

**CORPUS CHRISTI METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)  
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) MEETING NOTES  
Thursday, April 18, 2019**

**1. Call to Order and Quorum determination**

Mr. Brian DeLatte called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**2. Roll Call by MPO Transportation Planning Director**

Present: Brian DeLatte, P.E., City of Portland, Sarah Munoz, P.E., City of Corpus Christi, Jeff Pollack, AICP, Port of Corpus Christi; Howard Gillespie, San Patricio County (left 10:02 a.m.); Gordon Robinson, PMP, Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority (RTA); Paula Sales-Evans, P.E., Texas Department of Transportation Corpus Christi District (TxDOT-CRP)

Staff Present: Robert MacDonald, Daniel Carrizales, Victor Mendieta, and Yoshiko Boulan

**3. Introduction of the new MPO Director**

Mr. DeLatte introduced Mr. Robert MacDonald, new MPO Transportation Planning Director.

Mr. MacDonald graduated from Northeastern University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering and the University of Colorado with a Master of Public Administration Degree. Mr. MacDonald has an extensive knowledge and experience in both public and private sectors as a registered Professional Engineer (P.E.) and his past work experiences including the Executive Director position in Central Arizona Governments Pinal Regional Transportation Authority, Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority, City of Colorado Springs Public Works Department and various consulting firms.

Mr. MacDonald introduced himself as one who has a diverse background; a professional Engineer, a planner, and a funding administrator - a person who knows how to plan the projects and how to deliver the projects with both technical knowledge and interpersonal skills. He worked on quite a few multimillion-dollar projects as well as small scale projects such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities and he is looking forward to working on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for this region in collaboration with local entities.

**4. Introduction of visiting agency officials**

Mr. DeLatte welcomed all in attendance.

**5. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

Mr. DeLatte asked for public comments on agenda items; no public comments were offered.

**6. Presentation**

**A. Ms. Gretchen Arnolds, Corpus Christi Air Quality Group Chair, presented updates to the regional air quality attainment status, and decreased funding condition for air quality programs.**

Ms. Gretchen presented the historical background of the Corpus Christi Air Quality Group (CCAQ), the purpose and mission of CCAQ, and current issues CCAQ is facing. The CCAQ was established in 1995 as a voluntary group to monitor and maintain air quality reporting in the area. The main participants are the City of Corpus Christi, Nueces and San Patricio Counties, San Patricio County Economic Development Corporation (SPCEDC), United Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce, Port Industries, Port of Corpus Christi Authority (POCCA), TxDOT-CRP, RTA, Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC) and Kingsville (TAMUK), and the MPO.

Ozone is the only ambient air pollutant at risk for violation of National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in the Corpus Christi region. This region has been successfully maintaining required ozone levels (lower than 70 ppb) via local efforts. The current regulatory average for ozone is 61 parts per billion (ppb).

Maintaining the attained air quality status has profound impacts on transportation planning such as being exempted from the additional Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) reporting and analysis requirements and the State Implementation Plan (SIP) development process.

CCAQ is implementing two major programs, one is the Continuous Air Quality Monitors (CAMs) installed and monitored by TAMUK, and the other is the Pollution Prevention Partnership (PPP) to test and repair the emissions called AutoCheck. These programs were funded through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) but the funding was cut in 2017. Port Industries and POCCA provided temporary funds to maintain the CAMs and PPP respectively, however; the CAMs by TAMUK are not currently operating due to the loss of staff. CCAQ is working with the local elected officials and entities to reinstate the TCEQ funding to operate these two programs. The CCAQ believes it is critical to monitor air quality in this region. The region is experiencing major industrial developments, especially in the City of Portland, San Patricio County, and the City of Gregory. Additionally, there are also an increase in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) due to more cars on the road. Ms. Arnold mentioned that to keep the attainment status, there should be other programs to reduce emissions, such as ride-share and alternative transportation. The MPO helps to incorporate these programs into the planning process and acts as a strong stakeholder.

Mr. MacDonald asked Ms. Arnold if the background emissions are determined and addressed. For example, in Colorado, about half the ozone emissions come from outside the state and region. With this large percentage of background ozone, the local transportation system and point-source emissions are being targeted to reduce their emissions to account for some of the background ozone emissions. Ms. Arnold stated the TCEQ monitors have been running since late 90s and possibly not capturing all the necessary data, that is why CCAQ installed three additional monitors with support from TAMUK. This is another reason this monitor program should be funded.

Mr. Pollack suggested to coordinate with SPCEDC and Port Industries to evaluate those areas and possibly incorporate emission reduction practices into freight mobility such as using compressed natural gas (CNG) fuel to reduce emissions.

## **7. Discussion and Possible Action**

### **A. Prioritizing Category 2 (Metro and Urban Area Corridor) Projects.**

This item was discussed in the March 21, 2019 TAC meeting and the decision was to continue the discussion in the April meeting. The Texas Transportation Commission (the Commission) requested TxDOT-CRP and the MPO to submit the reprioritized Category 2 (Metro and Urban Area Corridor) project list to the TxDOT Transportation Planning & Programming Division (TPP) by May 1, 2019 for the 2020 Unified Transportation Program (UTP), TxDOT's 10-year plan. TxDOT-CRP provided a spreadsheet with a total value and average ranking to each project. The MPO prepared another spreadsheet for discussion with the project information and four frames of reference based on TxDOT's Decision Lens, Let Date, 2017 approved methodology, and 2017 methodology with updated data and performance measure requirements ranking. The Let Date is considered an important indicator given the projects are scheduled to begin (contract let date) and be funded for upcoming fiscal years. These relative comparative measurements of priority are provided as a tool to see how each methodology ranks projects. These are offered as a consideration for the TAC members to rank these projects. Mr. MacDonald stated that this project prioritization exercise is for this particular project ranking only and not applicable to future MTP project selection processes.

Ms. Sales-Evans, TxDOT-CRP, explained the purpose of this request; these eight projects are approved in 2019 UTP and candidate projects for 2020 UTP. These projects need to be prioritized with its needs and values based on the new performance measures and ranked from 1 to 8. TxDOT is making an effort to validate the projects priority with the TxDOT Decision Lens methodology. The Commission wants to ensure the MPO's involvement in the project selection process for Category 2 projects. Ms. Sales-Evans said the prioritization of projects may assist in the consideration of the projects for the Commission's discretionary funding (Category 12 – Strategic Priority) or other possible funding. Ms. Sales-Evans reminded the group that it is important to consider the nature of Category 2 funding, what should be addressed by projects using Category 2 funding, and how projects should be selected for Category 2 based on these factors. Ms. Sales-Evans also mentioned that some criteria are suitable for project prioritization for Transportation Alternative Set Aside (TASA) projects and Category 7 (Metropolitan Mobility and Rehabilitation) projects, but not necessarily for the State Highway System, thus the methodology needs to be flexible to select and

prioritize projects for different funding mechanisms. Ms. Sales-Evans also stated that these Category 2 projects are all important to the region and this ranking result should not affect these projects' status in 2019 UTP and 2020 UTP.

Mr. Pollack pointed out that both Decision Lens, 2017 approved methodology, and updated 2017 methodology all shows consistent lower ranking on PR 22, SH 361, and FM 893 projects. It validates these methodologies. Thus, he suggested that the focus for today's effort should be on the top five projects. He stated that if the Decision Lens ranking reflects State priorities on Category 2 projects compared to the local methodology, then using the Decision Lens puts the projects in a more competitive position in the UTP.

Ms. Sales-Evans stated that the regional priority is not fully reflected in the Decision Lens with other subjective factors associated to each project. Ms. Sales-Evans provided the background, the scope, and status of each project that affect the project priority in addition to the four methodologies/indicators. The specific for each project are summarized below:

IH-37 project (I-69/IH-37 and IH-37/US77 interchanges) addresses safety, congestion by adding some capacity, and raising elevation for hurricane evacuation with additional Category 4 (Statewide Connectivity Corridor Projects), the Commissions' discretionary funding, and rural connectivity funding.

SH 286 extension project from FM 43 (Weber Rd.) and FM 2444 (S. Staples St.) addresses the congestion on SH 358 (S.P.I.D.) by providing alternate route and accommodating rapid growth in the City's Southside. FM 43 4-lane upgrade is completed, and the Staples Street five-lane upgrade will be completed soon. This project requires ROW acquisition. TxDOT held the public hearing recently, and the funding for initial phase is available.

The two US 181 projects (FM 3239/Wildcat Dr.) widen freeway and ramp reversal are considered as one project due to the probability that one contract will be executed. It is necessary to mitigate the congestion caused by the rapid growth in the City of Portland and Gregory. Currently the project is under design to meet the local needs and safety requirements.

The SH 358 (Nile Dr./Staples St.) Ramp Reversal is part of the ongoing SH 358 safety improvement. With the relation to the current Ramp Reversal projects and its status, this project is programmed in 2021.

The FM 893 project might be a better fit for Category 7 funding due to the more local emphasis; however, the need for safety improvements due to the nearby elementary school, the fact that it is on the State Highway System, and Category 7 funds are tied with the Harbor Bridge project, this projects is a candidate for Category 2 funds.

The PR 22 project needs to refine its project scope and requires an extensive coordination between the City of Corpus Christi and TxDOT-CRP as well as local communities. The main purpose of this project is for operational improvement without adding capacity based on the access management study done a few years ago, but until the scope is detailed, it is difficult to score and rank effectively as a priority. With less details available, this project is programmed in 2025 to allow time for the details to be determined.

The SH 361 (at the SH 35 intersection) project is located at SH 361, SH 35, Spur 202, and railroad that all come together. TxDOT-CRP is currently working with a consultant to perform a feasibility study and analyze the scope for this project. This project needs refinement and data, so it is programmed in 2026.

With the consideration of other factors such as ROW acquisition, utility relocation, funding, final scoping, and coordination, the suggested ranking for these projects is:

1. I-37: Redbird Lane Overpass to Nueces River – Widen freeway by constructing additional 2 travel lanes Northbound and 1 additional travel lane Southbound.
2. SH 286: FM 43 to South of FM 2444 – Construct phase-1 freeway extension by upgrading existing 2-lane roadway to 4-lane divided highway.
3. US 181: FM 3239 (Buddy Ganem Drive) to FM 2986 (Wildcat Drive) - Reverse entrance and exit ramps in northbound direction and widen freeway by constructing 1 additional travel lane in each direction.

4. SH 358: Nile Drive to Staples Street – Ramp reversal phase II-B.5. FM 893: CR 3685 (Stark Road) to 0.2 mile west of CR 79 (Gum Hollow) - Upgrade to 5-lane urban roadway by constructing additional 2 lanes and center turn lane.
6. SH 361: At SH 35 Interchange to 0.6 miles southeast on SH 361 - Upgrade and add direct connectors.
7. PR 22: Aquarius Street to Whitecap Boulevard – Corridor Upgrade for pedestrian and access management improvements without adding capacity.

Ms. Munoz asked, that if the scope and objectives were clarified and analyzed, could the PR 22 project be advanced from its currently anticipated let date. Ms. Sales-Evans answered that if the project is in the 2020 UTP and all information becomes available, the project could be accelerated. Mr. MacDonald emphasized that this ranking is for this particular request from the Commission, and when the MPO goes through the project selection for the 2020 – 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), there will be an extensive discussion regarding the methodology and prioritization.

Mr. Pollack made a motion to adopt the ranking that is based on the systematic scoring process and local input for other qualitative factors. Ms. Sales-Evans seconded; motion passed unanimously.

The MPO staff will prepare the letter for the TAC Chair's review and submit the letter regarding the prioritized Category 2 projects to TxDOT-CRP.

## **8. Freight Topics**

### **A. TxDOT awarded \$6.8M Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technology (ATCMTD) grant for the I-10 Corridor Coalition Truck Parking Availability System.**

Mr. MacDonald informed the TAC members that a \$6.8M ATCMTD grant has been awarded to the coalition of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas Department of Transportation for the truck parking availability system.

## **9. Member Agency Project Update (Project Tracker)**

Mr. Mendieta provided the most current project list to TAC members and requested updates if the project status has changed.

## **10. Staff Briefing**

### **A. Association of Metropolitan Planning Organization (AMPO)'s National Framework for Regional Vehicle Connectivity and Automation Planning webinar: April 25, 2019 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.**

Mr. MacDonald informed the TAC members the AMPO's subject webinar on April 25, 2019. The MPO will provide more information if the TAC members are interested.

### **B. Transportation Policy Committee Meeting: June 6, 2019**

The TPC meeting is scheduled for May 2, 2019 has been cancelled. The next TPC meeting is scheduled for June 6, 2019.

### **C. Technical Advisory Committee Meeting: May 16, 2019**

The next TAC meeting is scheduled for May 16, 2019.

## **11. TAC Committee Member's Comments and Concern**

Mr. Robinson informed that TAC members that the RTA has been successfully providing the van pool (share-ride) program since April 2018 and will continue to serve this region as a congestion mitigation and emission reduction effort.

## **12. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.