

The History of LRGVDC

On August 2, 1967, the LRGVDC was created through a joint resolution merging the Lower Rio Grande Valley Council of Governments and the Texas Southmost Economic Development District assuming the duties of a Council of Governments, Regional Planning Commission, and an Economic Development District for Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties.

The timeline below describes dates of significance for LRGVDC regarding programmatic functions.

Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council

June 17, 1965

Texas Regional Planning Act of 1965 (H.B. 319-Tommy Shannon of Tarrant Co.) signed into law by Governor John Connally authorizing the establishment of a regional planning commission with the purpose of guiding the unified development, eliminating duplication, and promotion of economy and efficiency in the coordinated development of a region.

August 26, 1965

The Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965 bill became law establishing the Economic Development Administration in the U.S. Department of Commerce to provide grants to economically distressed communities to support employment and industrial and commercial growth.

April 8, 1966

Articles of Incorporation: Cameron County-Council of Governments (COG).

April 20, 1966

Certificate of Incorporation of Cameron County-COG approved by Texas Office of the Secretary of State.

May 16, 1966

Articles of Incorporation: Texas Southmost Economic Development District for the counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Zapata, Jim Hogg & Starr.

May 19, 1966

Certificate of Incorporation of Texas Southmost Economic Development District (TSEDD) is approved by Texas Office of the Secretary of State.

Note: Unverified documentation states that the TSEDD was developed as a "pilot" and served as the initial operational Economic Development Districts in the Country charged with the responsibility of formulating Economic Development Planning polices which laid the framework for today's "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy" process.

June 20, 1966

Articles of Incorporation: Lower Rio Grande Valley-Council of Governments.

July 8, 1966

Certificate of Incorporation of LRGV-COG approved by Texas Office of the Secretary of State.

February 23, 1967

Joint meeting was held between the LRGV-COG & TSEDD at the Fairway Motel in McAllen, Texas to discuss the proposed merger of the two organizations. The meeting was presided over by Mr. Jim Ray of the Governor's office, Mr. Paul Veale, Mayor of McAllen and President of the LRGV-COG, and Cameron County Commissioner, Ted Hunt, President of the TSEDD.

A telegram was read from Congressman Kika de la Garza expressing his regret at being unable to attend. He goes on to encourage both organizations noting the value of the merger and pledging his continued support.

Mr. Bill Schupp, McAllen City Manager, suggested the new organization be titled, Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council. A motion was made by C. B. Shields, representing Monte Alto School District, and the motion was unanimously passed by both organizations.

March 16, 1967

U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration designates the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development as an Economic Development District for the Counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy.

August 2, 1967

First meeting and resolution confirming the formal creation of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council; the merger of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Council of Governments and Texas Southmost Economic Development District.

Upon the formal creation of the organization, LRGVDC's purpose and outcomes were driven by the foundation of Economic Development with the goals of unified development and prosperity for the region.

Mr. Robert Chandler was first hired as the director of Texas Southmost Economic Development District in July 1966 and became LRGVDC's 1st Executive Director.

LRGVDC's groundwork began with a staff of 8 professionals, an 18 member Board of Directors, and 4 Executive Committee Officers with initial funding provided by U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In 1967, the three County area had an estimated population of 313,000 and 3 cities over 25,000 residents (Brownsville, Harlingen, and McAllen). As part of the inception of LRGVDC, many incorporated cities of the region pledged support via city resolution and proclamation in becoming members of the regional Council of Governments.

The first five committees established by LRGVDC included a Project Review Committee, Tourism Committee, Law Enforcement Committee and Communications Center Committee.

Today, many of LRGVDC's current programmatic functions, committee composition and bylaw alignments are identical or directly developed from the foundations of the initial organizational structure.

9-1-1 Department

1967

President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice recommended that a single phone number should be established nationwide for reporting emergency situations.

November 1967

FCC meets with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) to find a means of establishing a universal emergency number.

1968

AT&T announced that it would establish the digits 9-1-1 (nine-one-one) as the emergency code throughout the United States.

February 16, 1968

Senator Rankin Fite completed the first 9-1-1 call made in the United States in Haleyville, Alabama.

March 1973

White House's Office of Telecommunications issued a national policy statement which recognized the benefits of 9-1-1.

May 28, 1987

HB 911 was signed into law which established statewide 9-1-1 emergency communication system. (now called Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 771, Subtitle B. Emergencies)

HB911 also required Texas Regional Planning Commissions to develop regional implementation plans.

September 1, 1987

Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) was created in to assist implementation and administration of 9-1-1 in Texas.

May 25, 1989

LRGVDC Board of Directors recognizes HB9-1-1 and begins the process of developing a Strategic Plan; consequently establishing the 911 Department within the LRGVDC.

September 1, 1989

LRGVDC 9-1-1 Department's first Strategic Plan is submitted to CSEC.

1990

The first 9-1-1 service contract is established with CSEC for Hidalgo and Willacy County.

1992

The first 9-1-1 systems are installed in the LRGVDC area. Also, the implementation and development of the 9-1-1 database system initiated.

July-August 1994

The LRGVDC 9-1-1 Department is given the responsibility and authority to be the addressing entity by Hidalgo and Willacy Counties.

1996

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issued an order requiring implementation of a new Enhanced 9-1-1 system for wireless phones.

1996-2005

LRGVDC 9-1-1 Department continues to develop the 9-1-1 database systems, and deploys technology needed to meet Enhanced 9-1-1 requirements by the FCC.

2006

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is implemented to better maintain and manage the 9-1-1 system.

2007

LRGVDC 9-1-1 implements and deploys an IP base fiber optic network and purchases Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) capable equipment.

2008

The 9-1-1 Department receives certification of Wireless Phase II implementation from CSEC.

2009-2010

LRGVDC 9-1-1 Department continues to work on the technological development of the 9-1-1 system for future implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1.

2011-2015

Further department programs are developed to better assist in database management, location validation, mapping, system and psap operations, public education, and training within our region. LRGVDC also worked toward the implementation and development of the Regional Emergency Service IP Network (ESInet) in order to interconnect with CSEC's Statewide ESInet.

October 2016

Text-to-9-1-1 is completely implemented and deployed in Hidalgo and Willacy Counties.

Area Agency on Aging

July 14, 1965

President Lyndon Johnson signs the Older Americans Act of 1965, P.L. 89-73. Congress created the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1965 in response to concern by policymakers about a lack of community social services for older individuals. The original legislation established the authority for states to receive grants for community planning and social services, research and development projects, and personnel training in the field of aging.

1965

Texas Senate establishes the Governor's Committee on Aging to administer federal funds made available through the Older Americans Act of 1965.

1970

White House Conference on Aging identified issues affecting the elderly and establishes priorities to address such issues. The issue of hunger and other social needs prompted the need to identify a local entity that would address these barriers at a local level.

January 1, 1973

LRGVDC is the designated Area Agency on Aging for the Lower Rio Grande Valley and provided funding to establish a six month nutrition program. A contract is established with Harold's Country Kitchen to provide 300 meals a day for 5 days a week servicing the McAllen/Pharr and Brownsville areas.

1974

LRGVDC is tasked with increasing the nutrition program to serve over 1,000 meals a day for 5 days a week. The LRGVDC identifies Amigos Del Valle, Inc. as the new consortium to administer the nutrition program to provide the nutrition service on a regional under Title VII of the Older American Act.

1975

Amendments to the Older Americans Act, established specifying certain services to receive funding priority under the state and Area Agency on Aging program.

1978

Amendments consolidated the separate grant programs for social services, nutrition services, and multipurpose senior center facilities into one program under the authority of State Units on Aging and Area Agencies on Aging.

Further amendments, including the creation of Title III for Support Services, consolidation of Title VII Nutrition Services in Title III-C1 congregate meals and Title III-C2 home delivered meals, and established the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program were also made.

1981

The Governor's Committee on Aging becomes the state agency: Texas Department on Aging (TDoA)

1982-1984

The Older Americans Act is and establishes targeting to certain elderly groups and included establishment of targeting priorities on special populations and services.

1992

The LRGVDC is among the few Area Agencies on Aging in Texas with a comprehensive direct services system which included the establishment of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and expansion of benefits counseling program to provide legal awareness and legal assistance services.

2000

The Older Americans Act is reauthorized to include priorities such as Title III-E the National Family Caregiver Program, Title III-D Health Prevention Program to target Evidenced Based Intervention Program, and addressing the needs of family caregivers.

2011

LRGVDC is designated as an Aging and Disability Resource Center.

2012

LRGVDC became 1 of 105 Care Transition Programs under the Affordable Care Act across the country addressing the 30 day hospital readmission rates.

Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization

June 12, 1981

As a result of the 1973 Federal Highway Act mandating a Governor's office to designate a Metropolitan Planning Organization for metropolitan areas with a central city with a population over 50,000, on June 12, 1981, the McAllen-Pharr-Edinburg urbanized area was designated as an MPO called the McAllen-Pharr-Edinburg Urban Transportation Study Area.

This is a result of the 1980 census identifying the City of McAllen as over 50,000 in population. This agreement was in effect until 1991.

December 18, 1991

With the ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) transportation bill signed into law on December 18, 1991, a new category for larger urbanized metropolitan areas with a population of 200,000 or more was created known as a Transportation Management Area or TMA.

After the 1990 census, the McAllen urbanized area was expanded to include the Cities of Weslaco to the East, Palmview to the West, and Hidalgo to the South. The population for this larger urbanized area was 290,000. As a result, the McAllen-Pharr-Edinburg area was designated as a TMA.

The McAllen-Pharr-Edinburg MPO was also re-organized to accommodate additional federal requirements.

February 23, 1993

On February 23, 1993 the Governor of Texas designated a Transportation Policy Committee to the Hidalgo County Metropolitan Planning Organization to provide guidance and direction for the area's transportation planning.

April 8, 1993

By contract, on April 8, 1993 the LRGVDC was designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization to perform fiscal, administrative, and technical functions as directed by its Transportation Policy Committee which is still in effect.

Criminal Justice & Homeland Security

Criminal Justice Program

June 19, 1968

The **Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968** was enacted. Legislation passed by the Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson which then established the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), later superseded by the Office of Justice Programs, Title III of the Act set rules for obtaining wiretap orders in the US. It had been started shortly after November 22, 1963 when evidence in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy increased public alertness to the relative lack of control over the sale and possession of guns in the United States.

October 18, 1968

Executive Order by Governor John Connally was created to form the Texas Criminal Justice Council, which necessary to administer that Act's provisions.

1974

The Texas Criminal Justice Council was renamed the Texas Criminal Justice Division Advisory Board.

September 01, 1981

Passage by the Sixty-Seventh Legislative Session of Senate Bill 127 marked the establishment of the Criminal Justice Division (CJD) of the Office of the Governor. The Bill charged the Criminal Justice Division with administering state funds and limited amount of federal funds to local and state criminal justice agencies through Regional Councils of Government (COG's).

Homeland Security

September 11, 2001

Homeland attacked

November 25, 2002

Congress of the United States of America passed H. R. 5005, otherwise known as the **Homeland Security Act of 2002**, which established the Department of Homeland Security and was signed into law by President George W. Bush. As a result of the passage of the Homeland Security Act, all of the states are actively participating in the President's initiative in securing the United States and its borders against terrorism and all hazards, whether man-made, technological or natural.

October 01, 2003

President signed the FY2004 Homeland Security Appropriations Act and assigned the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Domestic Preparedness as administrator.

March 2004

Securing Texas required a coordinated effort among all agencies, jurisdictions, and the private sector. As a result, Texas begin collaborating closely with each of the 24 Regional Councils of Governments

(COGs) across the state and provided funding for the COGs to engage in regional and local planning efforts to implement the state's homeland security strategy and funding.

2003 – 2015

The State Administrative Agencies that have administered the Homeland Security program in Texas have been the Texas Engineering & Extension Services (TEEX), the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM).

May 2015 - Present

Governor Greg Abbot established the Homeland Security Grant Division (OOG-HSGD) as the State Administrative Agency under the Office of the Governor.

Regional Planning Department

Water Quality Program

1967-68

Annual Report & initial Overall Economic Development Plan (now Regional Strategic Plan) lists water supply & water quality as one of their goals and a priority for the Region.

1972

The Water Quality Program was authorized by Congress into 1972 law. The Valley is one of eight areas in Texas designated for area wide planning.

1975

LRGVDC was designated as the State Area-wide Wastewater Management Planning Agency.

Solid Waste Management

1967-68

Annual Report & Overall Economic Development Plan lists Solid Waste management as a priority for the Region.

1989

The Solid Waste Disposal Act was passed by the State Legislature to safeguard the health, welfare and physical property of the people and protect the environment by controlling the management of solid waste, including hazardous waste generated.

Community Development

1974

The CDBG Program began providing HUD grants on a formula basis to local governments and states.

1983

The Final Statement for the Texas Community Development Program created the Regional Review Committee which consisted of 12 Members appointed by the Governor to establish scoring procedures, review and score applications, and hear appeals.

2012

LRGVDC received over \$122 million dollars of funding to assist with Hurricane Dolly Housing Damages.

2017

LRGVDC is the first regional designee to fully complete a phase of Texas General Land Office Disaster Recovery Program and provide the State with a testimonial and guide for future best practices.

Regional Police Academy

1967 – 1968

As one of the original committees to be established by the LRGVDC, the Law Enforcement Academy Committee began planning and seeking to establish a permanent police training school in the valley.

1969

LRGVDC was awarded a Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Planning Grant through the Texas Criminal Justice Council for preparing the first phase of a Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Plan. This plan was completed and submitted in May 1969 and provided the framework for the establishment of a Regional Police Training Academy.

January 1970

The LRGVDC received a grant for the development of a Comprehensive Law Enforcement Plan.

February 1970

The First Police Academy Class was scheduled with the goal of providing every law enforcement officer within the three-county region the minimum training requirements for certification as a law enforcement officer. Instructors were utilized from Texas A&M University, the FBI, and Pan American College.

The two first academies administered by LRGVDC graduated in 1970 and certified 71 officers.

Due to the success of the 1970 programs, the academy became housed at Texas State Technical College in Harlingen in 1971.

1971 began the academies second year of operation. Between January 1, 1971 and March 25, 1971, the academy trained 121 police officers from the Valley area. Training provided included the Police Academy and in-service training.

2017

LRGVDC continues to administer Basic Peace Officer Course (B.P.O.C.) Academies throughout the entire Valley utilizing instructors from many area law enforcement organizations. BPOC #194 and #195 are slated to graduate in December 2017.

Valley Metro

1978

LRGVDC initiates “Rio Transit”, a public transportation service with 2 rural routes and 3 vehicles. The initial transportation service averaged 10,000 riders and 117,000 miles per year.

1991

Demand response service was initiated in Hidalgo County Rural area with 3 additional vehicles.

1993

The LRGVDC Transit building was constructed in Weslaco and was known as the Rio Transit Center. Consequently, rural service was extended to Brownsville and Progresso.

1995

LRGVDC introduced “Express Transit” through the cities of McAllen, Harlingen, and San Benito.

1999

Further demand response services associated “Rio Transit” as LRGVDC’s rural service and “Rio Metro” as LRGVDC’s urban transportation service.

2003

LRGVDC adds a rural route from Brownsville to Port Isabel, and the City of McAllen begins administering McAllen Express as a city municipal service.

2008

Harlingen Express is introduced with 2 new service routes.

Upon review of all existing routes in Rio Metro, times and routes are adjusted to better serve the Rio Grande Valley workforce. The following year, two additional routes were established in Cameron County servicing San Benito and western Cameron County.

2012

In an effort to consolidate the three existing LRGVDC systems (Rio Metro – Urban, Rio Transit – Rural, and Harlingen Express) and to align with partnering services, “Valley Metro” was created.

2015

Valley Metro expands service into Starr and Zapata Counties.

2017

Valley Metro currently operates 80 units, and experiences a consistent 3% annual ridership increase by providing nearly 500,000 passenger trips per year.

LRGVDC Leadership & Partnerships

LRGVDC's comprehensive history and successful tenure should be credited to strong leadership, partnership, and collaboration with stakeholders across the region.

Partnership Associations:

1969

LRGVDC becomes a formal member of The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) that provides advocacy, education, research, and training for the nation's network of 500+ regional development organizations. The association and its members promote regional strategies, partnerships, and solutions to strengthen the economic competitiveness and quality of life across America's local communities.

March 22, 1973

LRGVDC approves membership into Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC) which serves as the statewide association of regional councils. Since 1973, TARC has worked to strengthen the capabilities of our member councils while providing a forum for the exchange of ideas. TARC is governed by a policy board of local elected officials, including county judges, commissioners, mayors and city council members from the 24 regions.

Mr. Robert Chandler served as NADO President 1977-1978, Mr. Ken Jones served as NADO President 1995-1996, and Mr. Ron Garza was selected for NADO's inaugural "Emerging Leaders" leadership program elevating LRGVDC to a national platform of advocacy and resource development.

Executive Directors:

Robert A. Chandler

Mr. Robert Chandler was first hired as the director of Texas Southmost Economic Development District in July 1966 and became LRGVDC's 1st Executive Director. Mr. Chandler remained Executive Director for over 25 years, retiring on January 21, 1992.

Kenneth N. Jones, Jr.

Mr. Kenneth "Ken" Jones was appointed Executive Director, January 1992 after working as a regional and environmental resource planner, consultant, Criminal Justice Director and Assistant Executive Director. Mr. Jones held the position of Executive Director for nearly 25 years with a total tenure of over 39 years with LRGVDC.

A native of the Rio Grande Valley and graduate of Mercedes High School, Mr. Jones was honored for his near 40 years of service with the naming of the "Ken Jones Executive Board Room" at the LRGVDC main campus in Weslaco, Texas.

Ron Garza

Mr. Ron Garza was appointed Executive Director on August 2016; the third Executive Director in LRGVDC's 50-year history.

“Silver Star” Board Members:

June 26, 1986

Mercedes Mayor, Norma G. Garcia was welcomed as one of 7 new board members following the 1986 LRGVDC Annual Election Meeting. The Honorable Norma G. Garcia has served as a member of the LRGVDC Board of Directors continuously for over 31 years.

May 23, 1986

During the 1986 LRGVDC Annual Election Meeting, Mr. Arturo Ramirez was confirmed by the Grassroots Organizations Committee to serve on LRGVDC Board of Directors representing the “Grassroots” category designated to represent underprivileged citizens of the Region. Mr. Ramirez has served continuously for over 26 years.

LRGVDC Today

(2016-2017)

Today, the Rio Grande Valley is one of the fastest growing regions in the country with nearly 1.3 million residents.

Currently the LRGVDC operates and facilitates millions of federal, state, and local dollars, is staffed with approximately 160 full-time employees, and administers 8 departmental programs with multiple corresponding advisory committees.

The LRGVDC is currently comprised of a 26-member Board of Directors and 6 Executive Committee Officers; representing local elected officials from all three Counties.

As a primary responsibility, the LRGVDC administered and prepared the latest five-year comprehensive “Regional Strategic Plan” utilizing five domain areas: Economic Development, Public Safety, Human Services, Transportation, and Environmental Resources. The plan incorporated the use of social media to gather feedback and create enhanced stakeholder engagement.

Several recent marque projects include:

- 2017-2022 Lower Rio Grande Valley Regional Strategic Plan
- Opening of LRGVDC’s newest building; the Center for International Economic Development Opportunities. (CIEDO)
- Administering one of the most robust Public Transit Systems outside of a dedicated funded Regional Transit Authority
- Redesigned Area Agency on Aging service delivery structure Active and increased emphasis on Public Safety, Homeland Security, and NextGEN 9-1-1
- Enhanced Regional Police Academy utilizing Law Enforcement personnel instructors
- The 2017 “Road to Recycling” Regional Tire Collection Project