

MOVILIDAD

Del Valle

Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization

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Well the time for our quarterly MPO newsletter has come again and even quicker this time it seems. The staff of the HCMPO has been working on many exciting items such as the 3rd annual Border to Border Conference, which is being hosted in El Paso, Texas this year. HCMPO Staff has also been working on updating our Thoroughfare Plan, a plan which will give insight as to where future network preservation will occur. In addition, HCMPO Staff is developing plans to host our first walking and cycling event, tentatively named The Walk and Rolla with the MPO 2011. It is the intent of this event to address the benefits of more walking and cycling in our communities, and the positive impact that these outdoor activities can have on obesity and diabetes.

The HCMPO is also very pleased to announce that Westgate Drive in Weslaco will be able to move forward by the end of this calendar year. The HCMPO wishes to thank Jody Ellington, TxDOT Pharr-District, for his work with the coordination of the Lubbock MPO and TxDOT offices to secure our funding for Westgate. The Lubbock MPO had funds that they did not need to expend until 2014 and contacted the Pharr District offices to offer a "switch" of funds. Since the HCMPO needs and wants to get the Westgate project moving forward ASAP, the Lubbock MPO will allow us to use their \$2 million in Category 7 funds to let Westgate this year and the HCMPO will "repay" the \$2 million to the Lubbock MPO in 2014. It is actually much easier than it sounds; the TxDOT administration simply increases our funding allocation by \$2 million in 2011 and reduces it by \$2 million in 2014. None the less we all here appreciate the efforts taken by TxDOT to assist us in securing the funding for this much needed improvement.



As always, I am certain that you will find this issue as informative as previous issues. The HCMPO staff is always looking for news worthy events to publish in our newsletter, so please do not hesitate to contact us should you have something we should consider. The HCMPO staff is promoting other public outreach methods, such as Facebook. Look for us on Facebook and not only be kept up to date on what we are working on, but this will give us an opportunity to hear from you. The HCMPO is also undergoing a round of press releases and new commercials on Channel 4 to promote advocacy and public involvement at our Policy Committee meetings. Let us know what you think.

-Andrew A. Canon

SEPTEMBER

- 02: Strategic Plan Public Meeting @ Port Isabel @ 8:00 am
- 02: Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting (Pharr Chamber of Commerce) @ 1:30 pm
- 07: Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (HCMPO Office) @ 1:30 pm
- 14: RTAP Workgroup Meeting @ 10:00 am
- 16: Transportation Policy Committee Meeting (HCMPO Office) @ 5:30 pm
- 21-24: 12th National Tools of Trade Conference @ Williamsburg, VA

OCTOBER

- 05: Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (HCMPO Office) @ 1:30 pm
- 07: Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting (Pharr Chamber of Commerce) @ 1:30 pm
- 07-09: APA Conference @ San Antonio, TX
- 14: Transportation Policy Committee Meeting (HCMPO Office) @ 5:30 pm
- 19-22: AMPO Conference @ St. Louis, MO

NOVEMBER

- 01: TIP Cycled Revision
- 02: Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (HCMPO Office) @ 1:30 pm
- 04: Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting (Pharr Chamber of Commerce) @ 1:30 pm
- 16-18: 3rd Annual Border to Border Transportation Conference @ El Paso, Texas
- 25-26: Thanksgiving Holiday

BORDER-to-BORDER TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE

MPO Planning Partners:

Alamo, Alton, Donna, Edcouch, Edinburg, Elsa, Granjeno, Hidalgo, Hidalgo County, Hidalgo County RMA, La Joya, La Villa, LRGVDC Transit, McAllen, Mercedes, Mission, Palmhurst, Palmview, Penitas, Pharr, Progreso, Progreso Lakes, San Juan, Sullivan City, Weslaco and TXDOT.

Come & Join us!
Nov. 16-18, 2010
Registration \$100



3rd ANNUAL



Location: Judson F. Williams Convention Center
1 Civic Center Plaza, El Paso, Texas

Maria Champine
Hidalgo County MPO
Office (956) 969-5778
Cell (956) 279-7909



Efren Meza
El Paso MPO
Office (915) 591-9755 ext 33

Ex-officio Members:

FHWA, FTA, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, McAllen Express Transit, Rio Grande Valley Partnership, Weslaco Chamber of Commerce, Hidalgo County Commuter Rail District & San Juan Economic Development.

Contacts:

Visit our website at www.hcmpto.org/conference for more information.

We look forward to seeing you there!

REGIONAL GRANT OPPORTUNITY

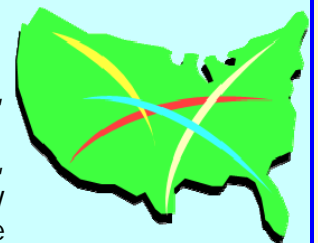


In June, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) along with the US Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a notice that they were making a \$98 million competitive grant available for regions to create a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD). The RPSD would include topics such as housing, transportation, water infrastructure, economic development, land use, environmental & open space. A plan such as this would make the region more competitive for future federal grants through the three agencies.



To be eligible for application, a regional planning consortium had to be formed. The Hidalgo County MPO is excited to announce that this group, the Rio South Texas Regional Planning Consortium has been formed and includes nineteen (19) non-profit organizations such as UTPA, the Hidalgo County Commuter Rail District and various cities from Hidalgo and Cameron Counties as well as all three MPOs. The Consortium has support letters from the Rio South Texas Economic Council and the University of Texas—Pan American along with others.

While an award date has yet to be released, we do know that our region, based on population, is competing with the largest metropolitan areas around the nation, and we are requesting \$1 million for planning and GIS activities. The application deadline is scheduled for August 23, 2010, and there will be an ongoing outreach to acquire more partners in Starr and Willacy County. This is a new endeavor for the HCMPO and we are hopeful that our efforts will be rewarded!



-Amanda Hernandez

“CITIZENS LEADING THE WAY”

“BRIDGING THE GAP”

Does leadership come with age? The reason we ask is because the Hidalgo County MPO has found a group of citizens that are willing to go the extra mile to accomplish their voluntary duties. We make reference to the **Citizens Advisory Committee**, which is made up of citizens that have stepped forward to make a difference in their communities. Leadership is the major trait that all of these committee members possess. They are not doctors or lawyers; no, they are citizens just like you and me. These people have become our voice out in the community with a resounding voice which travels like the wind and reaches everyone. This committee knows no boundaries. Separation by borders does not apply to them.

It all began back in 2004 when the HCMPO deemed it necessary to create a group of individuals that could receive the same information as our political leaders during policy meetings. Then be able to carry that information back to their communities and generate interest from the people. One of several important duties for a Metropolitan Planning Organization is to provide Public Awareness, Public Involvement, and have Public Participation during all aspects of Transportation Planning. This particular function of the HCMPO is fundamental in the global picture as we present plans, strategies, and or reports on potential projects to the political leaders for Hidalgo County. Our plans needed to be transparent and the Citizens Advisory Committee provided an avenue for that to take place. As projects became shovel ready citizens were informed, as new funding was received our committee members were instructed, and as projects were completed our diligent committee members carried the success stories out into their communities.

This method of communication has dual benefits in that this group of individuals not only transmits our information, but also brings concerns to the table from the community allowing for the HCMPO to address them as appropriate. Realizing how difficult it is to have citizens from the community come in to afternoon meetings makes us appreciate the committee's role in conveying the people's input concerning projects at hand. Let it be known that “Volunteerism” is alive and providing meaningful services to our communities. We are deeply indebted to the work that our Citizen's Advisory Committee has done for us all these years. If you are sitting at home, retired, and you feel something is missing in your life, do what these folks have done. They stepped forward and decided to get involved making a difference in their communities. We welcome the opportunity to share information relating to transportation, our roadways, and our bridges. **BECOME A LEADER FOR YOUR COMMUNITY NOW!**

- Rudy Gonzalez



Look Before You Leap



Making fast decision is easy but making good decisions fast is what's hard. Visualization is just another tool to help make that possible. Tools like Google SketchUP are relatively inexpensive and easy to produce, but make a superb tool for conveying complex information. 3D imagery or Visualization in general is a powerful communication tool. In the context of MPO, getting people understand better (public outreach) and more quickly can speed projects through decisions (TAC, TPC) that stand between ideas and work under-way.

3-D visualization is a natural way of viewing the potential effects and outcomes of a proposed plan or project. The visualization may also be used to create a futuristic or a "desired outcome" vision for a project or plan, which is not necessarily tied to any proposed solution idea. In either case, once the public has had a chance to understand and review the 3-D visualization, agencies may use the technique to:

- Gather community reaction.
- Obtain community opinion on projects and plans.
- Be a catalyst for further discussion, analysis, or refinement of a proposed alternative.
- Be the basis for an honest and valid sample of community opinion.

The renderings are a powerful public relations tool. The community members can view the renderings as an accurate forecast of colors and design, and the software also allow neighbors to view the building from different angles, to see how high it would be relative to adjacent structures.



This tool enables the public to better understand the implications of a potentially complex project or plan and enhance their ability to provide review and comments. Below is an illustration for the proposed Bicentennial Extension, McAllen.



If your community is working on a Downtown Revitalization Plan or Street Enhancement Project or any planning project, we would love to help you portray it visually. Please Contact: Sooraz Patro.

Source: FHWA, ENR

-Sooraz Patro



Emergency Preparedness Supplies

History teaches that a lack of hurricane awareness and preparation are common threads among all major hurricane disasters. It is a good idea to put together emergency preparedness supplies long before you need them. The Texas Division of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service advise that it's much easier to gather the supplies and documents you need before hurricane season starts. Hurricane season begins on June 1 and continues through November 30.

Having emergency supplies in easy to carry containers will serve you well, no matter what kind of natural or manmade emergency you may face, use this checklist:

- First-aid kit
- Extra prescription medications, written copies of prescriptions, other special medical items
- important documents and records, photo ID's, proof of residence, information you may need to process insurance claims
- Cash (power outages mean banks and ATMs may be unavailable)
- Battery- operated radio
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Phone numbers of family and friends
- Road maps, a travel plan, hotel reservations, list of places between your town your destination you can stop if the highways are clogged
- 3-day supply of non-perishable food, one gallon of bottled water per person per day
- Coolers for food and ice storage, paper plates, plastic utensils
- Manual can opener, knife, tools, booster cables, fire extinguisher, duct tape, tarp, rope
- Blankets, pillows, sleeping bags and extra clothing
- Toilet paper, cleanup supplies, personal hygiene products
- Eyeglasses, sunglasses, hearing aids
- Special supplies needed for babies, older adults or pets
- Extra Keys

Source: The Texas Division of Emergency Management

- Fred Villarreal

Flooding in the Lower Rio Grande Valley



Will it be Rio Metro or Valley Metro?

This summer, LRGVDC Regional Transit Services partnered in a community project with UTPA's College of Communications to 'rebrand' Rio Metro, Harlingen Express, and Rio Transit. A 'Creative Strategies' class composed mostly of Advertising and Public Relations undergraduates proposed a total of seven (7) projects that included a set of deliverables (*name, emblem, slogans, color scheme*) for use in the rebranding campaign. Dr. Jennifer Lemanski, Associate Professor of Communications, generously constructed her summer class around this project.



UTPA, LRGVDC, Hidalgo County MPO, and Harlingen-San Benito MPO staff members evaluated the seven (7) projects according to *creativity, relevance, adaptability, data/research, presentation skills, and cost effectiveness*. On July 22, 2010 the top two (2) student groups presented their projects to the LRGVDC Board, LRGVDC staff, and the public. LRGVDC Transit staff recommended the adoption of a final logo, slogans, and color scheme based on elements of each of the two projects. The Board approved the recommendation, thereby replacing the old transit brands with one new one: Valley Metro. All LRGVDC transit services will now be known under one banner. The transition into the new brand will begin with a marketing campaign in the fall of 2010.



The LRGVDC extends its gratitude to Dr. Lemanski and her students for their hard work and outstanding designs. It also thanks two very special representatives from UTPA who helped this project to develop: UTPA's Marketing Analyst Elisa Flores and UTPA's Office of Auxiliary Services Director, Leticia Benavides. The LRGVDC is indebted for their generous assistance and constant support of regional public transportation.

Student Groups: Deliverables were merged from both groups

Valley Metro - Lileana Cantu, Daniel Flores, Maria F. Garza-Garcia, Enrique Lastra

Name, emblem, color scheme, select marketing concepts

Liberty Express - Carolina Garza, Elizabeth Otero, Marlen Fields, Andrea Palacios

Slogans, Independence theme, fun facts for each city on buses, select marketing concepts

- Luis Guajardo, LRGVDC Transit

How is Transportation Funded?

A lot of people ask "How is transportation funded?", and it is a very interesting topic to discuss. Since the beginning of the modern economy, governments have funded public services and infrastructure needs thru taxes and fees. For example, the gas tax has been used to fund transportation needs since 1932. This money is collected and transferred to the Federal General Fund. From the General Fund, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), under the US Department of Transportation and thru a transportation committee, takes into account the population of every state along with other variables to distribute the moneys to all states in the nation.



The funds are then distributed to the states thru several federal transportation programs such as Safe Routes to School, Interstate Maintenance Program, National Highway System, Surface Transportation Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, Bridge Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program, Recreational Trails Program, and Earmarks. In Texas, the Texas Department of Transportation distributes the funding to all the districts in Texas thru 12 funding categories. The Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization (HCMPO) receives funding from the Pharr District thru Categories 1 (rehabilitation or maintenance of state roads), Category 2 (mobility projects of state roads), Category 6 (bridge replacement or rehabilitation), Category 7 (mobility projects for city or county roads), Category 8 (safety), Category 9 (transportation enhancement projects), Category 10 (earmarks and Coordinated Border Infrastructure funds), and Category 11 (Pharr District priority projects). Currently, due to federal rescissions, the state of the economy, along with more control of local expenditure of funds in the past by the Pharr District with approval from the HCMPO, most of the mobility categories have been depleted, reason why the Hidalgo County MPO as well as other MPO's in the country are looking into innovative financing options to cover the shortfall in federal transportation funding. There is a lot more to talk about regarding funding, so keep an eye on future newsletters to learn more.

- Linda de la Fuente



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If you wish to be added to our mailing list, please contact the MPO office and speak with **Maria Champine** or send an e-mail at **info@hcmpto.org**

HCMPPO also offers a *Spanish* edition of this newsletter.

THE CITY OF McALLEN



Although travelers had passed through and explored South Texas, it wasn't until the 1740's that established settlement began to dot the landscape, mostly on the south side of the Rio Grande. In the early 1850's, John McAllen arrived in the Rio Grande Valley, and development began to come together where McAllen is today. John McAllen and others established a town site in 1904 known then as West McAllen and the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroad reached the town site a year later. In 1907, other developers started a town on their own land tract and named it East McAllen. By 1910, McAllen had a population of 150, and by the next year the City of McAllen was incorporated which grew over 5,300 residents by 1920. Then after, the City of McAllen grew steadily over the next several decades and the U.S. Census reported that in 1960 McAllen had 32,728 residents.

During the 1960's, the city did not increase by many residents, but did build a new city hall, double the size of its library, established a museum in addition to the civic center and airport, which were built the previous decade. The city exploded with growth in the 1970's and it almost doubled in population to 66,281 by 1980 and continued to grow steadily. According to the Census website, the City of McAllen is estimated to have grown to 132,225 in population in 2009, and has become the 13th fastest growing city in the United States.

The economies of McAllen and Reynosa, a city right across the Rio Grande River from the City of McAllen, have boomed together due to the blooming of the maquiladora industry in 1975. The maquiladoras, assembly work, in Reynosa, Mexico, and the suppliers and distributors in McAllen.

The City of McAllen, which is also known as the City of Palms, is home to growing, diverse population and continues to transform and develop. McAllen enjoys year round sunshine and warm climate.

-Maria Champine

