



Movilidad del valle

HCMPD

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

What's New At the MPO?

The HCMPO is gearing up for the Spring. The HCMPO staff is actively working towards meeting deadlines. ♦ A quick update on land use. The Federal Highway Administration and the Resource Center Planning Team sponsored course on Coordinating Land Use and Transportation at the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) in McAllen, Texas. It was an excellent course, and we believe that it helped in understanding the links between land use and transportation. ♦ The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is accepting nominations for the Statewide Transportation Enhancements Program. For more information, please see article on page 3. ♦ At the current time, there are no restrictions to truck traffic on any state maintained highway. The Freight Sub-

Committee diligently worked on a proposed Non-Destination, Non-Radioactive Hazardous Cargo Routes (NDRHCR) for the metropolitan area of Hidalgo County. Hidalgo County and the metropolitan cities requested the assistance of the LRGVDC to coordinate an analysis study for the justification of the NDRHCR. ♦ There are some studies in the early stages of release: Multi-Modal Study and the Transit Study. There will be more information provided in our next newsletter. ♦ In addition, the HCMPO is glad to welcome aboard Linda de la Fuente and Sandip Sen. Linda comes to us from the University of Texas of El Paso, and Sandip comes from the University of Texas in Arlington. They will be great assets to the Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization. *Welcome Linda and Sandip!*

Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan

The Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan (TMMP) is the result of the Texas Legislature's HB 3588 that passed in 2003. The TMMP addresses a statewide initiative to quantify long-range needs within the larger metropolitan areas of the state and to develop a shorter range prioritized listing of projects aimed at improving mobility and air quality impacts as well as reducing traffic congestion. The TMMP is a state-based initiative that requires each of the eight (8) major metropolitan areas of Texas to develop locally conceived, comprehensive regional mobility plans to improve traffic flow. The metropolitan areas include Austin, Corpus Christi, North Central Texas (Dallas- Fort Worth), El Paso, Lubbock, Hidalgo County, Houston-Galveston, and San Antonio.

Historically, all of the major metropolitan areas across the state have experienced consistent growth trends without adequate funding needed to increase the capacity of the transportation system, resulting in loss of productivity, air quality implications, increased costs for services and goods, and a diminished quality of life. The Texas Transportation Commission has indicated that it is time to change the way Texas plans, funds and delivers transportation

systems in metropolitan areas. These individual plans will be implemented through a regional baseline allocation of Texas Department of Transportation's Metropolitan Mobility Funds (Category 2) and locally generated "gap funding." "Gap funds" can be derived from any locally generated source, such as tolls or a local option user fee. The HCMPO is currently working on its third revision of the TMMP due to the Commission in September of this year. Staff is updating demographic and network information from our base year 2000 model as well as updating information for our forecasting years: 2015 and 2030. These updates will assist staff to produce the most accurate depictions of what the true mobility needs of Hidalgo County will be. Staff is also examining new innovative financing options that will be needed to fill the "gap" of funding that the area will experience. The HCMPO staff is working closely with our Citizens Advisory Committee as well as our Technical Advisory Committee to provide and receive feed back on which initiatives may be reasonable and doable and those that may not be. Staff is excited to be working on such an important document that truly allows the citizens of Hidalgo County to decide what options are best for them in financing new mobility projects and attempting to eliminate congestion from our rapidly growing area.

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From the Director



**Andrew A. Canon,
HCMPO Director**

Well another winter has passed, not that it ever felt like one, and spring is quickly coming upon us. However, the Hidalgo County MPO Policy Committee, Advisory Committee and staff have not slowed down one bit, in fact just the opposite. The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) seems to be a success; we meet on the first Wednesday of every month at 1:30 in the HCMPO

offices. This provides an opportunity for the HCMPO staff to interact with the citizens of Hidalgo County on a one on one basis. This is a perfect platform by which citizens can ask for clarification on the planning process and staff can ask for feedback on upcoming planned projects as well. The Advisory (TAC) and Policy (TPC) Committees have been quite busy as well. Both committees have approved several TIP updates, the TIP being our 3 year horizon planning document, providing more accurate cost estimates for projects since the rise in oil prices have a direct affect on the cost of many of our planned projects. Both committees have also been hard at work with selecting and submitting projects for possible Congressional

Earmark funds. Kenneth Jones, Executive Director of the LRGVDC is also President of NADO, the National Association of Development Organizations, is providing assistance to the HCMPO to submit a list of four projects within Hidalgo County for possible funding. The HCMPO staff has also been quite busy with several projects as well. Such as staff is updating the Mobility Plan for the HCMPO. The plan identifies the shortfall in historical funding to the planning area, and identifies means of innovative financing that could be implemented to raise funding levels, and thus, provide for more projects to finance in a quicker time frame to the HCMPO area as well as assist in relieving congestion quicker. In addition, HCMPO staff is still coordinating efforts with the cities of Rio Bravo and Reynosa in attempts to solidify the planning process for the Hidalgo County area. It is important and very beneficial to all parties if the planning efforts on both sides of the Rio Grande river are coordinated, as we all know many of us use the roadways or transit system within both countries. We encourage everyone to become more involved with the planning efforts of the HCMPO, and we extend an offer to all concerned citizens to attend a CAC meeting, a Policy Committee meeting or even invite staff out to discuss with you and your organization the planning efforts for Hidalgo County.

Congestion Management System Tier II

The Congestion Management System (CMS) Study is a valuable indicator of the region's transportation system. Conducted yearly, rotating among the seasons, the CMS constitutes an extensive record of congested areas and the transportation system deficiencies. The rigor for which these traffic studies have been undertaken in Hidalgo County has set the standard for accurate and thorough CMS program across the State and Nationwide. The CMS program in Hidalgo County is now reaching maturity. The program has studied a majority of the 500 miles of roadway within the urban

area at least twice. The seasonal differences in traffic have been well documented and the duplicity of study has marginalized any outliers in the data set. In short, the congested areas are known and the transportation deficiencies have been outlined by the historical CMS studies. Therefore, the time is "right" for a modification to the scope of the CMS study. Past CMS's generated recommendations for the entire Hidalgo County MPO roadway system. These recommendations were often limited to a few words, i.e. update signal timing or utilize access management. An analysis

at this level leaves more questions than answers and does not result in action. By adding a second tier to the CMS, the HCMPO is able to garner a greater degree of analysis for a select group of priority corridors. For 2005, the HCMPO has studied some corridors which are among the most congested and in need of a congestion management plan. This methodology will produce a CMS that not only documents the state of the transportation network, but also details a specific course of action to manage congestion.

Upcoming Events

March 2006

- 1-Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting at HCMPO Office 1:30 PM
- 2- Land Use Meeting at HCMPO Office 3:00 PM
- 7-TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 PM
- 22-Transit Advisory Panel in Brownsville 10:00 AM
- 23- Policy Meeting at TxDOT Office in Pharr 5:30 PM

April 2006

- 5-Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting at HCMPO Office 1:30 PM
- 6- Land Use Meeting at HCMPO Office 3:00 PM
- 11- TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 PM
- 27- Policy Meeting at TxDOT Office in Pharr 5:30 PM

May 2006

- 3- Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting at HCMPO Office 1:30 PM
- 4- Land Use Meeting at HCMPO Office 3:00 PM
- 9- TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 PM
- 25-Policy Meeting at TxDOT Office in Pharr 5:30 PM

HCMPO Policy Committee Member Spotlight

Councilman Noe Garza, P.E. represents the City of Edinburg at the HCMPO Transportation Policy Committee. Mr. Garza was born and raised in San Juan, Texas. After graduating from PSJA High School in 1960, he attended and graduated from the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, and received his Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering in 1965.

In 1976, Mr. Garza joined the City of Edinburg staff as a City Engineer and Director of Public Works. He decided to leave the City to open a private practice in 1984. As a Civil Engineer, with a strong emphasis in structural engineering, he has used broad spectrum of skills in modern urban planning, site feasibility studies, utilities analysis, street and drainage projects, wastewater improvement projects, and structural projects.

Mr. Garza has actively participated in different organizations as part of his dedication towards community service. During Mr. Garza's term, unemployment dropped from 12% to 4%. Construction in underway or contracted on a new fire substation, library and City Hall. His main goal as a member of the HCMPO Transportation Policy Committee is to work hard to improve all transportation in the Rio Grande Valley. Mr. Garza said, "the Valley has always been 10-20 years behind, we need to work hard to catch up".



Councilman Noe Garza, P.E.,
City of Edinburg

HCMPO Staff Spotlight

It is a great honor to write about this month's Spotlight, Srilatha Raavi, GIS Specialist for the HCMPO. She provides support for the GIS and the modeling process which she enjoys most of all. Srilatha is also a part of several other areas of planning as well including: demographics, functional classification of roadways, land use, CMS and PMS. Srilatha was born and raised in Hyderabad, India. In 2001, she received her Bachelor of Technology in Civil Engineering from Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University at

Anantapur, India. She then decided to come to the U.S. to pursue a higher education and seeking better opportunities in the field of Civil Engineering. She then received her Masters of Science in Transportation Engineering from the University of Toledo, Ohio, in May 2004. Srilatha first came to the HCMPO in August of 2004. She believes that transportation planning is one of the basic steps and that it is a good start to learn everything related to transportation engineering. Someday she hopes to become a

Professional Engineer and eventually would like to work towards her MBA degree.

At first she did not know anything about the Valley, but after living here for a while, she likes the warm weather, plus, the life style here makes her feel at home.



Srilatha Raavi,
GIS Specialist

Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program



The Texas Department of Transportation in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration announced a call for project nominations for the Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program (STEP) starting November 1, 2005 and

ending at 5:00 p.m. on April 28, 2006. TxDOT is the agency responsible for the administration of the STEP. Transportation enhancements are provided under the federal transportation legislation, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and the Efficient-Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The program includes transportation-related activities to the livelihood of communities, promote the quality of our environment and enhance the aesthetics of our roadways. The goal of the program is to

encourage diverse modes of travel, increase the community benefits to transportation investment, strengthen partnerships between State and local governments and promote citizen involvement in transportation decisions. The STEP is a statewide competitive program and is administered in accordance with applicable federal and state rules and regulations. The funds provided by this program are on a cost reimbursement basis and not considered a grant. All projects must have a nominating entity such as a city or county government, a

state agency or a Metropolitan Planning Organization. To be eligible, projects must demonstrate a relationship to the surface transportation system by either function or impact; fit one of the 12 enhancement categories; and go above and beyond standard transportation activities. Projects undertaken with enhancement funds are eligible for reimbursement of up to 80% if allowable costs. The governmental entity nominating a project is responsible for the remaining cost share, including all cost overruns.



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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 Alamo, Texas

The HCMPO will be incorporating a little history of the cities within the Hidalgo County metropolitan area, so everyone can experience a taste of the *Lower Rio Grande Valley*.

Alamo, Texas, is on U.S. Highway 83, nine miles southeast of McAllen in southern Hidalgo County. Between 1902 and 1909 Peter Ebenezer Blalock and George T. Hawkins accumulated 32,000 acres of land surrounding the townsite and extending fifteen miles north of the Rio Grande. By 1908, they had laid out the town, built shipping pens, and named the railroad depot Ebenezer. The site became known as Camp Ebenezer when a community of prospective buyers housed in temporary dwellings developed. In 1909, the land was sold to the organizers of the Alamo Land and Sugar Company, which moved the

town from Camp Ebenezer to higher, better-drained ground. The Alamo Townsite Company was formed by C. H. Swallow and Rentfro B. Creager, who promoted the site to prospective settlers. In 1909, a post office was established. The town was reportedly first called Forum and later Swallow. It may have been subsequently named for the mission in San Antonio. In 1919, the Alamo Progressive Club was formed; it later became the chamber of commerce. The First State Bank of Alamo opened in 1920. After incorporation in 1924, the town grew steadily, and its population was reported at 200 in 1925. In 1936, Alamo had 1,018 residents and fifty businesses. During the 1940s and 1950s, the town served mainly as a shipping point for vegetables and citrus fruits. The population was 1,944 in 1940



and 3,017 in 1950. In 1990, the population was 8,210, and by the year 2000, the City of Alamo grew to 14,760 which is an almost 80% increase..