memorable moment throughout his successful career, he wouldn't be able to choose; overall, the opportunity to help and serve the community and the opportunity to be in a decision-making body for the betterment of the community makes his entire career memorable and worth every effort. Commissioner Palacios has one main or immediate goal, to continue his current path and to devote the next four years and beyond to Hidalgo County by working with the rest of the Commissioners Court, always anticipating the needs of the county and addressing those needs and issues. In his own words, Commissioner Palacios insists that “It takes commitment and dedication to do the best job possible.”



Commissioner Hector “Tito” Palacios  
County of Hidalgo

## HCMPO Staff Spotlight

The HCMPO team was fortunate to acquire a highly skilled team member: Luis Bazan. Luis is originally from Wasco, California, and while growing up, he has lived in Houston, McAllen and Palmview, Texas. He is currently residing in Sharyland with his supportive wife, Erika, and his two children, André and Vivian.

After graduating from La Joya High School in 1993, Luis attended the University of Texas—Pan American (UTPA) and what was previously known as South Texas Community College (STCC), now known as South Texas College (STC). In 1999, he received his degree from UTPA, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Speech

Communication, with special studies in Organizational Communication and Marketing.

Later, Luis joined the McAllen Chamber of Commerce as Director of Business Development and Governmental Affairs, and specialized in Business Planning and Development. Now, he is a valued employee of the HCMPO.

As he advances in his career, Luis plans to pursue a Masters in Public Administration (MPA) and continue learning the diverse aspects of transportation planning. Eventually, he plans to become a business consultant & developer and establish a consulting and

developing company/resource center to provide a “Take me by the hand and show me” professional service. He believes that, “Whether planning for transportation or business, in the end, it all comes together as economic development and it contributes to the overall growth and prosperity of an already booming community, area and region”.



Luis Bazan  
Transportation Planner I

## Public Participation Plan (PPP) Update



Transportation affects and involves all citizens; therefore, everyone should have

the opportunity and knowledge of how to get involved in the HCMPO transportation planning process. Great ideas often occur through an open exchange of information and viewpoints.

The HCMPO is in the process of updating their Public Participation Plan (PPP) in order for it to be SAFETEA-LU compliant. The HCMPO is a regional planning agency established by federal law to assure a continuing, comprehensive and cooperative in decision making process for metropolitan areas containing a population of 50,000 or more. Therefore, the

HCMPO is responsible for transportation planning for the County of Hidalgo. The goal of the HCMPO's Outreach Program is to ensure that all citizens have an equal opportunity to participate in the MPO's decision-making process.

The PPP is a living document and will be continually reviewed for possible changes. It is also intended to provide direction for all public involvement activities to be conducted by the MPO. The HCMPO shall actively engage the public in the transportation planning process and provide the public

with thorough information on transportation planning services and project development updates in a convenient and timely manner.

The HCMPO encourages all citizens to participate in the transportation planning process. As a part of keeping the public informed of on-going transportation related activities on a continuous basis, the HCMPO meets with a Citizens Advisory Committee the first Wednesday of every month at the HCMPO office at 1:30 p.m. Please join us and let your voice be heard...



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If you wish to be added to our mailing list, please contact the MPO office or Maria Champine at [hcmpo@lrgvdc.org](mailto:hcmpo@lrgvdc.org)

HCMPO also offers a *Spanish* edition of this newsletter!

## The City of Edcouch, Texas

In the rich farmland known as the Delta Area, the City of Edcouch was carved from a tract covered in mesquite and thorny brush. Once part of the Llano Grande Land Grant, during the 1800s the arid region supported two ranches: Rancho San Jose and Panchita Ranch. Early settlers belonged to the Salazar, Crenshaw, Carlson, Gutierrez and Johnston families.

In 1926, Weslaco banker and landowner Edward C. Couch, founder of the Guaranty State Bank in 1920, eager to have a Texas and New Orleans Railroad depot on property he owned, developed the area that was soon named after him. Within a year, the city was incorporated and booming. Cotton, citrus fruits, vegetables such as cabbage, carrots and cucumbers grown outside the city were passing through Edcouch's eleven packing sheds on their way to market via the railroad. Feed stores, ice plants and lumber yards lined city streets. Soon grocery and furniture stores, beauty parlors, an undertaker (funeral home), a

telephone exchange, a theater and a weekly newspaper called the Edcouch Enterprise, added to the bustle of the boomtown. The city adopted a slogan that exhibited its rip-roaring attitude: "Edcouch, the town where thirty minutes ago is ancient history." Even the 1933 hurricane, which destroyed the post office and fire station, couldn't dampen the town's growth. Sugarcane fields spread into the distance.

Prosperity was short lived and within time, the packing sheds closed, although produce, cotton and sugarcane crops still employed many townspeople. The city's economy shifted to service businesses, and the population shrank. The small town with the big heart got quiet for a while. But, after an assessment of its resources and with a determined effort to develop its potential, the City of Edcouch entered the twenty-first century reinvigorated. Its location near the Mexican border positioned the small town as a front door for bi-national business and trade. A young labor force indicated



the city's rich human resources.

Back in the day, before it's incorporation, the City of Edcouch had a population of 914. By 1963, Edcouch had a school, two churches, an estimated population of 2,814 and 42 businesses. In 2005, the population was 4,426.

Today, Edcouch is much more than public buildings and good roads; it's a tightly knit community made up of family and close friends, a city that has kept true to its roots and has lived up to its name. Through community effort, the small town with a big heart has, and will continue to become a better place to live and work.