

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

12:00PM Wednesday March 25, 2026

HELD IN-PERSON AND BROADCAST VIA YOUTUBE VIDEO CONFERENCE.
INITIATED AND CHAIRED FROM LRGVDC MAIN CAMPUS
301 W. RAILROAD STREET, WESLACO, TEXAS BUILDING B,
KEN JONES EXECUTIVE BOARD ROOM

PRESIDING: Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza

Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m. Roll Call was taken, and as of 12:03 p.m. quorum was attained.

Present: Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza

Commissioner Ernie Garcia, Willacy County
Commissioner Nurieth Galonsky, City of Brownsville
Mayor Omar Ochoa, City of Edinburg
Mayor Pro Tem Pete Garcia, City of Weslaco
Commissioner, Joey Lopez, Cameron County
Mayor Sylvia Castillo, City of Sullivan City
Mayor Pro-Tem Ruben Saldana , City of Mercedes
Commissioner Pepe Cabeza de Vaca, City of McAllen
Commissioner Edward Gonzales, City of Raymondville
Mayor Rick Guerra, City of San Benito
Ms. Veronica Gonzales, UTRGV
Mr. Paul Hernandez, South Texas College
Mr. Luke Lucio, TSTC
Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake
Mr. Ernesto Cavazos, Willacy Co, Navigation District
Mr. Jim Darling, Member-at-Large
Mr. Oscar Garcia, Member-at-Large
Mr. Andres Chavez, Member-at-Large
Ms. Lupita Sanchez Martinez, Grassroots Org

Absent:

Mayor Norma Sepulveda, City of Harlingen
Commissioner Ellie Torres, Hidalgo County
Mayor Rosa Perez, City of La Villa
Mayor David Moreno, City of Donna
Mayor Alejandro Flores, City of Los Fresnos
Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez City of Pharr
Commissioner Marco Villegas, City of San Juan

Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Item#2

Item #2 Consideration and ACTION to approve meeting Minutes February 25, 2026. *Jim Daring made a motion to approve the February 25, 2026, meeting minutes. Commissioner Pepe Cabeza de Vaca seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.*

Item #3: Public Comment – No public Comment

Item #4: Administration

B. Executive Director Report – Mr. Cruz started off with stating that he did have one item and was time sensitive. I previously provided a letter of support, but I would like to offer additional context regarding this matter for the benefit of the audience and members present.

As you may already be aware, the EDA Regional Director this is a critical position within our region, Texas and four other states. Mr. Jorge Ayala, who many of you know, is scheduled to retire in April. Earlier this month, while attending the National Association of Development Organizations conference in Washington, D.C., he informed us of his upcoming retirement, which is effective in late April. During that time, he also shared limited updates regarding the current administration’s plans for his position. As of that date, there were no confirmed plans to hire a replacement or backfill the role.

Given the importance of this position, several Councils of Government—both from Texas and across the five regions within the Economic Development Districts—took a proactive approach by reaching out to their federal representatives to express concern. I also contacted some of our federal representative offices to ensure they are aware of the situation. As you know, we serve as the Economic Development District for this Council of Governments, and this role is vital not only for our region but for the entire state, as well as the other states. Funding is allocated across these regions, and we are responsible for providing technical assistance to our local governments. The ED regional office in Austin then reviews these applications, establishes priorities, and selects projects for funding.

At this time, there is uncertainty regarding the future structure of the region, potentially including the possibility of consolidation from the six EDA regions in the U.S. to three. Regardless of the outcome, it is essential that our region remains a high priority and that a regional director is retained. Given that our region represents one of the strongest economies in the nation, it is critical that we continue to have appropriate representation and support at the regional level.

To that end, I have presented a draft letter for your consideration today. One option would be for the Board President to sign the letter, with copies provided to all Board members, and submit it to our federal representatives. Another option would be for individual cities and counties to take similar action. However, a unified approach would send a much stronger message. As Board members, you play a key role in representing our region, and it is important that you are informed and engaged on this issue. I would like to open the floor for discussion on how we would like to proceed, but I strongly encourage that we take action to ensure the continued presence of a regional director within this Economic Development Administration Regional District to support sustained economic growth for our region and the state as a whole.

So, the Action item today is Consideration and ACTION to Advocacy effort Regarding Economic Development Administration (EDA) Austin Regional Director Vacancy with a Letter of Support. *Jim Darling made a motion to approve the Action to Advocacy effort regarding Economic Development Administration (EDA) Austin Regional Directors Vacancy with letter of support. Commissioner Pepe Cabeza de Vaca seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.*

Mr. Cruz also states that we did reach out to some of our federal representatives, as well as Senator Ted Cruz, Congresswoman Monica De la Cruz, and Congressman Vicent Gonzalez. Mr. Pep Cabeza de Vaca also stated that we can also reach out to Ana Flores and make sure they are aware of this as well. Mr. Cruz then mentions that again, the letter provided today has already been drafted, and the selected option can be addressed to each of the respective representatives. Ms. Gonzales with URTGV also states that the letter is appropriate, as it does not advocate for any specific outcome. For those of us familiar with Jorge Ayala, we recognize that he has been extremely helpful, particularly in securing and supporting numerous grants and related efforts. Mr. Ernesto Cavazos with Willacy County Navigation District asks, Where do we currently stand with Vicente and Ted Cruz, and how would you characterize our relationships within our district? Specifically, are these relationships favorable with all of our representatives? I understand there are six districts—where do we stand across them? Mayor Norie Gonzales then answers, I can only speak from my perspective, but I believe that, as a Council of Governments, we maintain strong relationships overall. From the City of Mission’s standpoint, we consistently engage with the Senators’ offices, and we have established solid communication and working relationships with those currently in place. While changes may occur, I can say that, at this time, our relationships are positive.

Commissioner Pepe Cabeza de Vaca states that from the perspective of the City of McAllen and the portion of Hidalgo County that I represent alongside Commissioner Fuentes, communication with our representatives’ offices is very strong. While Senators are not always present locally, our Representatives are accessible and highly responsive to the needs and concerns we raise. Overall, we have solid representation—Vicente, Monica De La Cruz, and Cornyn have all been very effective. Additionally, Congressman Cuellar now has a local point of contact here in Hidalgo County, which further helps address regional matters efficiently.

Ms. Veronica Gonzales mentions that on behalf of UTRGV, given our presence across the entire Valley—and extending as far as Laredo—we work closely with our federal representatives throughout the region. Over the years, we have built strong relationships with Congressman Henry Cuellar, Congresswoman De La Cruz, Congressman Gonzales, and Senator Cornyn’s office.

We maintain regular communication with key staff, including Ana Flores and Josh Rojas, in Senator Cruz’s office. In fact, Josh recently assisted in preserving funding that had been at risk for the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center. Overall, our relationships are strong, with consistent engagement and open lines of communication. Recently, during South Texas Days in Washington, D.C., many regional stakeholders met directly with federal representatives to advocate for our area and ensure that our needs are clearly communicated. Based on these efforts, I am confident that they are listening and responsive to our region.

Mr. Cruz then stated, I don’t want to prolong the discussion, but it’s important to keep in mind that the EDA program is one of the programs currently under consideration by the administration for potential elimination, despite being reauthorized in 2024 with increased funding. At this point, we do not know what actions will ultimately be taken. While it’s possible that a replacement may be considered, Mr. Ayala has indicated that there are no current plans in place. With his retirement approaching in April, time is of the essence. If we remain ideal, we risk missing out on significant opportunities and benefits for our region.

2. Introduction of New Staff. Mr. Cruz introduced all new staff which were all in packet provided to board. Mr. Cruz then stated as you may recall, approximately six months ago we approved a resolution to enter into an agreement with AARP. Due to the temporary pause in federal funding, AARP’s programs were impacted; however, they have recently resumed their initiative focused on bringing retirees back into the workforce.

As a result of our existing agreement, we are pleased to welcome our first participant—with the hope of many more to come. Ms. Ginger Acuna has joined our team in a clerical role within Administration. She is a retiree returning to the workforce through the AARP program. We anticipate additional opportunities to place participants across various departments in the near future.

3. Updates on regional News, Funding Opportunities, training and Legislation. At the same conference I attended in Washington, D.C. earlier this month, there was a strong push to establish RTPOs—Regional Transportation Planning Organizations. In fact, just yesterday, our Chair of the TARC Transportation Committee met with TxDOT to discuss this opportunity. It appears likely that funding will be made available to Council of Governments to begin implementing this initiative within the coming year.

As you know, we currently have the RGVMPPO, which serves our urbanized areas; however, there is no entity dedicated to planning for rural portions of our counties. The RTPO concept is intended to fill that gap by identifying priorities in rural areas and positioning them to compete for funding. While the funding associated with RTPOs is not on the same scale as MPO funding, it is focused on planning—helping rural communities identify and prioritize critical projects so they can pursue funding through sources such as FTA, TxDOT, or others. This concept is not entirely new to this Board. Prior to my tenure, I understand that in 2008 a resolution was passed in support of creating an RTPO. I want to bring this back to your attention so that you are aware and prepared as this initiative moves forward.

There is also strong national support for this effort. It is backed by the Local and Transportation Coalitions, which includes organizations such as the National Association of Development Organizations, the National Association of Regional Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the National Association of Counties, the National League of Cities, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. I also shared a flyer with you regarding the BASIC Act, which is tied to this initiative.

Lastly, as a small token of appreciation, the LRGVDC recently sponsored and hosted a luncheon for the City of Weslaco staff who assisted with our tree planting event. For those who were not here last month, you may have noticed that the LRGVDC campus is looking greener. The trees and native plants along the front and parking areas are establishing well—better than expected. This effort was made possible in large part thanks to Javier Dominguez, who led the grant through the H-E-B Trees for Texas program. With \$5,000 in funding, we were able to plant a variety of native trees and plants. We are hopeful that, over the next few years, these improvements will continue to enhance and make our campus a bit more green.

Item #5 Department Reports

Community & Economic Development – Ms. Melisa Gonzales Rosas started off with. First, back in September, if you all recall, we approved a tire ordinance for our region. However, since counties do not have the authority to pass ordinances, this would instead need to be in the form of a resolution. Therefore, the first action item is the following.

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve the Tire Resolution for counties to adopt. ***Jim Darling made a motion to approve the Tire Resolution for Counties to adopt. Ms. Veronica Gonzales seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

My 2nd action item relates to our solid waste project rankings. As you can see on the screen, four entities were selected to receive solid waste funding. The City of Mission was selected for source reduction and recycling, with the project expected to begin in May—tentatively May 1st. The City of Weslaco will follow. For the second cycle, which is scheduled to begin in September, the selected awardees are the City of Alton and the City of Mercedes. You can also review the scoring for each project displayed on the screen.

2. Consideration and ACTION to approve the Solid Waste Applications Ranking & Scoring for Funding year 2026-2027. ***Paul Hernandez made a motion to approve the Solid Waste Applications Ranking & Scoring for funding year 2026-2027. Commissioner Joey Lopez seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

My 3rd action item is to request approval of a new member for the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC). We currently have a vacancy, and Ms. Susan Torres, with Mother Earth Recycling, has submitted an application to fill that position. She is in the process of developing a recycling facility, although a final location has not yet been determined. She does operate a nonprofit organization, Mother Earth Recycling, and is working with several Economic Development Corporations in the region to identify a suitable site. In the meantime, she is interested in serving as a member of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee.

3. Consideration and ACTION to approve Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) member. **Commissioner Joey Lopez made a motion to approve Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) member. Ruben Saldana seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**

My 4th action item is to request approval of two stakeholders and one member for STC4. Informally, we referred to this as the “meeting of the Juans,” given the names involved. The two stakeholders recommended for approval are Juan Mendive from the Laredo MPO and Mr. Juan Rodriguez, Executive Director of the South Texas Development Council. Additionally, Mr. Juan Galvan from Valiant Energy is recommended for approval as our first member.

4. Consideration and ACTION to approve the following South Texas Clean Cities & Communities Coalition (STC4) Advisory Committee Stakeholders and Membership. **Commissioner Joey Lopez made a motion to approve South Texas Clean Cities & Communities Coalition (STC4) Advisory Committee Stakeholders and Membership. Commissioner Edward Gonzales seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**

The final action item is to consider approval of a resolution proclaiming April as National Fair Housing Month.

5. Consideration and ACTION to approve Resolution 2026-07 Proclaiming April as National fair Housing Month. **Troy Allen made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-07 Proclaiming April as National Fair Housing Month. Mayor Pro-Tem Pete Garcia seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.**

Program Status Reports - We will be hosting a Texas Water Development Board application workshop, which will be held virtually. Queta Caballero with the Texas Water Development Board will walk participants through the application step by step, as many applicants tend to miss small details that can prevent their applications from advancing. The workshop is scheduled for April 7th at 10:00 a.m., and the virtual link is available on our website. If you're interested, please share this information with your planners, grant writers, or anyone involved in preparing TWDB applications.

Additionally, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) currently has two open Requests for Proposals for grant funding. One is for Supplemental Disaster Funding, and the other is for Public Works infrastructure. If you are working on a project related to these opportunities and would like a letter of support, please reach out to us. We are happy to assist, as a letter of support can help strengthen your application.

Lastly, I would like to recognize the City of Palmview. They were the first city in our region to adopt the regional tire ordinance that this Board approved on September 25th. Palmview placed the item on their November 3rd agenda, and it was approved that same day. I will be visiting Palmview on April 7th to present a small token of appreciation in recognition of this achievement. The City of Mission followed shortly after as the second city to adopt the ordinance. Currently, we have two cities in Hidalgo County that have taken this step—Palmview being the first, and Mission the second. I want to thank both cities for their leadership and encourage others to follow suit.

Health and Human Services – Ms. Margarita Lopez started off with today, I will be covering one action item, one survey, and two brief announcements. I'll begin with the action item. Consideration and possible action to approve vendor requests to amend contract rates for Texas Visiting Nurse Service, LTD and Healthcare Unlimited, Inc.

Texas Visiting Nurse Service, LTD, is requesting an increase in rates for both respite and homemaker services from \$14.00 per hour to \$15.25 per hour. Healthcare Unlimited Inc. is requesting an increase in rates for both respite and homemaker services from \$15.00 per hour to \$17.64 per hour.

Discussion - Commissioner Joey Lopez asked Ms. Lopez when the last increase was, Ms. Lopez then answered with it happening once a year. Ms. Lopez then explained the process is outlined in their application, which includes a clause stating that vendors may request an increase, amendment, or change only once per year. Per the established timeline, requests are submitted in February, presented in March, and, if approved, take effect in April. These vendors did not request an increase last year. When they submitted their applications in July 2025, they were awarded contracts at their current rates. As such, they are eligible to request an increase once annually following their initial application. Commissioner Joey Lopez then stated, It appears that the increases differ significantly, one is \$2.64 and the other is \$1.25, meaning one request reflects a substantially higher adjustment than the other. Did we receive any explanation or justification for the difference in the requested increases?

Ms. Lopez then responds, yes, we did receive justification in their letters. One vendor, Texas Visiting Nurse Services, explained that they receive additional funding through HHS for these provider services. They noted that in 2025 there were increased requests due to mandated wage increases for employees. In their case, they are currently paying below the required average wage—about \$12 per hour versus the mandated \$13 per hour. The requested increase is intended to bring them into compliance with HHS requirements and also allow for basic administrative costs.

The other vendor provided a similar rationale related to wage requirements and operating costs. There is also a broader market strategy difference between providers. Some maintain lower hourly rates in order to be selected more frequently by participants, since clients are given a list of providers and available hours but not the providers' rates. This allows lower-cost providers to be chosen more often, giving them greater exposure and the opportunity to build long-term client relationships. Since our program is temporarily bridging clients while they await long-term Medicare or Medicaid services—providers sometimes use this as a way to establish a pipeline of future permanent clients. Other providers take a different approach and prioritize higher reimbursement rates upfront rather than focusing on volume or long-term client development.

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve vendor request to amend contract rates from Texas Visiting Nurse Service, LTD & Health Care Unlimited, Inc. ***Commissioner Joey Lopez made a motion to approve vendor request to amend contract rates from Texas Visiting Nurse Service, LTD & Health Care Unlimited, Inc. Mayor Pro-Tem Pete Garcia seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

Program Status Reports – Ms. Margarita started by as part of the packet, we have included a survey that was distributed both in hard copy and via QR code. If you have not yet had the opportunity to complete it, I would ask for just a couple of minutes of your time to do so. This survey will provide important input for our Area Plan. We are currently in the process of developing it, which includes roundtable discussions, county visits, and listening sessions throughout the region. Your feedback is very important and will be incorporated into the draft Area Plan, which you will receive at your next meeting in April. The survey has been condensed to less than a full page to make it quick and easy to complete. The last announcement is that our LIIFE Conference is scheduled for this Friday. As always, we are fully registered and expect to be at capacity.

C.1.A. Emergency Services, Criminal Justice & Homeland Security

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and County of Hidalgo to finalize the transfer of grant-funded Emergency Communications (HAM Radio) equipment for the Emergency Communications Headquarters Project. ***Jim Darling made a motion to approve the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and County of Hidalgo to finalize the transfer of grant-funded Emergency Communications (HAM Radio) equipment for the Emergency Communications Headquarters project. Pepe Cabeza de Vaca seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

Program Status Reports – Mr. Merla started off with, Our Homeland Security Division is hosting an All-Hazards Preparedness Workshop for senior officials on April 9th. This one-day workshop will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., offers TCOLE credit through TEEEX, and still has several available slots.

Additionally, our Criminal Justice Division is partnering with Behavioral Health Solutions South Texas to offer a two-day Naloxone (Narcan) training course on Wednesday, April 22nd, and Thursday, April 23rd, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The point of contact for this training is Ms. Perez with Behavioral Health Solutions.

C.1.B. Rio Grande Valley Emergency Communication District – On the 9-1-1 side, we have some exciting news. As of late February, our Mobile Multi-Agency Communication Center is officially up and running. The images before you reflect the unit that has already been deployed by Mr. Cruz on multiple occasions. Most recently, yesterday morning at approximately 5:30 a.m., the unit was transported and escorted to the All-Hazards Conference, where it is currently operating as a live demonstration. A ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for today at 3:15 p.m. at the conference.

There are many more impressive developments to come, but we are proud to share that the unit is now fully operational and already making an impact.

C.2 LRGV Police Academy Program – No Action Items at this time

Program Status Reports - Mr. Javier Solis started off with Our 231st Weslaco Academy is currently in its final week of training. Last week, cadets participated in a live active shooter exercise. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my co-directors and colleagues for your continued support, particularly for providing staff to assist in these scenarios. Your involvement contributed greatly to the success of the exercise, and the cadets gained valuable insight and practical experience. The cadets are scheduled to take their TCOLE examination on April 7th, with graduation set for April 13th, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Knapp Medical Center Conference Center.

Our City of Mission Academy, Class 232, has successfully completed training on the Texas Traffic Code and is currently undergoing Standardized Field Sobriety Testing instruction to better identify impaired drivers. We will be conducting a wet lab as part of this training and are seeking volunteers. If anyone is interested, please feel free to contact us—we would be happy to accommodate you.

Looking ahead, our LRGV Academy Class 233 is scheduled to begin next Thursday, April 2nd, with orientation. The original start date was adjusted due to Good Friday. We have completed background checks on over 40 applicants and are pleased to report that we will begin the academy with 30 cadets. This will be a part-time, 10-month program held here at the COG, with evening sessions at the Ken Jones facility from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Additionally, we are preparing to launch our 234th Police Academy in Rio Grande City. The background process for that class will begin in April. By early May, we anticipate running three concurrent academies across the Rio Grande Valley. I am also preparing an action item for the next board meeting regarding the development of an interlocal agreement with law enforcement agencies in Cameron County. We have identified a need for expanded in-service training in that area and are actively working with our partners to address it. We hope to present this item for your consideration at the next meeting.

For this month's report, we conducted three in-service courses, training a total of 26 officers. We delivered 48 hours of instruction, resulting in 376 contact hours. For the first quarter, we trained 332 officers, provided 418 instructional hours, and accumulated a total of 5,094 contact hours. As you can see, we remain very active and engaged at the Academy.

Mr. Cruz also shared the following announcement, before transitioning to Transportation, I would like to provide an update under Public Safety within Homeland Security. As previously mentioned, the FY 2026 State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP) applications have been submitted, and we are currently awaiting their release from the State.

Due to the strict submission deadlines established by the State, we will not be able to align the review and approval process with our regular board meeting schedule. As a result, we will need to convene the Executive Committee—Mayor and the four committee members—to review and approve the applications, which will then be ratified at the subsequent regular board meeting.

We anticipate receiving the regional batch of applications from the State around April 1st or 2nd. From that point, we will have a two-week window to complete the review, approval, and submission process. This is being shared as an FYI for the Executive Committee and for general awareness among all board members.

No further questions or comments Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Next item on Agenda.

Valley Metro Transportation

Program Status Reports - Ms. Sandra Carrizales started with, I don't have anything quite as exciting as 9-1-1 to report, but we see an 18% increase in ridership. So, if anyone decides to take Mr. Solis's advice and head out, we can certainly provide a ride home—as long as you are in suitable condition.

I do not have any action items this month, but I do have a few updates. Our team continues to meet with RTAP every other month to coordinate regionally and to support the development of our five-year Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan.

Two key tasks have been completed. The first is the stakeholder engagement plan, which outlines how KFH (Knapp, Fravel & Hosen) will conduct outreach through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The second is the communication plan, which details how updates will be shared through regular check-ins, progress reviews using our project tracking system, and ongoing updates to the RTAP group.

Lastly, our planning team has been very active with community outreach this past month. They have participated in several events across the Valley, including PSJA activities, the Laguna Madre Vet Fest, and the STC Disaster Ready Expo. While we do not have any action items this month, we anticipate returning next month with a full slate of items.

No further questions or comments Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza moved on to Next item on Agenda.

Rio Grande Valley MPO

Claudia Salinas, Project Manager for the Rio Grande Valley MPO, introduced two interlocal agreements with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute for board consideration, accompanied by Transportation Manager Rudy Zamora. Both items are part of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), a federally required plan that outlines key transportation planning activities across five major task areas.

The UPWP was approved by the Policy Board on July 21, 2025, and received federal approval on September 17, 2025. The first action item, Subtask 5.1, is an International Border Crossing System-Wide Analysis in the amount of \$559,281. This study will examine passenger and freight movement across all international crossings, evaluate system performance, test various scenarios, and assess regional economic impacts.

1. Consideration and ACTION to approve an Interlocal agreement with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute in the amount of \$559,281.00 to perform special study identified in the FY 2026-2027 Unified planning work Program as Subtask 5.1: International Border Crossing System-Wide Analysis. The second action item, Subtask 5.4, is a Regional Transit Authority Feasibility Study in the amount of \$328,327. This study will assess the feasibility of establishing a regional transit authority, including evaluating transit mode options and opportunities for regional integration. ***Paul Hernandez made a motion to approve an Interlocal agreement with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute in the amount of \$559,281.00 to perform special study identified in the FY 2026-2027 Unified planning work Program as Subtask 5.1: International Border Crossing System-Wide Analysis. The second action item, Subtask 5.4, is a Regional Transit Authority Feasibility Study in the amount of \$328,327. This study will assess the feasibility of establishing a regional transit authority, including evaluating transit mode options and opportunities for regional integration. Jim Darling seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

Mr. Cruz then stated that, before the board takes action, he would like to provide some clarification for transparency purposes. He explained that while these items fall under the MPO, which has its own governing board, they are being presented here because, historically, the MPO has not undertaken projects of this scale. As the COG serves as the fiscal agent for the MPO and is responsible for vendor payments, these items are brought before this board for review and approval. He further recommended that any formal action taken today be contingent upon review and approval by the RGV MPO Policy Board. While the UPWP has already been approved with the associated funding amounts, the specific vendor—in this case, TTI—was not included in that approval process. To avoid delays, the items are being presented now, with the understanding that final approval will follow MPO Policy Board consideration. Mr. Cruz noted that the RGV MPO Policy Board is scheduled to meet on April 15, 2026, at the Ken Jones Conference Room. Jim darling then asked what was it that they were approving, Mr. Cruz then stated that they will be approving the Interlocal Agreement between RGV MPO & LRGVDC and TTI the Fiscal agent.

This item stems from a finding during the 2022–2023 FTA audit, where it was noted that this board had not formally approved MPO projects. As the fiscal agent for the MPO, it is important that we acknowledge and approve these projects accordingly. This does not change the existing approval process, as the projects are still reviewed through the MPO’s Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Policy Board. Rather, this step is intended to ensure transparency and to obtain this board’s concurrence to move forward. Additionally, only the LRGVDC has the authority to sign off on interlocal agreements as per the Texas Interlocal Cooperation Act, Texas Government Code Chapter 791.

2. Consideration and ACTION to approve Interlocal agreement with Texas A&M Transportation Institute in the amount \$328,327.00 to perform a special study identified in the FY 2026-2027 Unified Planning work Program as Subtask 5.4: Regional transit Authority Feasibility study. ***Paul Hernandez made a motion to approve Interlocal agreement with Texas A&M Transportation Institute in the amount \$328,327.00 to perform a special study identified in the FY 2026-2027 Unified Planning work Program as Subtask 5.4: Regional transit Authority Feasibility study. Jim Darling seconded the motion; upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

Rudy Zamora, Transportation Manager with the RGV MPO. I'd like to provide some clarification following Mr. Cruz's comments.

The Transportation Policy Board has already approved the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which is a federally required document that includes planning studies such as these. With that approval in place, we are now seeking approval from the LRGVDC specifically for the interlocal agreement, which is the contract component. As Mr. Cruz mentioned, this board's role is to approve the agreement itself. If, for any reason, the board chooses not to approve the interlocal agreement, we would report that outcome back to the Policy Board. At that point, it would be up to the Policy Board to determine how to proceed.

That said, the Policy Board has already approved the funding through the UPWP. While a denial at this level could present some challenges in executing the contract or agreement, this situation has not occurred before. If it does, we will address it accordingly.

Mr. Cruz further noted that, given the nature of TTI as a governmental entity, it is entirely permissible to enter into this type of interlocal agreement. He added that the same process would apply to institutions such as UTRGV or STC.

Mr. Rudy Zamora added that, for clarification, once the interlocal agreement is executed, it must be returned to the Policy Board for final approval, including confirmation of the specific funding amounts.

Felipe Lopez from Procurement also clarified that, under the Interlocal Cooperation Act, agreements of this nature must be executed through the COG or another local governmental entity, which is why this board's approval is required. Mr. Zamora concluded by noting that, much like any agreement requiring leadership authorization, board approval is necessary to proceed—reinforcing the role and purpose of this board in the process.

Item #6 New & Unfinished Business – None at this time

Item #7 Adjourn - Meeting was adjourned at 12:58 pm


President Norie Gonzalez Garza

ATTEST:


Liza Alfaro, Recording Secretary