



Movilidad del valle

What's New At the MPO?

The HCMPO is preparing for such a busy FALL season that the work will carry over to 2007! ♦ The HCMPO hosted a Scenario Planning Workshop, and I am happy to say that it was a GREAT success. The Land Use subcommittee is ready for the next step which is planning for Peer Program Workshop. ♦ The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the HCMPO and the City of Reynosa was a great accomplishment towards solidifying a joint working relationship. ♦ The Multi-Modal Study was kicked off in July 2006. The study will assist all entities in how to fill in the

connectivity gaps in all modes of transportation. ♦ The HCMPO staff will begin working on updating and making them SAFETEA-LU compliant: Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. ♦ Everyone is to keep in the lookout for information on the Border to Border Conference that is being organized by the HCMPO and FHWA in the coming year. ♦ The HCMPO will be conducting surveys that will allow us to better plan for all modes of transportation in Hidalgo County. We encourage all citizens to participate in the planning process.

Public participation plan

The HCMPO is in the process of updating the Public Participation Plan (PPP) in order it to be SAFETEA-LU compliant. With the PPP, the HCMPO needs the public involved in the transportation planning process because the public has the right to have a strong voice in all matters of public policy. Additionally, only the public can provide the information needed to develop, maintain, and carry out an effective transportation plan. Planning staff,

consultants and local officials need comments from those who know the community best: the people who live and work there. Public involvement informs and educates the public about transportation planning and creates an informed community, which in turn leads to better planning. To have a proactive public participation process, the HCMPO will provide a public comment period of 45 days on the proposed PPP procedures used in the transportation planning process.

Incident management system

The HCMPO has been working diligently on its innovative Incident Management System (IMS) for about year-and-a-half. Through out this time, many questions and concerns have come up, making the study that much more important. The process is ongoing and tedious, but the data will prove to be invaluable in future transportation planning.

Incident Management System – What is it? In its simplest form, it is a system developed by the HCMPO, after much research, to identify accident “hot spots” and their cause. Committed to providing results, HCMPO staff decided that a personal visit to local police departments was the best approach in order to express the importance of the safety of our citizens. Currently, staff

is finishing data input for the years 2003 – 2004 and will soon begin processing 2005. Thanks to the cooperation of the police departments this will be a continuous study due their compromise in providing the HCMPO with incident reports on a continuous basis. The overall study will address all incidents, from the smallest to the most complex. It will determine, for example, whether a simple solution such as increasing visibility of roadway signage is the answer or if restructuring the existing system will be the appropriate measure to take. The first round of results will be submitted after completion of all 2003 – 2005 data processing. Once the results are addressed and the proper measures are taken, the HCMPO staff will continue its diligent research to identify new “hot spots”, address questions and concerns, and aim towards developing a safer community.

HCMPO

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

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From the Director



**Andrew A. Canon,
HCMPO Director**

Well it's that time again, Fall is coming upon us which means cooler temperatures here in the valley and traditionally more work for the staff of the HCMPO. As we begin the new fiscal year 2007, the HCMPO staff is gearing up for many project initiatives to be completed and is working closely with others to complete additional initiatives. To begin with, it looks like the HCMPO is getting closer and closer to bringing on our first bi-national planner. This individual will work as a conduit for planning objectives to be bridged between the HCMPO and our

neighbors in Reynosa. The HCMPO is very excited at having this new staff person on hand and assisting us bridge the planning efforts between our two great communities. The HCMPO is also working closely with Ken Jones and the

LRGVDC to assure that the Haz-Mat study is moving well and on time so that local communities can adopt and enforce a Haz-Mat route in their areas. The HCMPO staff is also gearing up for two runs of our Congestion Plan in FY 2007. Staff is eager for the new plans to be conducted so that we can work with our subcommittees to update our Long Range Plan and our TIP by June 2007. The information gathered in our Congestion Plan has traditionally been a bench mark for project selection and has assisted staff and committee members in determining the most needed projects in Hidalgo County. As you can see we have quite a full plate and are looking forward to much more as the New Year comes upon us. As always we encourage everyone to become involved in the planning process and to attend the Citizens Advisory Committee and our Transportation Policy Committee meetings as well. It is important that we receive feedback from our communities on how we are doing on the transportation planning process and how we can improve upon what we are doing already.

Nado-2006 innovative award



The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) provides advocacy, education, research and training for the nation's regional development organizations primarily serving small metropolitan and rural regions. The association is an advocate for federal programs and policies that pro-

mote regional strategies and solutions for addressing local community and economic development needs. Building on nearly four decades of experience, the association offers its members exclusive access to a variety of services and benefits—all of which are designed to enhance the ability of regional development organizations to foster “regional solutions” to local government, business and community needs.

Since 1986, the National NADO Innovation Awards Program has recognized organizations that have demonstrated innovative approaches to regional economic and community development. Each year award winners are highlighted in a special issue

of the Regional Development Digest, which is published in July and distributed to NADO members, federal and state officials, the media, and members of Congress. This year, the HCMPO was awarded the 2006 NADO Innovative Award in recognition for all the hard work dedicated to Land Use. Land Use planning entails the analysis of existing land uses, the regulation of land uses, and the visioning of “what we want our community to look like in the future”. *The HCMPO staff and the subcommittee are doing a GREAT job!!*

Upcoming Events

October 2006

- 4— Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting at HCMPO Office 1:30 PM
- 5—Land Use Meeting at HCMPO Office 3:00 PM
- 5—Transit Advisory Panel in Harlingen 10:00 AM
- 9—TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 PM
- 9-12 - TxDOT Short Course in College Station
- 26- Policy Meeting at TxDOT Office in Pharr 5:30 PM

November 2006

- 1—Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting at HCMPO Office 1:30 PM
- 2- Land Use Meeting at HCMPO Office 3:00 PM
- 14- TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 PM
- 23-24—Thanksgiving Holidays—HCMPO Office Closed

December 2006

- 6- Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting at HCMPO Office 1:30 PM
- 7- Land Use Meeting at HCMPO Office 3:00 PM
- 12- TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 PM

HCMPO Policy Committee Member Spotlight

Mario Jorge is district engineer for the Pharr District of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Under the direction of the executive director, he provides executive-level direction, management and engineering oversight of all district transportation activities. The Pharr District consists of eight counties: Jim Hogg, Brooks, Kennedy, Willacy, Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Zapata. He was named district engineer in January 2002. Jorge began his career with TxDOT in 1983 as a summer intern, working in construction inspection and surveying. In 1984 he was hired as an engineering assistant in the Dallas District. Jorge transferred to the Pharr District in 1985 where he held various engineering positions including assistant district design engineer. In 1990, he moved to the Pharr area office. There he served as project engineer for the U.S. 83/281 interchange in Pharr, for which he received the Design Award in 1993. He was appointed Pharr area engineer in 1993, managing an average of 30 construction contracts totaling more than

\$200 million, a record high in construction volumes. Jorge has served on numerous transportation committees, such as the Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Committee and the Edinburg Transportation Committee. He was a member of the Kiwanis Club from 1985 through 1991, and served the club as secretary, vice president and president. In addition, he has been involved as a Little League baseball coach in McAllen for the past 10 years.

A native of Havana, Cuba, Jorge has been living in the Rio Grande Valley since age 11. He graduated from McAllen High School in 1979 and earned a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Texas at Austin in 1984. He received his professional engineer's license in 1988.

Residing in McAllen, he and his wife, Elsa, have three sons: Mario, Marcos and Diego.



Mario Jorge,
TxDOT District Engineer

HCMPO Staff Spotlight

The HCMPO staff is honored and pleased to write about this month's spotlight person, Linda de la Fuente. Linda is a valued employee and has been working for the HCMPO as a Transportation Planner I for almost a year. She was born in Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico, and raised in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Linda and her husband, Armando, decided to live in Harlingen, Texas, for a couple of years now.

Linda attended the Instituto

Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico and earned a Bachelor's degree in International Business. She then received her Master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Texas at El Paso, Texas. Plus, Linda has acquired experience throughout the years that has been an asset for the HCMPO.

Her goals are to gain as much experience in government as possible

and work her way up to a more challenging position. In addition, Linda's plans include to start her own family soon, and be able to manage both a family and her professional career.



Linda de la Fuente,
Transportation Planner I

Transportation Peer Program Workshop



The HCMPO has submitted an application for the Transportation Planning Peer Program Workshop, and basically, the Transportation Planning Capacity Building Peer Program is one of the

most important pieces of the overall Transportation Planning Capacity Building vision. The program provides opportunities for sharing solution-based experiences throughout the professional planning community, and seeks to recognize, support, and promote good statewide, metropolitan, and rural transportation planning practices nationwide. Sharing ideas, noteworthy and solution-based experiences between MPOs, regional planning organizations, transit operators,

and state departments of transportation not only strengthens transportation planning practices, but also builds relationships and reinforces cooperation between these agencies. The Peer Workshop is designed as an instructional learning tool to assist customers in learning how to apply specific planning tools based upon other peer experiences, assist agencies and planning partners with transportation planning issues by providing a forum for healthy dialogue exchange, and facility

dialogue on crosscutting transportation issues that will be of relevance to agencies and other stakeholders in the transportation planning process. In this scenario, peer experts instruct other peers in a workshop format on specific effective techniques and tools to be used in transportation planning. This type of program may take place at a national workshop, symposium, or conference or as stand-alone activity.



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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

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

The City of DONNA, Texas



Downtown

It is hot and dusty and many people in town holster a gun, this could be a typical town in the old west, but it's not. It is Donna, Texas in the early 1900's. Stories are told of bandits invading the town and the people holding up in the basement of the town hotel which had walls two feet thick. Donna is in a territory that was granted to Lino Cabazos as part of the La Blanca land grant on May 19, 1834. It was a wild and untamed country then when almost anything could have happened.

In the 1900 several families from the northern states, including the Ruthven, Champion, and Hooks families, settled the area. Many of them were land speculators who saw an opportunity to make money by selling land to others from the north. Thomas Jefferson Hooks arrived in the Lower Rio Grande valley in 1900 and the following year moved his family to Runn in Southeastern Hidalgo County. In May 1902, he helped form La Blanca Agricultural Company, which purchased 23,000 acres fronting the river, two miles east and two miles west of the site of present day Donna, and extending

north eighteen miles. He gave part of his purchase to his

twenty-one-year-old daughter, Donna Hooks Fletcher. As a land owner, she settled in the area and established the Alameda (Grove) Ranch. Fletcher stocked the ranch with Jersey cattle. In 1904 The Hidalgo and San Miguel Extension (later called the Sam Fordyce Branch) of the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway reached the site of what is now known as Donna. The town was founded in 1907 and was named Donna in honor of Donna Fletcher, who was postmistress when the Donna post office opened in 1908. Donna was officially incorporated on April 13, 1911.

The citizens of Donna first started using the motto "The City with a Heart in the Heart of the Rio Grande Valley" to promote the city in the 1940s. By 1945 the town had a population of 4,712 and seventy-eight businesses, and continued to be a citrus and vegetable growing center. In 1953 Donna had three gins, three wholesale groceries, hardware and farm

implements dealers, a wholesale distributor for feed mills and the Donna News. The election of 1954 drew attention to Donna when Bob Jefferys, a newspaperman, requested that a special contingent of Texas Rangers be sent to the city by Governor Allan Shivers. He alleged that the election campaign was becoming violent because political bosses were physically threatening voters. The American Legion Hall was designated a historical landmark in 1964. In 1967 Donna reported 110 businesses (including eight manufacturers), ten churches, a bank, a library and a newspaper.

The City of Donna has come a long way. The dusty roads have given way to paved streets, canals replaced the old well that provided water, and police fire and library services have all been modernized. And even though the motto has changed to "The Heart of the Valley" but it is still the city with a heart.