

## **MINUTES**

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

12:00PM WEDNESDAY, January 29, 2025

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

**PRESIDING:** Mayor Norma Sepulveda

Mayor Norma Sepulveda called the meeting to order at 12:09 p.m. Roll Call was taken, and as of 12:11 pm quorum was attained.

**Present:** Mayor Norma Sepulveda

Councilwoman Marissa Gerlach, City of Mission  
Judge Aurelio Guerra, Willacy County  
Commissioner Rose Gowen, City of Brownsville  
Commissioner David Garza, Cameron County  
Commissioner David Fuentes, Hidalgo County  
Mayor Alma Salinas, Sullivan City  
Mayor George Guadiana, City San Perlita  
Mayor Pro-Tem Gabriela Fernandez, City of Los Fresnos  
Commissioner Omar Quintanilla, City of McAllen  
Commissioner Edward Gonzales, City of Raymondville  
Mayor Rick Guerra, City of San Benito  
Veronica Gonzalez, UTRGV Edinburg  
Mr. Paul Hernandez, South Texas College  
Luke Lucio, TSTC  
Mr. Troy Allen, Delta Lake  
Mr. Jim Darling, Member at Large  
Mr. Tony Chavez, Member at Large  
Ms. Lupita Sanchez Martinez, Grassroots

**Absent :**

Mayor Ramiro Garza, City of Edinburg  
Mayor Adrian Gonzalez City of Weslaco  
Mayor JR Garza, City of Alamo  
Mayor David Moreno, City of Donna  
Mayor Ambrosio Hernandez City of Pharr  
Commissioner Marco Villegas, City of San Juan  
Ronald Mills, Willacy County Nav Dist.  
Ms. Ann Williamis Cass, Member at Large

Without any questions from the board, Mayor Norma Sepulveda moved on to Item #2

Item #2: 1. Consideration and ACTION to approve Meeting Minutes for May 29 ,2024. ***Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve Meeting Minutes for May 29, 2024. Jim Darling seconded the motion and upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

2. Consideration and ACTION to approve Board of Directors Meeting Minutes for December 11, 2024. ***Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve meeting minutes for December 11, 2024. Jim Darling seconded the motion upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

Item #3: Public Comment- No Public Comment

With no further comments and questions, Mayor Sepulveda moved on to Item #4.

Item #4: Administration – Mr. Cruz started off with, before we move on to the action items, I'd like to take a moment to briefly recap the recent State of the COG, which we discussed earlier this month.

During the State of the COG meeting on the 9th of this month, we solicited nominations for regional champions from the various regions. Mr. Javier Dominguez distributed the information to all participants, including cities and counties, resulting in a diverse pool of nominees. Based on population proportions, we selected three awards for Hidalgo County, two for Cameron County, and one for Willacy County.

At the meeting, we presented five of the six awards to individuals who exemplify regionalism. The goal was to recognize and express sincere gratitude for the ongoing efforts of those we work with daily. Unfortunately, one recipient was unable to attend, but we are taking this opportunity to present the award. Judge Guerra from Willacy County will be presenting the regional award to the individual selected by Willacy County.

Mr. Cruz started off with, as mentioned earlier, the Annual Report and Budget Committee meeting on January 9th, 2025. This meeting was held in a hybrid format and marked our very first-ever State of the COG event, hosted at this facility. Due to limited space, we were able to accommodate about 70 attendees, and the room was filled. I noted during the meeting that this was a record attendance for the Annual Report and Budget Committee, as we typically have around five attendees, so this was a significant increase.

The meeting included participants from various jurisdictions, and during the session, a recommendation was made. This action item is now being presented to the general membership for consideration and approval.

The recommended action is to approve the FY 2025 Annual Report and Budget. The annual report provides the general membership, the Board of Directors, and the public with a comprehensive outline of the LRGVDC's composition, organizational structure, and programmatic responsibilities. It also highlights LRGVDC's performance goals for 2025, the budget for the current year, and productivity outcomes for the previous year, 2024. The final recommendations are being presented today, January 29th, 2025, during this general membership and corporation meeting. The 2025 annual budget totals \$42,547,325, reflecting an increase of just over \$2.3 million compared to the 2024 budget. This increase is due to additional funding awards from sources such as the RGV-911 District, the Federal Transit Administration, TxDOT, and Health and Human Services. Notably, the 2025 budget does not include an increase in membership dues.

The 2025 fringe benefit rate is set at 50.09%, representing a decrease of 0.48% from the 2024 rate of 50.57%. The total budget expenditures for 2025 allocate 11.59% to indirect costs, based on the state's revised guidance and calculation method. This marks a decrease of 1.78% from the 2024 indirect rate of 13.37%.

According to the Texas Local Government Code, Section 391.0115(e), a Regional Planning Commission (RPC) cannot allocate more than 15% of its total expenditure, excluding capital expenditures and any subcontracts or subgrants.

The 2025 salary recommendation includes a 3% performance-based salary increase for employees who have successfully met all standards in their annual evaluations.

This report is presented as a recommendation by the committee that met on January 9th.

4A. Consideration and General membership ACTION to approve FY 2025 Annual Report and Budget. ***Jim Darling made a motion to approve FY 2025 Annual Report and Budget. Mr. Troy Allen seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

4B. Consideration and ACTION to adopt Annual Investment Report and Accept Quarterly Investment. ***Jim Darling made a motion to approve Adopt Annual Investment Report and Accept Quarterly Investment. Commissioner Edward Gonzales seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

The 2025 meeting schedule is provided for your reference, so that you are aware of the upcoming dates and plan accordingly. Please note there are a few exceptions: there will be no meetings in July or November. Additionally, and as a quick reminder, the annual elections will take place in early May, with the election presentation scheduled for May 28th before this board. This meeting schedule is presented for your approval.

4C. Consideration and ACTION to approve the 2025 Board of Directors Meeting Schedule. ***Commissioner David Garza made a motion to approve the Board of Directors Meeting Schedule. Paul Hernandez seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

4D. Discussion and Presentation of the LRGVDC 2025-2030 Strategic Plan with Request for feedback from Board of Directors. Javier Dominguez started off as mentioned earlier, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council serves as a fiscal agent, overseeing HR and finances for many of these programs. While we don't typically delve into the specifics of each department, we rely on their expertise to help guide us. We take this opportunity to look ahead at their goals for the next five years and work collaboratively to share a platform that demonstrates our commitment to advancing and improving the lives of residents in the three-county region.

I want to emphasize that the role of the LRGVDC is not project-specific, but rather focused on researching ideas and goals we want to pursue over the next five years. This is what the plan is intended for, and it should not be confusing with the CEDS, which is also being updated. While the Economic Development Advisory Committee, led by our chair here today, plays a related role, it focuses on different aspects. However, both committees support one another.

I understand there's a long agenda today, but I wanted to briefly share that we have drafts of our executive summary. There will be two versions: a short, condensed version, and a more in-depth version, which we will present for adoption next month. The strategic priorities and initiatives we aim to explore over the next few years include the following:

- **Census Preparation:** As you know, there was a significant undercount in the last U.S. Census. The LRGVDC worked hard alongside Texas Census partners and U.S. Census partners to help prepare, but there's always room for improvement in preparation for the next census.
- **Merging Metropolitan Statistical Areas:** There have been discussions about merging the metropolitan statistical areas here in the Rio Grande Valley, which could help increase funding for the MPO, criminal justice, homeland security, and other federal and state-funded programs.

- **Regional Transit Authority and Mobility:** The Regional Mobility Advisory Committee was established following House Bill 71, ratified in 2019. This bill authorized the LRGVDC to create a regional transit authority, as we are the only metropolitan area in Texas without one. We are actively researching ways to best serve our constituents and improve public transportation access.
- **Intelligent Transportation System:** With the region's growth and the development of major roadways such as the I-69 connector, the outer loop, and the 365 tollways, we aim to establish an intelligent transportation system. This would help us manage and share real-time traffic data, like the Houston Trans Star system, ensuring better communication and traffic management as our region becomes more complex.

These are just some of the areas we want to start researching so we can be prepared for future developments. In the executive summary, each program will have a one-pager outlining its goals and vision. The full document will include specific strategies for achieving those goals.

I apologize for speaking quickly, but I wanted to get through all the key points. Currently, I welcome any questions, comments, or feedback. If you don't have any now, feel free to drop off a card later today or email us. I've provided my email and Mr. Cruz's for any feedback you'd like to share afterward. Mr. Cruz also mentioned that these goals are intentionally broad to ensure that no specific city or jurisdiction is limited in applying for a particular priority. This approach has been used historically to allow flexibility for all jurisdictions. Additionally, these goals complement the CEDS plan, and both will work in conjunction to support regional development. The CEDS plan will be presented as another action item next month, likely in March.

If you have any input on the goals and objectives listed, please share it with us. If you're satisfied with them, we can proceed with finalizing the document. We will also be reaching out to gather input from other stakeholders throughout the region.

I'd also like to add that we're coming to you because there may be aspects we haven't considered. As subject matter experts, your input is invaluable, and we want to ensure we include all relevant perspectives in the final document. Historically, even though the document is designed for five years, it has been revisited and updated every couple of years to stay aligned with the evolving needs of the region. This is something we can also revisit, and we can commit to reviewing it in two years to assess whether it's working or if any updates are needed. Ron Garza from UTRGV made a comment that the RGV Partnership is doing an RGV at the Capitol, and that Daniel was finalizing the Regional Legislative Priorities. Mr. Ron Garza stated that the first 4 Javier had shared align perfectly and that should mirror the same. Mayor Sepulveda then stated in today's digital age, for those who aren't ready to jot down feedback on a postcard right now, it would be helpful to have the option to email their input instead. It might be a good idea to set a deadline for submissions, so that people have the chance to review the materials and provide any suggestions, comments, or even confirm that they're satisfied with the current state. Do you have a preferred timeline for when you'd like to receive this feedback? Javier then stated that there are no Federal Guidelines, this is just something that we are doing on our own and would like to include everyone in it. With that said, everyone agreed that 2 weeks from now would be the deadline for any feedback.

With no further questions or comments, Mayor Norma Sepulveda then moved on to the next item on the agenda.

Executive Report: Mr. Cruz introduced all new staff to the board. Then Mr. Cruz moved on to Updates on regional News, Funding Opportunities, Training, and Legislation.

- **87th Legislative Session Focus and Funding Opportunities:**
- The 87th legislative session focuses on water issues. Along with this, new funding opportunities have emerged:

- The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has made available \$10.9 million in grant funding.
- Under public safety, over \$500 million in grant funding will become available.
- **89th Legislative Session Schedule:**
  - The 89th legislative session was convened on January 14th.
  - The bill filing deadline is March 14th.
  - The session will adjourn on June 2nd.
- **President's Executive Orders:**
  - The President released executive orders on Monday, which were received the following day. These orders direct federal agencies to place a temporary pause on federal funding assistance, including grants, loans, and cooperative agreements.
  - The pause went into effect yesterday at 5:00 PM.
  - A judge issued a block on the executive orders, making them effective until February 3rd.
  - The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has instructed federal agencies to evaluate the alignment of their financial assistance programs with the President's agenda and submit reports by February 10th.
  - Members of various associations, including the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), and the Texas Association of Regional Councils, were informed of these developments.
  - Ron Garza and Commissioner Garza shared that the executive order was discussed in relation to the update provided by Mr. Cruz and has just been rescinded. Mayor Sepulveda mentioned that she had just discussed this with Manny and was evident that things are moving fast and did not agree how the executive order was released.
- **Impact on Local Programs:**
  - The executive orders affect the Council of Governments (COG), as approximately 43% of the funding it receives is federal, with another 35% coming from state funds passed through the federal government.
  - Specifically, transportation funding through the FTA and funding for the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) under HHS may be impacted. This includes services such as Meals on Wheels and support for community centers across the region. The COG receives about \$9-10 million in funding through HHS for AAA programs.
- **Texas State Updates:**
  - While federal funding issues are clear, the state's response is still pending. Governor Abbott's State of State address will provide more information regarding any changes or developments in Texas.

Additionally, the Texas House has realigned and merged several committees, with some being abolished.

- **Committee Restructuring:**

- As an example, the Veterans Affairs committee has now been moved under the Public Safety committee. Previously, it was a standalone committee. Several other committees have been revised or eliminated as well.

- **Ongoing Updates:**

- Information regarding these changes is being actively shared with the Executive Committee. Members can receive email updates as new information becomes available. While much of the information is widely circulated and sometimes picked up by the media before it reaches the committee, the updates will be forwarded as they come in.

- **Grant Funding Sources:**

- Various grant funding sources continue to be available, including:
  - FTA (Federal Transit Administration)
  - EDA (Economic Development Administration)
  - HHSC (Health and Human Services Commission)
  - CDBG (Community Development Block Grants)
  - Funds through cities, TxDOT (Texas Department of Transportation), the Office of the Governor, and TCEQ (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality).
- Additionally, various pass-through grant funds are available.

- **Closing Remarks:**

- The speaker thanked the committee for allowing them to keep the update brief.

No questions or comments, Mayor Sepulveda then moved on to Item #5 Department Reports.

A. Community & Economic Development: Melisa Gonzalez started with her first actions items on the agenda for her department.

5.A1. Consideration and ACTION to Approve Regional Small Cities Coalition (RSCC) elections of Officers for 2025. As per the RSCC Bylaws, the Advisory Committee shall consist of chair, Vice Chair, & Secretary. The meeting was held on January 14. Recommendations for Officer Roles The following positions were recommended: **Chairperson:** Selena Gonzalez, City of Primera, **Vice Chair:** Mayor Jose Solis, City of Lyford. **Secretary:** Mayor Alma Salinas, City of Sullivan. **Commissioner David Garza approved Regional Small Cities Coalition (RSCC) elections of Officers for 2025. As per the RSCC Bylaws, the Advisory Committee shall consist of chair, Vice Chair, & Secretary. Jim Darling seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.**

5.A2. Consideration and ACTION to approve Road to Recycling Tire Disposal Services Request for proposal (RFO) Awards. Bids **for Contract:** Two organizations submitted bids for the contract, and both are being recommended for acceptance:

- **Republic Services**
- **UTW**

**Collaborative Effort:** Both entities will work together to ensure that all tires collected during the April 2025 tire event are kept out of the landfill. The goal is to process the tires into much, with UTW exploring creative solutions to minimize the landfill footprint.

**Tire Event Details:** The tire event is scheduled for April 2025. Outreach will be made to cities and counties to gauge participation. Additional information about the event will be provided at the next meeting in February. ***Troy Allen made a motion to approve Road to Recycling Tire Disposal Services Request for Proposal (RFO) Awards. Alma Salinas seconded the motion upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

Status Reports: Mrs. Gonzales had some announcements. **Tire Event:** The tire event is scheduled for April 2025. Outreach will be made to cities and counties to determine participation. More information will be provided at the February 2025 meeting. **CEDS Updates:** The goal is to present the CEDS draft to the EDAC at the end of February 2025 for approval, followed by approval from the Board in March 2025.

No further Questions or comments, Mayor Sepulveda then moved to Health & Human Services

B. Health & Human Services: Margarita Lopez had one Action item on the agenda.

B.1 Consideration and ACTION to approve the following Membership Applications for the Citizens Advisory council. ***Luke Lucio made a motion to approve the following Membership Applications for the Citizens Advisory Council. Mayor Alma Salinas seconded the motion, upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.*** The council requests your approval for the following appointments:

- **Rosalinda Martinez** (Cameron County) - Appointed under the category of 60 years of age or older.
- **Carmen Nordyke** (Cameron County) - Appointed under the "Other" category. Carmen works for a medical coverage insurance company and represents older individuals.
- **Ms. Alice Cobos** (Hidalgo County) - Appointed under the "Other" category. Ms. Cobos works for a kidney care and dialysis agency, representing the needs of older individuals.
- **Eliodora Flores** (Hidalgo County) - Appointed under the category of 60 years of age or older.
- **Belinda Olivo** (Cameron County) - Appointed under the "Other" category. Ms. Olivo works for Star Health Insurance and represents supportive services, leadership, and the needs of older individuals.
- **Term Duration:** All appointments will be for a three-year term, as outlined in the Citizen Advisory Council rules of function, Article 5, Section 4 (Membership).

Status Reports: Ms. Lopez let the board know that all her status reports were in the packet and were available to answer any questions.

No further questions or comments Mayor Norma Sepulveda moved on to Public Safety.

C. Public Safety: Criminal Justice & Homeland Security. Mr. Cesar Merla was not able to attend the Board meeting, but all Criminal Justice and Homeland Security status reports were provided in everyone's packet.

No further questions or comments Mayor Norma Sepulveda moved on to LRGV Police Academy.

C.B. LRGV Police Academy: Mr. Javier Solis started off with his Action Items on the Agenda.

C.B1. Consideration and Action to Approve a resolution for Fiscal years 2025-2027 for the LRGV Regional Law enforcement Academy Project. ***Troy Allen made a motion to approve a Resolution for fiscal years 2025-2027 for the LRGV Regional Law enforcement Academy Project. Mayor George Guadiana seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

C.B2. Consideration and ACTION to Approve an Interlocal Agreement between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the County of Hidalgo, Texas for the purpose of reporting training hours to TCOLE for Texas Peace Officers attending the South Texas All Hazards Conference, and with the authority for the LRGVDC Executive Director, Manuel Cruz, to sign and finalize the agreement. ***Mayor Alma Salinas made a motion to approve Interlocal Agreement between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the County of Hidalgo, Texas for the purpose of reporting training hours to TCOLE for Texas Peace Officers attending the South Texas All Hazards Conference, and with the authority for the LRGVDC Executive Director, Manuel Cruz, to sign and finalize the agreement. Commissioner Edward Gonzalez seconded the motion, upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

C.B3. Consideration and Action to approve an Interlocal Agreement between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the Rio Grande City, Texas for the purposes of utilizing the Rio Grande City Municipal Airport as a training site for the LRGV Academy Basic Peace Officer Course and with the authority for the LRGVDC Executive Director, Manuel Cruz, to sign and finalize the agreement. ***Commissioner David Garza approved an Interlocal Agreement between the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and the Rio Grande City, Texas for the purposes of utilizing the Rio Grande City Municipal Airport as a training site for the LRGV Academy Basic Peace Officer Course and with the authority for the LRGVDC Executive Director, Manuel Cruz, to sign and finalize the agreement. Jim Darling seconded the motion upon a vote the motion was carried unanimously.***

Status Reports: Mr. Solis explains On Friday, January 3rd, the department began the Mission 228th Academy, with 25 cadets currently enrolled. On Monday, January 6th, 18 out of 20 cadets graduated from the Edinburg Police Academy. The department is in the process of finalizing the first-ever Starr County Police Academy. Testing is currently underway with the Rio Grande City Police Department to prepare for the launch of this historic academy.

No further questions or comments Mayor Norma Sepulveda moved on to Rio Grande Valley Emergency Communication District.

Status Reports: Mr. Dennis Moreno started off with no action items on Agenda but wanted to give an update on Departments reports. We've been hosting the RGV911 website throughout 2024, and we've had approximately 64,000 hits and page views. We attribute a large part of this success to the tickets our team processes. Our GIS department alone has handled over 20,000 tickets, addressing updates to address points, new road creation, and road updates. This is a key aspect of our ongoing work within the ticketing system.

Moving on to our IT department, we've conducted 33 PSAP audits and reviewed the generators at the 911 centers, ensuring their maintenance. Additionally, we're introducing two important training classes for your dispatchers: Active Shooter Training, which teaches dispatchers how to manage calls and handle the influx of calls during an active shooter situation, and Crisis Negotiation Training. These training programs are highly requested by our PSAPs and will be rolled out through our office.

Now, a quick update on our 2024 outlook: We handled nearly half a million emergency calls in 2024, a significant milestone. However, we did see a decrease of about 20,000 calls this year. One notable trend is the increase in text-to-911 usage. We've seen a 33% increase in text messages to 911, which is a great success. Texting to 911 is now available in our region, and we encourage everyone to use this platform. Just text "911" to begin the process, just like a call. We're seeing more crime victims utilizing this feature, and it's making a difference. Please help spread the word in your cities to ensure everyone knows texting to 911 can save



lives. Cities like Granjeno and Sullivan City are already promoting this, and we're planning to introduce video and text translation for our region as well.

On the community engagement front, our team has been incredibly active. In the past quarter alone, we attended five events, bringing our total for the year to 89. That's over one event per week! Keep in mind, this is all done by a small team, and we're working on expanding it. We ask for your support in helping us raise awareness about the resources available to your residents.

No questions or comments, Mayor Sepulveda proceeded to Item D Valley Metro.

D. Transportation Valley Metro: Mr. Tom Logan started off with his action items on the agenda.

D.1. Consideration and Action to Approve Acquisition of Vehicles Under State approved Grant for LRGVDC Valley Metro. ***Jim Darling made a motion to approve Acquisition of Vehicles Under State approved Grant for LRGVDC Valley Metro. Mayor Alma Salinas seconded the motion upon a vote, and the motion was carried unanimously.***

D.2. Discussion and Action on Approval of Resolution # 2025-01 Authorizing Adoption of the Hidalgo County Active Transportation and Active Tourism Plan "The Active Plan" My name is Julian Salas, and on behalf of Halff and Associates and Tool Design Group, we are excited to present the Hidalgo County Active Transportation and Active Plan. First, I'd like to express how incredible this experience has been for us over the past year. From the warm and welcoming people who have shared their insights and ideas to the rich culture and amazing food that truly defines South Texas, this region has been inspiring. And of course, the breathtaking landscapes of Hidalgo County make it truly unique.

This journey has been both insightful and inspiring for our team. Through active community involvement and the guidance of a dedicated steering committee, we've developed a proposal for a 278-mile network of trails to connect communities throughout Hidalgo County. The plan outlines design guidelines, recommended amenities, signage, and funding strategies to support and expand this network. It also identifies opportunities for active tourism in the county, including trail-based recreation and birdwatching.

To ensure successful implementation, the plan assigns specific responsibilities to local and regional entities and includes a five-year action plan to achieve these goals. Ultimately, the vision is to enhance connectivity, promote active and healthy lifestyles, and boost tourism throughout Hidalgo County.

We're thrilled to present this plan for your consideration and adoption. It represents the passion and dedication of community members, local leaders, and stakeholders who are committed to building healthier, more connected communities. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Hidalgo County, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council, and all the neighboring communities within the county. We can't wait to see this vision become a reality for all of you.

Additionally, Ilda Capriccioso, our project manager Mr. Cruz then added, "Madam President, if I may, I just want to express my sincere gratitude to the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court for their willingness to step forward and fund this plan. This is truly for the benefit of Hidalgo County. It also complements the existing plans in Cameron County, so together, both plans create an even stronger resource. Not only does this benefit our region, but it also provides valuable justification when applying for funding or working to expand and improve our hike and bike trails. Additionally, it plays a key role in the tourism aspect, helping to attract more people to the region by highlighting the many trails and destinations that are already identified for them to visit. For this initiative, we are also joining online. We're both really excited for you beginning the work ahead. Ron Garza made a comment to the board, I do want to mention, and this may be more of an MPO matter, but it could be worth considering an incentive for cities that adopt this plan and potentially create their own active transportation plan that aligns with it. This could be a points qualifier when they apply for CATS 7 funding. Of course, if you're applying for projects in this category, it's important to have adopted and supported the plans in the region. Just something to keep in mind. Mr. Cruz added, the plan will first be presented to the Commissioners Court and then we will visit each city individually to

get on with their agendas for adopting the resolution. Commissioner Fuentes mentioned I completely agree with Ron's point about being prepared especially when grant funding becomes available.

A lot of it comes down to planning and organization, ensuring that you have everything in place so you can start applying for grants right away. Typically, there's anywhere from \$4 million to \$6 million in funding available each year. Of course, it's a competitive process, usually between Hidalgo County and Cameron County. These types of projects are essential for building the infrastructure needed for alternative mobility, active lifestyles, and promoting health and wellness, especially since the impact of COVID-19 in 2020. I encourage everyone to engage in proactive planning because you never know when funding opportunities will arise, but you must be ready when they do. I wholeheartedly support what Ron is saying, and I appreciate the work done on this plan. Commissioner David Garza also commented, Yeah, this is a great project because, as Commissioner Fuentes knows, having shovel-ready projects makes it much easier to secure support. When the announcement is made and you're still in the planning phase, it's more challenging. But with shovel-ready projects, you're already prepared to move forward. I know that the cities of Harlingen, Brownsville, and the county have had great success in having projects pre-prepared for funding opportunities. When you approach the small cities with resolutions, please avoid presenting a resolution where they're simply agreeing to provide money or being asked for funding. That approach has been a major turnoff in our area. Instead, focus on gaining their support and buying first. Show them what can be achieved with their investment and allow them to decide on their own if they can contribute financially. Asking for money upfront can really kill the momentum. Commissioner Fuentes then stated that he also agreed with Commissioner David Garza on his comment. ***Ron Garza made a motion to approve Resolution # 2025-01 Authorizing Adoption of the Hidalgo County Active Transportation and Active Tourism Plan "The Active Plan" Mayor Alma Salinas seconded the motion and upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.***

Status Reports: Lastly Mr. Logan then stated that all his department reports were attached to the packet.

No further Questions or comments, Mayor Sepulveda then moved to Rio Grande Valley MPO.

Rio Grande Valley MPO: Mr. Cruz just wanted to announce that, as you know, they currently have an open solicitation for projects, totaling about \$1.9 million. They've already sent out the emails, and this funding is intended for studies with a regional focus. I highly encourage all of you to apply, as we are planning to submit applications as well. Specifically, we're applying for two feasibility studies: one for the RTA and another for transit-oriented development on 27 acres down the road. Just wanted to give you a heads-up, especially if you're involved with the MPO.

With no further questions or comments Mayor Sepulveda moved on to Item #7

#7 New & Unfinished Business: **Closing Remarks:** Mr. Cruz wanted to add that, during our State of the COG address, we presented service awards to a few of our members. Unfortunately, we also had the sad news of losing one of our most dedicated team members, my executive assistant, Ms. Debbie Morales. She passed away, and we didn't learn of it until later that afternoon, after the State of the COG concluded, when we were contacted by her relatives. Her service was held this past weekend, and several staff members attended to pay their respects.

Debbie will be deeply missed. As I mentioned during the State of the COG, she was the glue that kept everything together. Her impeccable filing system was something well-kept and it made it easy for anyone to step into the position and continue. She had been with us for 21 years, and in that time, she became an integral part of the team.

The COG attracts unique, dedicated individuals, and Debbie was truly one of those special people. It's not an easy job, especially in a not-for-profit or local government setting where compensation isn't always high. For her to stay with us for so long is a testament to her commitment. She started from the bottom, working in transit as a temporary staff member, and over the years, she worked her way up. She initially worked under the great Ken Jones, and then with Ron for about five years before I took over in 2020. Unfortunately, her passing has left a void, and we are all deeply saddened by it. I just wanted to make everyone aware.

#8 Adjourn: There being no further business to come before the board, Mayor Sepulveda made a motion to adjourn at 1:03 PM

  
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President Mayor Norie Gonzalez Garza

ATTEST:

  
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Liza Alfaro, Recording Secretary

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