

Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization

MPO Planning Partners:

- > Alamo, Alton, Donna, Edcouch, Edinburg, Elsa, Granjeno, Hidalgo, Hidalgo County, LaJoya, LaVilla, McAllen, Mercedes, Mission, Palmhurst, Palmview, Peñitas, Pharr, Progreso, Progreso Lakes, San Juan, Sullivan City, Weslaco, FHWA, FTA, LRGVDC-Transit, TxDOT

What's new at the MPO?

Every three years, the MPO is reviewed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to ensure that we are complying with federal regulations and doing the best possible job as this area's MPO. The Hidalgo County MPO will be undergoing a joint Triennial Certification Review in February 2005. As part of the certification, **the MPO will be conducting two public listening sessions** to answer any questions or complaints the public

may have regarding transportation related issues. Officials from FTA, FHWA, and TxDOT will be at the meetings to listen and respond to your comments. A schedule of the upcoming meetings is included in this newsletter in the **Upcoming Events** section. We encourage all citizens to attend the meetings and let your voice be heard. LRGVDC Transit recently turned over operations of the McAllen Express Transit buses to the City of

McAllen. The city is very excited about the acquisition and has innovative ideas for improvement that will benefit its users. Service will not be affected by the change in operators and all questions or comments regarding the bus routes should be directed to the McAllen Express at (956) 631-7050.

The MPO would also like to welcome our newest staff member, Heaven Lashley. Heaven is a Planner I and comes to us from The University of Texas A & M, College Station. Welcome, buses to the City of Heaven!

The MPO plans to begin a new study in Hidalgo County

The chances are likely that even the uninformed individual understands the importance of Incident Management planning very well, without being aware of it. Every vehicle accident has several repercussions both inside and outside of the immediate circle of those involved in the accident. **Incident Management** is the process of collecting accident reports from police departments throughout the affected region. Using the police reports, the MPO can identify accident "hot spots" in various areas and identify the cause of the accidents. Then, the MPO can work with the cities to create solu-

tions for these areas and use the information to initiate transportation improvement programs to prevent future accidents. Primarily, we are concerned about the safety of our passengers. Eliminating accidents, especially during peak hours of the day, ensures a timely emergency response, thus increasing the victim's chance of survival, and helps minimize property loss of those involved. Each accident creates a sort of "shock wave" which causes each vehicle behind the incident to be delayed until the accident scene is finally cleared. For this reason, Incident Management must be addressed to improve safety,

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Incident Management (continued from page 1)

eliminate congestion and sustain the economic vitality of the Rio Grande Valley. The HCMPO will begin performing traffic safety studies at the end of January 2005. HCMPO team members will be meeting with Dr. Ned Levine of the

Houston MPO to learn how the city (a region significantly impacted by incident management) has performed traffic safety management planning. We appreciate the generous cooperation we have already received from some of our local police departments

who have provided accident reports to assist us in our study. We look forward to continued cooperation and support in our efforts to improve safety in Hidalgo County.

Upcoming Events

February 2005

7-Public Listening Session #1 [McAllen City Hall](#)
3:00 p.m.

8-TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 p.m.

8- Public Listening Session #2 [McAllen City Hall](#)
6:00 p.m.

17-Multi-modal subcommittee meeting 9:00 a.m.

21-President's Day (MPO Office Closed)

24-Policy Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 5:30 pm

March 2005

8-TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 p.m.

24-Policy Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 5:30 pm

Call MPO Office for the Transportation Improvement Program Adoption meeting date.

April 2005

12-TAC Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 1:30 p.m.

28-Policy Meeting at TxDOT office in Pharr 5:30 pm

Call MPO Office for the Transportation Improvement Program Adoption meeting date.

From the Director



Andrew A. Canon,
HCMPO Director

Fellow Hidalgo County Citizens, it gives me great pride to update all of you on the planning processes undertaken by the Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization (HCMPO), in our 3rd edition of the HCMPO newsletter. This newsletter is an invaluable source

for the citizens of Hidalgo County as well as the staff of the HCMPO because it allows us the opportunity to communicate to the citizens, describe how the planning process works, how citizens can become more involved, and inform everyone as to what lies next on the horizon for the HCMPO. As many of you know, the HCMPO just completed a year long process of updating our Fiscal Year 2005-2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). This document was adopted by the HCMPO Policy Board on December 16, 2004, and outlines possible projects for the Hidalgo Metropolitan Area for the

next 25 years. The MTP identified over \$1 billion in proposed projects for the Metropolitan Area. HCMPO deeply appreciates all of the citizen input we received during the 9 MTP public meetings we held throughout Hidalgo County.

I would also like to invite the citizens of Hidalgo County to participate in the HCMPO Triennial Certification process. The HCMPO will be holding public listening sessions February 7-8, 2005, to give Hidalgo County citizens the opportunity to inform the Federal Highway (FHWA) and Transit (FTA) Administration about how they view the process of Transportation

Planning and how the HCMPO is carrying out these operations. It is important to receive input from the public so that we can improve and grow, and so that we, the HCMPO can better serve, inform, and partner with the citizens of Hidalgo County. I hope to see you all there. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can answer any questions in advance for you.

"It is important to receive input from the public ...so that we can better serve... the citizens of Hidalgo County."

HCMPO Policy Committee

On December 16, 2004, the MPO held elections for the HCMPO Policy Board. The new officers are as follows:

Chairman: Mayor Leopoldo Palacios, Pharr

Vice Chairman: Commissioner Eddie Johnson, Edinburg

Secretary: Commissioner Angie Garza, La Joya

The MPO Policy Committee consists of elected officials from each city and Hidalgo County and was created for the purpose of serving as spokespersons for the citizens in the metropolitan area. Every Policy committee meeting has time set aside for

citizen input and citizens are encouraged to attend the meetings and participate in the transportation process. A schedule of upcoming meetings is included in **page 2** of this newsletter.

Committee Member Spotlight

Commissioner Angie Garza is the Mayor Pro-tem for the city of La Joya and is currently the Secretary of the HCMPO Policy Board. Commissioner Garza was first elected to office in 1987 and has been very involved in the community. Prior to serving as the Mayor Pro-tem for the city, she worked with the La Joya Independent School District as a personnel and school secretary for 28 years. After retiring in 2004, she has

remained active with the school district as a substitute teacher.

While in office, she has helped to purchase land for the La Joya Economic Development Corporation as well as for the existing Sewer Plant, rehabilitate 30 new homes under CDBG, assisted in the construction of the La Joya Fire Station addition, the paving of all city streets, the purchase of fire trucks and

additional equipment for the fire station, as well as numerous accomplishments for the city. She is involved with various organizations in the community and participates in the yearly Christmas parade and toy drive. She is also a Charter Member of the La Joya Lions Club, a member of HELO/AMHO, is the past president of the La Joya Athletic Booster Club and is also the past president of the La Joya Boys & Girls Club.



Commissioner Angie Garza,
City of La Joya

Committee Member Spotlight

Mr. Jaime S. Sandoval has served the City of Alamo as the Community Planning & Development Director since April 2000. He is responsible for coordinating activities related to all subdivision developments with the P & Z Commission and the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Sandoval graduated from the Pan American University with a B.B.A. in Marketing. Following graduation, he continued to manage his family's business before pursuing a career in public administration. He started his public administration career as Assistant

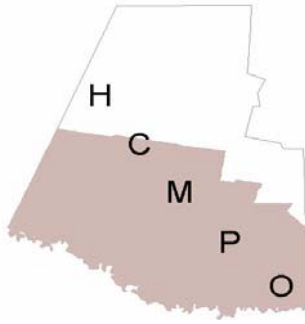
Director of the Hidalgo County Department of Human Services. He has been very active in community affairs having served as Chairman of the Alamo Public Housing Authority, past President of Alamo Youth Sports-PONY baseball, and past member of both the Donna and Alamo Chamber of Commerce. He currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Southmost Section Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association and is the City of Alamo's representative to the TAC as well as other sub-committees of the MPO. Mr. Sandoval has been very active in fostering

economic growth in the City of Alamo by facilitating commercial development activities through his department allowing such businesses as Super 8 Motel, Auto Zone and Wal-Mart Supercenter to come to Alamo. Also, he has assisted and coordinated all activities related to the construction of the new city hall and new public library. Future projects that will be coordinated through his department include a new fire station, elevated storage facility, and a new sports complex/community park. By partnering with various agencies, the City of Alamo has experienced



Jaime Sandoval,
City of Alamo

tremendous residential and commercial growth during the past four years. Though many goals have been met, many challenges and opportunities await this fine city and Mr. Sandoval will do his part to serve the community by continuously promoting and improving the quality of life for all citizens of Alamo.



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If you wish to be added to our mailing list, please contact the MPO office or Lindsey Nuñez at hcmpo@lrgvdc.org

HCMPO also offers a Spanish edition of this newsletter!

Can You Influence the Future of Transportation in the Valley?

In the morning I take my car on a five minute drive to a light rail stop, enjoy a hot cup of coffee from the shop downtown, and slide from Weslaco to McAllen (bypassing a previously congested freeway). Meanwhile, young students are using “hike and bike trails” to ride new bicycles to school and back on a nicely landscaped trail, diverted from the nearby roads. Efficiently planned transit routes ensure that the rural poor are able to commute downtown for shopping, doctors visits, or to find a better job. Another transit route collects South Texas College and University of Texas Pan-American students to their schools where they head over to

class passing filled parking lots. Freight Trucks utilize designated roads, bypassing most of the Valley, leaving Expressway 83 to experience free flow traffic for those that deem using the expressway absolutely necessary for that day... Such is my ideal vision of the potential for transportation’s evolution in the Rio Grande Valley.

What is your vision of a “perfect” transportation system? It may be (very likely) different from mine. If not, there may be dissent about the best way to achieve a better transportation system. When dealing with competing interests, competing resources, and struggling to

understand the complicated nature of our legal system, it is easier to become apathetic, or to simplify the struggle to “Us vs. Them” without really understanding the nature of the beast. Richard D. Klein, author of “Everyone Wins!: A Citizens Guide to Development” discusses the fact that both the citizens affected by decisions in urban development, and those responsible for making developmental decisions, are benefited with open communication during early developmental stages.

Here at the Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization, not only is public involvement mandated, it is our passion. We appreciate the input we have received from you thus far, and hope to edify our relationship with our community through more outreach.



We also urge you to consider the Citizens Advisory Committee we anticipate to form in the next few months. By being involved in our Citizens Advisory Committee (and besides being a tremendous resource to us) you will have a great opportunity to form or reinforce leadership in our community as well as ensure that the issues, which you consider to be relevant, are illuminated. Please contact the MPO for more information - we look forward to hearing from you!