

Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization (HCMPO)

What's new at the MPO?

The Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization offices have moved! We are now located in the International Bank Building across from Embassy Suites on the 4th Floor, Suite 430. We would like to thank Mr. Ken Jones, the executive director of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the rest of the staff for all of their help and support to make the move possible. There will be an open house from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, August 27, 2004 for citizens to come meet their elected officials and become familiar with the MPO office. For more information, contact HCMPO at (956) 618-0803.

The staff of the HCMPO is enthusiastic and aware

of our goals for the year. The staff has just had our Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) approved, our yearly financial document that identifies the work elements for the upcoming year as well as the expense to complete each work task. Staff has also submitted the HCMPO copy of the Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan (TMMP). The TMMP will assist the HCMPO to identify what our true needs for projects are as well as analyze financial alternatives that will assist the HCMPO and TxDOT to move projects forward. The HCMPO staff is now preparing to complete the Long Range Plan for the HCMPO. This document

allows the HCMPO to identify projects for the next 20 years as well as how the projects could be funded. Staff will have the long range plan (MTP) completed for adoption in December 2004.



HCMPO Staff

Andrew A. Canon, Director

Mary Escalona, Administrative Assistant

Edward Molitor, Planner II

Srikanth Matta, Planner II

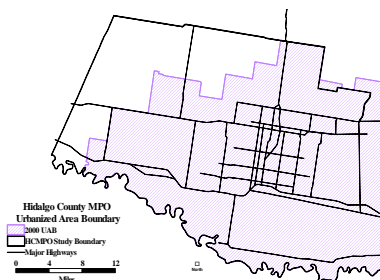
Maria Champine, GIS Specialist

Lindsey Nuñez, Planner I

Hidalgo County population expected to reach 1 million

Hidalgo County was one of the fastest growing areas in the U.S. during the 1980s and 1990s. Year 2000 Census data shows that the McAllen Metropolitan Area is among the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country with a growth rate of more than twice that of most areas. From 1990 to 2000, population in Hidalgo County

grew by 48.5%. Larger in population than 3 U.S. states, the region has substantial growth in population and is expected to continue. The total population for the Hidalgo County area in 2000 was 569,463. By the year 2025, Hidalgo County is expected to include approximately 1 million persons.



The urbanized area contains 743.21 sq miles.

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

Inside this issue:

From the Director	2
Upcoming Events	2
Toll Roads	2
TMMP	3
UPWP	3
Committee Spotlights	3
What is the MPO?	4

From the Director



Andrew A. Canon

First allow me to say how excited I am that the Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization (HCMPO) is reviving our quarterly newsletter. It is important that we as HCMPO staff identify and reach out to our customers, the citizens of Hidalgo County. Public involvement is paramount to what

we do here at the HCMPO and feedback and public input is not only sought out, but encouraged. We implore our fellow citizens of Hidalgo County to communicate with us here at HCMPO so that we can be aware of the local concerns and questions so we can attempt to answer public needs. I also want to take a moment and invite anyone from the public to come visit us at our new offices on 2nd Street (Colonel Rowe), at the International Bank building. We would love the opportunity to provide more insight into what we

do here at the HCMPO and assist in improving citizen awareness of the planning process here in Hidalgo County.

I also want to thank our planning partners, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) and TxDOT for assisting us in acquiring our new offices. The HCMPO has moved into an office space with more than 4,000 sq/ft available for staff. This has allowed us to begin hiring new staff and expand the capabilities of the HCMPO. With the new space and staffing limits of the HCMPO increasing we see many things on our horizon

that we will now be able to do in house, such as traffic modeling. This capability will allow us to truly assess what projects are most beneficial for our County as well as allow us to work with our member cities and assist them with modeling work as well.

I hope you will all become more involved in our process and we welcome the guidance that can be provided by our communities here in Hidalgo County. Please feel free to contact me personally at any time if I can be of any assistance to you, or your community, because this is an organization you are apart of. I look forward to our next newsletter and the continued, cooperative process that we have here in Hidalgo County.

Upcoming Events

August 2004

10th—TAC meeting 1:30 p.m.
26th—Policy Meeting 5:30 p.m.
27th— HCMPO Open House

September 2004

6th – Labor Day
14th– TAC Meeting 1:30 p.m.
23th– Policy meeting 5:30 p.m.

October 2004

12th- TAC Meeting 1:30 p.m.
28th- Policy Meeting 5:30 p.m.

Toll Roads— Why is it necessary to charge tolls for transportation projects?

If you drive anywhere in the nation, you will find that some of the best highways can be found in Texas. Since the first 20-mile section of Texas highway was completed in 1920, Texans have enjoyed driving along what is now 79,000 miles of state-maintained highways. Unfortunately, the world-class highway system that played a major role in the state's 20th century population growth and economic expansion is showing its age.

More than 18.7 million motor vehicles are registered in Texas. That number is expected to increase significantly in the next decade and will place more strain on already overcrowded roads and highways. A 20th century transportation system financed by motor fuel taxes is not keeping pace with 21st century traffic. Present budget allocations allow the Texas Department of Transportation to meet only about **one-third** of the transportation-related needs statewide. With limited transportation funding, and needs out-

pace these dollars, Texas is facing a transportation crisis. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) saw this problem and asked the Legislature to provide alternative construction-funding methods. In 2003, the 78th Legislature created a solution for the state's transportation issues by passing House Bill 3588. Thanks to history-making legislation and innovative partnerships never before possible, local and state officials can respond to transportation demands for their areas and get Texas moving again by using these new funding methods. Transportation improvements that leverage state dollars by creating their own revenue streams, otherwise known as toll roads, can free up tax money for even more projects.

Toll roads are the fastest way to accelerate needed projects, stretch limited transportation funds and reduce congestion in Texas. If areas in the state do not adopt this new method of funding, the once smooth roads Texans became accustomed to driving on will become a thing of the past.

Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan (TMMP)

Metropolitan areas across the state have experienced tremendous growth in the past decades without adequate funding to increase the capacity of the transportation system. More than 12.4 million people or 60 percent of Texans live in the state's eight major metropolitan areas (**populations exceeding 200,000**) which include: Austin, Corpus Christi, North Central Texas (Dallas-Fort Worth), El Paso, Lubbock, **Hidalgo** County (Lower Rio Grande Valley), Houston-Galveston, and San Antonio. The Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan increases local control of metropolitan transportation planning and mobility funding to reduce urban congestion and improve quality of life. This plan is a state-wide initiative focused on improving safety, reducing regional congestion, diverting long-haul and hazardous materials from entering population centers, providing underdeveloped areas of the state access to competitive utility service, and ultimately improving air quality throughout the state. The established goals for the TMMP are ultimately to improve citizens' mobility and quality of life.

Citizens are encouraged to participate in the transportation planning process and may come by the HCMPO office to read through the TMMP and learn more about what the MPO and its planning partners are doing for your area.

UPWP

Every August, the HCMPO adopts a new Unified Planning Work Program for the new fiscal year (October 1 to September 30). This plan coordinates all the transportation planning and programming activities that are to be undertaken in the Hidalgo County area during the upcoming year. HCMPO takes the results of transportation studies to provide planning support for the cities in the county and for a variety of projects in the area. Annual solicitation of ideas are requested from each city, then ranked and fit into an estimated budget. On July 22, 2004, the HCMPO policy board approved the MPO budget of \$1,067,505 for the upcoming planning year. If you are interested in viewing the FY 2005 UPWP, please call or come by the HCMPO offices.

Committee Member Spotlight

Mayor Roberto F. Loredo, mayor of the city of San Juan, is currently the Chairman of the Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Mayor Loredo has served his community as an elected official for the last eighteen years. He was first elected as a city commissioner in 1987 and

served for three terms in that position. He became Mayor in 1996 having run unopposed. He began his second term as Mayor in 1999 also unopposed. He is currently completing his third term as mayor.

Under his leadership, the City of San Juan has been able to provide much

needed infrastructure to the whole community while at the same time keeping up with population growth (12,000 in 1990 to over 26,000 in 2004). He continues to serve his community as Mayor and the valley, as a member of different committees and organizations, including the Hidalgo County MPO.



**Mayor Roberto F. Loredo,
City of San Juan**

Committee Member Spotlight

Ed Taylor is Senior Planner for the City of McAllen and began working for the City in 1975. He assisted TxDOT in the 1970's by providing data for travel demand modeling; i.e. housing units, employment, and land use for the base and forecast years. Ed worked in Austin, Texas from 1980 to 1988 with consulting firms and Capital Metro.

He is one of McAllen's staff representatives at MPO Technical Meetings and is chairman of the Congestion Management Subcommittee. Congestion management studies prepared by Carter and Burgess for the MPO have received national recognition. He has assisted the MPO in the preparation of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan in 1994, 1999

and the upcoming 2004 update. He assisted the MPO and LKC Consulting Services in the preparation of the transit feasibility study for McAllen that led to the creation of the McAllen Express and development of Central Station. He attends MPO policy meetings and advises Mayor Leo Montalvo and Mayor Pro-tem Carlos Garza on important MPO Policy Committee issues.



**Ed Taylor, AICP
Senior Planner**



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

HCMPO also offers a Spanish edition of this newsletter!

What is the MPO and how does it affect me?

Do you wish that you could talk to your officials about transportation problems before the construction begins? The HCMPO provides numerous opportunities for you to be heard! Whether you are a member of the MPO or a private citizen, you have a role to play with the MPO.

What is the MPO? Every metropolitan area with a population of more than 50,000 persons must have a designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). HCMPO has served as the MPO for the McAllen Metropolitan Area since 1993 and provides technical assistance to the local governments of Hidalgo County in planning, coordinating, and implementing transporta-

tion decisions. The HCMPO is composed of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a Policy Committee. The TAC Committee's membership consists of local officials and planners from the cities and the county within the MPO boundary. This committee is responsible for making technical planning recommendations to the Policy Committee for immediate action. 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 of the county and cities in the metropolitan area. The Policy committee is responsible for policy-making in transportation planning issues. An up-

dated list of the technical and policy committee members can be obtained from the MPO office.

MPO committee members are ultimately responsible to the residents of the region for the quality of transportation services and for the impact of transportation on their overall quality of life. This means the committee members share the responsibility for making sure that major transportation issues of today and tomorrow are dealt with fairly and properly. Citizens are encouraged to participate in the transportation planning process during the monthly meetings of the Technical and Policy Committees. Contact the MPO office for more information or to learn about meeting locations.

