



**Ports-to-Plains**  
**Corridor Feasibility Study (HB 1079)**  
**Segment 3 Committee**  
**Meeting #1 Summary**

November 4, 2019, 8:30 a.m.  
City of Del Rio Civic Center  
1915 Veterans Boulevard  
Del Rio, Texas

# Ports-to-Plains Segment 3 Committee Meeting #1

## Summary

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### Attendees

Segment Committee Member	Organization	Attendance
Mayor Ramsey Cantu	City of Eagle Pass	Designee Present: George Antuna, City Manager
Sid Cauthorn	Ports-to-Plains Alliance	Not Present
Miguel Conchas	Laredo Chamber of Commerce	Not Present
Anna De La Garza	Eagle Pass International Bridge System	Present
Liliana Flores	Del Rio Port of Entry	Present
Nick Gallego	Middle Rio Grande Development Council	Present
Melissa Huddleston	Laredo Motor Carriers Association	Not Present
Blanca Larson	Del Rio Chamber of Commerce	Present
Morris Libson	Eagle Pass Business and Economic Development Council	Not Present
Yvette Limon	Laredo International Bridge System	Designee Present: J. Kent Richard, Assistant Bridge Director
Mayor Bruno Lozano	City of Del Rio	Present
Sandra Martinez	Eagle Pass Chamber of Commerce	Not Present
Leo Martinez	Del Rio Economic Development Corporation	Designee Present: Jerry Simpton, Del Rio Economic Development Corporation
Margie Montez	Del Rio International Bridge	Present
Judge Lewis G. Owens, Jr.	Val Verde County	Not Present
Judge Francisco G. Ponce	Dimmit County	Not Present

Mayor Pete Saenz	City of Laredo	Not Present
Judge David R. Saucedo	Maverick County	Not Present
Mayor Wayne Seiple	City of Carrizo Springs	Not Present
Judge James Tullis Shahan	Kinney County	Present
James Kirby Snideman	Laredo Urban Transportation Study (Metropolitan Planning Organization)	Designee Present: Vanessa Guerra
Judge Tano E. Tijerina	Webb County	Present
Raul S. Villareal	Laredo Licensed U.S. Customs Brokers Association, Inc.	Not Present
<b>Advisory Committee Leadership</b>		
Mayor Dan Pope, Ports-to- Plains Advisory Committee Chairman	City of Lubbock	Present
Judge Stephen Smith, Ports-to- Plains Advisory Committee Vice Chairman	Sutton County	Present

### Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

Caroline Mays  
 Brian Barth  
 Roger Beall  
 Loretta Brown  
 Blake Calvert  
 Emily Clisby  
 Olivia Furlan

Krista Jeacopello  
 Raul Leal  
 Steve Linhart  
 Terry Martinez  
 Roberto Rodriguez  
 David Salazar  
 Akila Thamizharasan

### Consultant Team

Wendy Travis	Garver	Casey Carlton	WSP
Tambra Ellason	Garver	Audrey Koehler	WSP
Jason Henderson	Garver	Michael Penic	WSP
Kirsten McCullough	Garver	Rachel Lunceford	HG Consult
Tracy Michel	Garver	Lena Camarillo	PCI
Joe Bryan	WSP	Colin McGahey	PCI

### Other Attendees

Minnie Abrego-Sanchez      City of Del Rio  
 Felipe Basulto                Ciudad Acuna (Mexico)

Carlos Castro	Ciudad Acuna (Mexico)
Manuel Chavez	City of Del Rio
Ori Fernandez	City of Del Rio
Geraldine Garcia	Andrade VDP
Hector Gonzalez	Ciudad Acuna (Mexico)
Javier Herrera	City of Del Rio
Trinidad Herrera	Ciudad Acuna (Mexico)
Duffy Hinkle	Ports-to-Plains Alliance
Cheri Huddleston	Ports-to-Plains Alliance
Juan Jaime Ganza Gomez	Ciudad Acuna (Mexico)
Ivan Morue	City of Eagle Pass
Harrison Stell	-
Lalo Uribe	Webb County
Matt Wojnowski	City of Del Rio

## Welcome

Brian Barth, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Director of Project Planning and Development, welcomed the attendees to the Segment #3 Committee meeting. He explained each Segment Committee would develop a report to be incorporated into the final Advisory Committee Recommendations to TxDOT. The goal of the study is to meet the requirements of House Bill (H.B.) 1079 and determine the feasibility of a four-lane divided or an interstate level facility within the corridor. Mr. Barth said there was a lot to do to accomplish this within the timeline laid out in H.B. 1079. He stated during today's meeting, the Committee would elect a Chair and Vice Chair to represent Segment 3. He also stressed the importance of being at the meetings and participating in the Committee's actions. He asked members to let their colleagues know the importance of the Committee's work and of attending the meetings. Next, Mr. Barth introduced Caroline Mays as the representative from TxDOT leading this effort.

Caroline Mays welcomed members and explained the Advisory Committee Meeting met on October 1<sup>st</sup> and stated this is the first Segment 3 Committee Meeting. Then, she introduced the Chair of the Ports-to-Plains Advisory Committee and Mayor of Lubbock, Dan Pope.

Mayor Pope said all seems to be going well in Del Rio, and thanked Committee Members for attending today's meeting. He said there was a lot to do in 13 months. He told members the bulk of the work and effort would be within the Segment Committees. Mayor Pope said Committee member participation was critical and elected officials, business owners, and commerce need to collaborate with other members to stay the course of the schedule. Meetings will be monthly, and members need to keep the momentum up. Mayor Pope explained he grew up on I-35 in Temple and understands I-35. He said in west Texas, I-35 seems mythical, but it really does exist. It can't be explained why there is not an interstate between Laredo, Dallas and Denver. It is critical to do our work and craft vision to create safer, less expensive ways to move goods, service, and people into the Midwest and west. He said he was looking forward to being part of it and is pleased to be here.

Next, Mayor of Del Rio Bruno Lozano thanked everyone for being at the meeting, including the City of Eagle Pass, City of Laredo, Webb County, and Mayor Pope. He told the group he went to Lubbock for the Advisory Committee Meeting. He stated there was work to do within Segment 3 and it will be a huge endeavor, but the corridor will connect us to different corridors including I-10, I-20, and I-40. He also said Segment 3 is the least invested in the corridor, due to location. However, he said each member was taking a step by being at the table. There is a lot of work to be done, and it is critical everyone join forces. Mayor Lozano said this was a great project that will enhance the area. He was recently in North Dakota, as a representative from the Ports-to-Plains Alliance Group and saw what an impact a potential interstate like I-27 would be. He thanked the audience and TxDOT and said he was prepared for how Del Rio could help with this effort.

Ms. Mays spoke next, and extended gratitude to Del Rio and Mayor Lozano and his staff for hosting the Segment 3 Committee Meeting. She stressed this project will go beyond borders and into the rest of the country. She said the timeline is short and everyone is needed at the table.

At this time, the Segment 3 Committee Members, TxDOT staff and the consultant staff introduced themselves.

### **Overview of Study**

Blake Calvert started the discussion by giving an overview of H.B. 1079. He began by acknowledging the work that was done on the Bill with State Senator Charles Perry and State Representative Four Price. He explained this was a very tight timeline to accomplish the necessary work. He said each Segment Committee would be doing the heavy lifting to meet the requirements of the Bill. The corridor will be studied as defined in the Texas Transportation Code, and it cannot deviate from that description. Section 225.069 lists the roadways specifically the Segment Committees will be focused on. He explained the Bill requires the Advisory Committee Members meet twice annually between Lubbock and San Angelo and shall consist of Elected Officials or their designees. Mr. Calvert explained the Segment Committee was made up of volunteers representing cities, counties, ports, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, chambers of commerce, economic development corporations, the trucking industry, and other interested parties. He said the Segment Committee members can also appoint designees. He said a Chair and Vice Chair will be elected during the meeting today.

He continued by providing an overview of the reporting requirements of the Segment Committee, which includes submitting a report to the Advisory Committee. Another component of the Bill is to engage the public. Public Meetings are to be held quarterly in Amarillo, Laredo, Lubbock, and San Angelo on a rotational basis. Once the reports are finalized, they will be viewed by the public for comment. Mr. Calvert finished the presentation by reviewing important dates including a timeline for Advisory Committee meetings, Segment Committee meetings, and report due dates. TxDOT will submit the final Feasibility Study report to the Governor and Legislature by January 1, 2021.

### **Feasibility Study Purpose, Goals, Scope and Schedule**

#### **Purpose and Goals**

Ms. Mays started the presentation by asking Committee Members to be ready to actively participate and be prepared to talk. She gave an overview of the corridor feasibility study purpose outlined in H.B. 1079. In summary, it states the study must evaluate the feasibility of costs and logistical

matters associated with improvements that create a continuous flow, four-lane divided highway that meets interstate standards, including improvements that extend Interstate 27. Ms. Mays continued with showing how the three segments were divided and reviewed each goal. Goals included transporting energy products, employment opportunities, relieve traffic congestion, freight movement, maximizing the use of existing highways and protecting private property, interstate designation, project costs, and funding sources. She asked the Segment Committee to think about each goal and determine which was most important to them.

**Mentimeter Question #1: Which goals of the corridor feasibility study are most important to you?**

*There were 15 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: freight movement (12), safety and mobility (12), economic development (10), traffic congestion (6), energy products (6), existing infrastructure (3), interstate designation (3), funding sources (3), private property (2), and project costs (1).*

Webb County Judge Tano Tijerina commented everyone was in the right frame of mind with freight movement needing to alleviate traffic from I-35. He said it was extremely important to have good connectivity and distribution of interstates, but we have a lot of them east to west and it's important to have north to south ones too and we only have I-35. It's very important to keep pushing for extending I-27. Alleviating congestion and improving safety are major factors.

Mayor Lozano added for port of entries it is very important to have a four-lane extension of interstate, since it relieves congestion and moves freight into other states. We also need support from Mexico. There is a need for safer highways (Midland/Odessa), if we experience more freight movement, we can expect the same issues.

Judge Tijerina added it is extremely important for freight to keep moving. There is a need to keep truck drivers moving, and refrain from being idle. They are regulated and are required to be off for a certain number of hours, so it's important they can move when driving. The faster freight moves, the cheaper it will get, hopefully.

Ms. Mays commented the cost of moving goods is an important element since the cost keeps going up. The cost of transportation is a large part of our state competitiveness, The American Transportation Research Institute does a study every year. Idling and drivers not making it to their destination (because they can only drive so many hours) is an issue. She said she was glad Judge Tijerina brought this issue to everyone's attention. By reducing idling, it keeps us competitive as state.

Mayor Lozano commented while he was at the Ports-To-Plains Alliance Meeting in North Dakota he discovered, depending on the type of products, there is an impact to freight movement. In one instance, part of a toll booth had to be sawed out to accommodate Caterpillar products being moved. Infrastructure can impede movement of commercial traffic, and it does add cost. He was able to speak to representatives from Colorado who were transporting wind energy equipment which had to re-route due to bridge heights not being adequate to accommodate the trucks. He noted communities need to understand having the Ports-To-Plains route will enhance the entire route.

Ms. Mays responded sawing out the toll booth was due to height to allow over-sized trucks to get through. Otherwise, they had to store goods in Acuna. It is important for oversized and overweight trucks to be able to move.

David Salazar, TxDOT Laredo District Engineer, commented there is a potential to lean toward safety and mobility. Texas is growing exponentially, and studies shows the largest growing counties are west of I-35. It is very important to recognize safety and mobility issues come along with this growth.

George Antuna, City Manager of Eagle Pass, commented within Segment 3, we need to make sure we are proposing bypassing Eagle Pass to Laredo and bypassing Carrizo Springs. Freight traffic going from Highway 69 in Presidio to the valley is an issue due to congestion. He stated he wants to make sure we relieve congestion. He also noted FM 1021 in Eagle Pass was an issue.

Mr. Calvert responded H.B. 1079 requires the Committees focus on the corridor described in the Bill. He said there are other opportunities to look at other roadways, but not under this study.

Mayor Pope also said we need to stick to Bill. He added doesn't mean we can't look for other routes but must look at the corridor prescribed by H.B. 1079.

Mr. Barth noted for the purpose of this study we need to stick to H.B. 1079, and that we can look at the Border Master Plan or other studies for other routes.

Mayor Pope commented Texas Transportation Commissioner Alvin New was able to speak at the October 1, 2019 Advisory Committee Meeting, and he wanted to share a few of his comments. Only 15% of Texans live west of I-35, but by 2050 there will be close to 50 million people in Texas. The same report says 1.3 million people are projected to live in the Permian Basin. Midland and Odessa are at 325,000 people, and remarkable growth is expected. Lubbock and Amarillo are both projected to be at 500,000 people. He said there is a project to work on a 30 mile stretch on I-35 from north of Austin in Georgetown to south of Austin near Kyle. The cost for the project is estimated to be \$10 billion. He explained for \$8 billion or less, we could build the entire I-27 corridor, and there are places to be budget conscious along route. There is an economic case for this study, and the future growth of Texas is a big part of it.

### Study Scope

Wendy Travis, a member of the consultant team, resumed the presentation by reviewing the study scope. She explained transportation agencies nationwide do these types of feasibility studies routinely, and this study follows the same process. The process starts with determining a purpose and need for the study, followed by existing conditions and needs assessment. Next will be an assessment of forecasted conditions. Staff will get feedback from the Segment Committees on how to incorporate those findings into the report. After these are evaluated, the feasibility of a four-lane divided corridor will be studied. She explained staff will present potential economic impacts of the improvements and work with the Segment Committees to develop strategies for improvement, a financial plan, an implementation plan, and each Committee's recommendations. She explained

TxDOT will submit a final Feasibility Study Report to the Governor and Legislature by January 1, 2021. She noted stakeholder engagement will be going on throughout this entire process.

### Study Schedule

Ms. Travis proceeded by discussing the study schedule and milestones. She explained today's meeting would focus on reviewing existing conditions in Segment 3. The next meeting will be in February and will cover forecasting, economic development, and planned projects in the Ports-To-Plains corridor. In April, staff will present corridor alternatives and the results of an economic model showing the potential job creation because of improvements within the corridor. At the meeting, the Committees will identify recommended improvements and cost and determine the prioritization of improvements. The final meeting in June, the Committees will develop an implementation plan and finalize their report with their recommendations to the Advisory Committee. She stressed the schedule for this study consisted of lots of work in a short amount of time, but it is achievable.

### Existing Segment Conditions and Needs

Akila Thamizharasan, TxDOT Corridor Planning Branch Manager started the presentation by referencing the discussion about H.B. 1079 earlier this morning. She explained staff would be presenting about existing conditions next.

### Mentimeter Question #2: What are the key needs and challenges in Segment 3?

***There were 11 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: safety and mobility (3), population growth (1), economic development (1), freight movement and congestion (2), alternative route to I-35 (2), and construction cost (3).***

Lalo Uribe from Webb County commented construction costs and right-of-way acquisition increases every year and we need to take that into consideration for the near future.

### Mentimeter Question #3: What are the potential opportunities in Segment 3?

***There were 9 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: economic development (5), job creation (3), growth along the corridor (2), and energy production (1).***

### Overall Segment Characteristics

Ms. Thamizharasan continued the discussion by explaining experts have reviewed corridor existing conditions information and presented it at the Advisory Committee Meeting. She summarized the discussion review and pointed out each topic to be covered today. She continued by providing an overview of overall corridor and segment characteristics including number of corridor miles, counties, TxDOT districts, major cities, and Ports of Entry located in the entire corridor.

Judge Tijerina commented regarding I-35, the question always asked is if there is any way you could make a designated truck lane. He asked if there have been any studies done showing the results of having a truck designated lane. He noted we could maybe make I-27 the first of its kind. Having a truck designated lane would help with safety and mobility.

Ms. Thamizharasan commented this was something to consider and would depend on the traffic composition on the corridor.

Ms. Mays commented on a designated truck lane on I-35, it has not been studied. It has come up in many conversations, but nothing has been studied. She said Judge Tijerina raises a question which could possibly be looked at in the future. For this study, only two alternatives (four-lane and interstate) will be studied, but a truck designated lane can certainly be looked at on I-27 and other corridors in the state at a later date.

Ms. Thamizharasan continued the presentation by discussing the details of corridor miles, counties, TxDOT districts, major cities, and Ports of Entry, existing highways and access control for Segment 3. She noted the majority of Segment 3 does not have access control.

#### Population and Economic Characteristics

Kirsten McCullough, a member of the consultant team, continued the presentation by providing an overview of current corridor population growth for the entire corridor and for Segment 3. Population growth was summarized from years 1990-2000, 2000-2010, and 2010-2017. She explained there was substantial growth in the 1990s, and in Segment 3, Webb County and Maverick County had the most growth. From 2000-2010, there was still an increase in growth, but it slowed some. Webb County grew the most during this timeframe. From 2010-2017, there was approximately the same amount of growth as the previous decade, but most was in the Permian Basin. In Segment 3, the population growth was slightly less than the entire corridor.

Ms. McCullough continued the presentation by discussing median household income along the entire corridor and in Segment 3 from years 1990-2000, 2000-2010, and 2010-2017. Overall, in each decade, there was an overall increase in median household income. She pointed out in Segment 3, from 1990-2000 the largest increases were in Kinney, Dimmit, and Maverick Counties. From 2000-2010, largest increases were in Edwards and La Salle Counties, and from 2010-2017, La Salle and Kinney Counties median household income numbers increased the most.

Ms. McCullough then moved on to total employment along the entire corridor and in Segment 3 from years 1990-2000, 2000-2010, and 2010-2017. Once again, total employment increased along the overall corridor and in Segment 3. In Segment 3, from 1990-2000 and 2000-2010 Webb and Maverick Counties had the highest employment growth. From 2010-2017 Kinney, La Salle, and Zavala Counties had the largest employment growth.

#### **Mentimeter Question #4: What factors do you think will influence population, income, and employment in Segment #3 over the next 30 years?**

*There were 10 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: job opportunities (2), trade (3), state and federal funding (1), technological advancements (2), and water and energy (2).*

Blanca Larson with the Del Rio Chamber of Commerce commented drilling is going to be occurring on the Mexico side which will increase trade with Mexico. She said the Ports in Laredo and Eagle Pass are very busy, and the Mayor is trying to work with freight trucks on the Mexico side to have commercial trucks to expedite this.

Ms. Mays commented trade with Mexico should be a consideration. She commented the fastest growing trade between Texas and Mexico is energy. Mexico produces 20%, but most energy is coming from Texas. There are not enough pipelines, so most energy products are moved by trucks. There are a lot of storage tanks and other pieces of equipment to support energy development being made in Mexico for use in the Permian Basin and other energy exploration areas.

Judge Tijerina said he totally agrees. He said for oil and gas, infrastructure costs \$3 billion just to move oil and gas. He noted we have infrastructure and should take advantage of using it.

Mayor Lozano commented the Port-To-Plains corridor will be positive to growth and will enhance the border region. He noted this is the opportune time to enhance. Freight movement is not just going to Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston. It will create jobs. Border towns recognize the importance of infrastructure and energy commodities including oil, gas, and wind. When these commodities are transported on land it translates to economic growth and jobs. In Del Rio, there are more federal agencies including border patrol and Laughlin Air Force Base. Investing in the corridor will help Laughlin Air Force Base to move goods and people. It also enhances quality of life and provides more jobs. Not only will all the Segments benefit, but all of Texas will benefit as inbound trade traverses to ports of entry. At the end of day, job creation and population growth are two major factors.

Ms. McCullough concluded growth due to trade, energy will bring about job creation.

-Break-

#### Freight Movement

Joe Bryan, a member of the consultant team, started the presentation by giving an overview of total freight. He explained inbound freight referred to goods including household items, supplies, etc, while outbound freight referred to products of industry, or goods from warehouses, including crops. He told members he would be discussing overall freight in the entire corridor as well as freight in Segment 3.

He explained the principal points for truck freight along the entire corridor are Amarillo, Lubbock, Midland, and Laredo. The corridor crosses large, rural areas and provides more access to markets for nearby counties. Within Segment 3, the principal points for truck freight are at the border crossings: Laredo, Eagle Pass, and Del Rio. It also crosses large, rural areas and provides more access to markets for nearby counties. Next, he discussed inbound and outbound freight along the entire corridor. The Panhandle area of Texas ships more freight than it receives, while Amarillo and Midland/Odessa receive more freight than they ship. The Port of Entry at Laredo is busy in both directions. In Segment 3, freight coming and going is generally balanced. Val Verde County receives more than it ships, while Uvalde County ships more freight than it receives.

Mr. Bryan continued the discussion by giving an overview of commodities. Prominent outbound commodities along the entire corridor include food and agriculture in the Panhandle, mineral products in the Permian Basin, and consumer products in the south. Energy and oil are important across the entire corridor. Outbound commodities important in Segment 3 include consumer

products, mineral products, and energy products. He then discussed inbound commodities. Along the entire corridor, the most common inbound commodities are the same as the outbound. Segment 3 differs by mineral or energy products being the top inbound commodity.

Mr. Bryan continued the freight discussion with shipping and receiving. He said, like the entire corridor, Segment 3 freight generating businesses are in population centers. These include large shippers and receivers of mineral products. Foreign truck trade is at the border with Mexico, with some Canadian and overseas traffic. Foreign trade is throughout the segment, but Laredo has the most foreign trade, followed by Del Rio and counties near Eagle Pass. He finished the discussion on freight movement with numbers of trucks crossing at Laredo, Eagle Pass, and Del Rio. The numbers at Laredo are overwhelming, but Eagle Pass and Del Rio see lots of significant activity as well.

#### **Mentimeter Question #5: What are key needs and challenges for moving people and freight in Segment 3?**

*There were 10 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: traffic congestion (4), infrastructure, roadway design (3), staffing for Ports of Entry (3), training and funding for first responders (1), and adequate planning (1).*

#### **Mentimeter Question #6 – what factors do you think will influence future freight movement in Segment #3?**

*There were 9 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: national politics and international trade agreements (3), ample bypasses and wide bridges (3), Ports of entry size and number (4), and population growth (2).*

Mayor Lozano commented the Segment Committee should convey their answers for this Segment to other Segments. Segment 3 is unique in it has Ports of Entry and is the connecting piece to Mexico for international trade. He noted they needed to ensure they convey the same message on the importance of investing in west Texas. Segment 3 has completely different needs due to the border, and others may not understand until it is explained.

Ms. Mays assured the Committee all comments will be included in the Segment Committee report. She noted this is a unique segment, and those comments need to be captured here. Feedback and comments are very important. She noted we need to determine how Segment 3 fits into entire corridor. It matters to the entire corridor.

#### **Energy Sector and Agricultural Production**

Mr. Bryan continued the discussion on oil and gas production within the entire corridor and Segment 3. Gas accounts for most of the energy in Segment 3 and along the entire corridor. The counties with the most natural gas wells include Webb, Edwards, and La Salle. The largest gas production occurs in Webb, Dimmit, and La Salle Counties. Energy/Oil field tonnage is dominated by petroleum products corridor wide. In Segment 3, energy products include petroleum and metal. For wind energy production, Webb, Val Verde, and Kinney Counties have the largest number of wind turbines and highest capacity output in Segment 3.

After a review of the energy sector, Mr. Bryan focused on agriculture production. The highest agricultural sales in the corridor are in the Panhandle. In Segment 3, the counties with the highest sales include Uvalde, Zavala, and Maverick Counties. Top crops along the corridor include cotton, forage, wheat, corn for grain, and pecans. Livestock includes cattle, goats, and sheep. In Segment 3, forage is the top crop by acre, and other important crops include pecans, corn, and wheat. Cattle and calves are the top livestock products. Goats are important in Val Verde and Edwards Counties. Agricultural products being shipped in Segment 3 include food products, farm products, grain, and livestock.

#### **Mentimeter Question #7: How does energy production influence the transportation needs in Segment #3?**

*There were 10 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: increased demand for substantial infrastructure, i.e. higher and wider overpasses and bridges (4), safety needs (2), and increased demand for transportation and freight movement (1).*

Mayor Lozano commented by being in North Dakota, and hearing the energy market growth they are experiencing, he noted investing in an interstate will create competitiveness and future innovations. It started with wind turbines and there's no telling where innovation stops. There will always be a need to accommodate innovation and provide transportation for new industries stemming from innovation.

#### **Mentimeter Question #8: How does agricultural production influence transportation needs in Segment #3?**

*There were 7 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: increased population, increases demand which increases the need for infrastructure and freight mobility (4), I-27 Corridor could be alternate north/south route in Texas (1), and need for USDA cold storage facilities (1).*

#### **Traffic, Pavement, and Bridge Conditions**

Michael Penic, a member of the consultant team, started the presentation by discussing average daily traffic along the entire corridor and in Segment 3. He explained traffic volumes in the corridor and Segment 3 vary considerably. US 277 carries significant volume in Segment 3 in Del Rio and Eagle Pass. He also discussed growth in traffic volumes, which also vary. In Segment 3, Laredo had the strongest growth. The largest truck volumes along the entire corridor and in Segment 3 are from Laredo. Del Rio and Eagle Pass also have significant truck volumes. There are relatively low truck volumes between Eagle Pass and San Angelo. Mr. Penic also discussed average speeds. Most of the entire corridor and Segment 3 have travel speeds of 60-70 miles per hour.

#### **Mentimeter Question #9: Where are the bottlenecks for traffic in Segment #3, and what is the cause?**

*There were 10 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: Ports of Entry and international bridges (2), slower moving vehicles (2), need for more lanes (3), lack*

*of bypasses (3), terrain (1), Gibbs and Veterans intersection in Del Rio, Texas (1), and Highway 277 to Sonora (2).*

Mayor Lozano commented the State Loop 79 in Del Rio between US 277 and SH 90 is currently closed which causes congestion at Gibbs Street and Veterans Boulevard as this is the only way in and out. It also creates increased accidents due to wind turbines trying to make tight turns through downtown. This shows how important it is to have proper infrastructure built for safety. City roads cannot accommodate this type of traffic. Del Rio needs TxDOT to build these routes now.

Mr. Salazar commented TxDOT has a program that is funded and plans to work on US 277 soon.

Mayor Lozano commented TxDOT did the right thing by closing the road and doing construction all at once. The community already responded and realized it is temporarily shut to enhance the project. We can see in real time what happens when the route is offline. With a lack of infrastructure, it shows what can happen. Other routes are enhanced by new routes.

Mr. Salazar noted as a community grows it is no secret these issues arise. Laredo is already preparing for these routes. He said he appreciates the comments, and moving forward, they will be prepared.

Mr. Penic continued the presentation with information on pavement condition. Overall, both the corridor and Segment 3 are in good to very good condition. The bridges and bridge vertical clearance are also rated highly overall throughout the corridor and within Segment 3.

#### **Mentimeter Question #10 – What are the key pavement and bridge needs and challenges in Segment #3?**

*There were 7 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: bridge and overpass clearances (3), on US 277, need for wider bridges, additional lanes, shoulder improvement etc. (2), oversize/overweight freight vehicles (2), safer inclines to prevent runaway vehicles (1), and increased congestion (2).*

#### **Safety**

Mr. Penic continued the presentation by reviewing total crashes throughout the entire corridor and in Segment 3 (data from 2014-2018). The highest rate of crashes is near cities, except for Lubbock. In Segment 3, the highest crash rates are through Del Rio. Truck crashes are higher in Eagle Pass and Edwards County in Segment 3. Fatal crashes are highest near Eagle Pass and Laredo. He explained contributing factors to crashes are similar in the entire corridor and within Segment 3. Speeding and failure to stop/yield are the most common reasons for crashes. Intersection crashes are the most common in Segment 3.

#### **Mentimeter Question #11 – What areas and issues contribute to safety needs and challenges in Segment #3?**

*There were 8 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: lack of passing lanes (4), Ports of Entry (2), numerous crashes, safety concerns, i.e. steep inclines, Traffic*

***Control light at Loop 79 (3), and more Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) staff/presence (2).***

Anna De La Garza with Eagle Pass International Bridge system commented between Del Rio and Eagle Pass, it is dangerous from lack of passing opportunities.

Judge Tijerina commented from I-35 to Toll Road 255, there has been a huge change in the number of trucks on Highway 83 near Laredo. He explained lots of truck companies are buying land in rural areas since there are no regulations. There are thousands of trucks entering and exiting on Highway 83. There are no passing lanes in this area, and trucks are stopping in the middle of the highway and shoulders with fast vehicles coming up behind them. It is extremely dangerous. There are now four to five major truck companies with 3,000-4,000 trucks from just one company. It has created huge backups.

Mayor Pope responded there is a need to talk about these issues. There is a similar issue in downtown Amarillo. There are several places along route with serious safety issues. Some are right off the route. With the right type of transportation, trucks can be reduced these areas.

Judge Tijerina commented while an issue in Laredo, a lot of people in the northern parts of the corridor may not have same issues. With a lot of heat, the pavement gets hot and warped. TxDOT does a good job on maintenance, but due to the weight of trucks and heat, some areas get unsafe to drive depending on the speed of vehicle.

Mr. Salazar noted this was a good comment and noticed the same thing on I-35. Going west to east, they added concrete to the intersection at Highway 83/Highway 255, which are very high traffic areas. They are also acquiring right-of-way to make the corridor four-lane divided. TxDOT is also moving forward with a bypass that is funded. It is in the environmental review stage now.

Ms. Mays asked if there was any comment from Eagle Pass.

Mr. Antuna responded there is a major concern from Eagle Pass to Del Rio on US 277 due to commercial traffic, and he would like to see them complete State Loop 480 in Eagle Pass.

Mr. Tijerina commented TxDOT is doing a great job. He did make a call to TxDOT about SH 255. There is an intersection has a very short stop, and trucks have a hard time slowing down in time, and the collisions are awful. He asked if there was any way to put slow down signs prior to the exit.

Ms. Mays responded TxDOT has a huge safety initiative including low cost measures.

Mr. Salazar commented there are standards for on-ramps. The problem is there are different scenarios. For example, in the Permian Basin, in rural country, there is not enough lighting at intersections, but it follows standards. He said they will continue to monitor it, and will look further into it, and move forward.

Judge Tijerina applauded TxDOT's efforts of mowing, painting, among others. He wanted to make sure they know it's appreciated, but there might be more to do.

### **Nominations and Elections**

Mayor Pope next announced the need to elect a Chair and Vice Chair for the Segment 3 Committee. He asked if there were any nominations.

Nick Gallegos of the Middle Rio Grande Development Council nominated Mayor Lozano as Chair and Judge Tijerina as Vice-Chair. Jerry Simpton of the Del Rio Economic Development Corporation seconded the nomination.

Mayor Pope asked who was in favor for the Chair and Vice-Chair nominations, and all raised their hands. No one was opposed.

Mayor Lozano and Judge Tijerina accepted their positions of Chair and Vice Chair.

### **Interstate Facility Design Features**

Ms. Thamizharasan reviewed the H.B. 1079 requirements of conducting a comprehensive study and evaluating the feasibility of improvements to create a continuous flow, four-lane divided highway that meets interstate highway standards. She reviewed the existing highways and access control located along Segment 3. She then explained the difference between four-lane divided highway and interstate with frontage roads. Four-lane divided highways have driveway access, lower design speeds, smaller right-of-way widths, and at-grade intersections with other roadways. She provided examples of four-lane divided highways. Interstate with frontage roads have no driveways, no stop signs or signals, higher design speeds, necessary overpasses, and larger right-of-way widths. She also showed examples of interstates with frontage roads.

### **Report Outline**

Ms. Mays discussed the Segment Committee Report outline and the annotated outline of Chapters 1 through 3. She explained each Segment Committee will provide a report. It will consist of an executive summary, letter from the Segment Committee Chair, introduction, public and stakeholder engagement, existing conditions and needs assessment, forecasting and future conditions, segment feasibility analysis, economic development impacts of the Segment, Segment improvement strategies, Segment Committee findings and recommendations, financial plan, and an implementation plan. It will also include figures, tables, and appendices.

Ms. Mays explained the report will be sent to the Advisory Committee to use in the full, final report. She said staff will be drafting Chapters 1 through 3 prior to the next meeting. She said the draft Chapters would be sent to the Committee members at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting for their review and comment.

Mayor Lozano commented he was supportive of getting materials reviewed.

### **Next Meeting**

Ms. Thamizharasan explained there will be four rounds of Segment Committee Meetings and Public Meetings. The first round is in November. She showed dates for each location. She also explained the goal of the public meetings is to inform, consult and collaborate, and engage with the public. The public meeting locations will occur in Amarillo, Lubbock, San Angelo, and Laredo. The first public meeting for Segment 3 will be here tonight.

She discussed the overview agenda for the future Segment Committee meetings. She proposed the next Segment 3 Public Meeting to be February 3, 2020 and the next Segment 3 Committee Meeting to be February 4, 2020 in Laredo.

Mayor Lozano motioned to change the date of the Committee Meeting to the 3<sup>rd</sup>, so they will both be on February 3, 2020. This avoids conflicts with City Council. Judge Tijerina seconded the motion.

### **Discussion**

At this time, Mayor Lozano opened the floor for discussion. He thanked everyone for coming. He said as part of the Ports-To-Plains Feasibility Study, it is important to reach out to stakeholders, trucking companies, industries, and any other interested parties. He appreciates all feedback. He said Segment 3 is different due to its Ports of Entry. It is a competitive entity for the state.

Mr. Gallegos thanked everyone and said he is looking forward to participating.

Ms. Mays thanked Mayor Lozano, the City of Del Rio, and the Ports-To-Plains Alliance folks. She said this is a partnership. She also reminded everyone the public meeting is today at 4:30 p.m. It is crucial to have feedback, and asked members to please reach out to those not at table. The Study is based on not just data but feedback from each Segment Committee. For the Segment 2 Committee meeting in Big Spring on November 18, we will likely talk more about energy. For the Segment 3 Committee meeting in Amarillo on November 20, we will likely hear more about agriculture. She said she was looking forward to seeing everyone on Feb 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mayor Lozano told members to think specifically about trade and transfer commodities. This Study is being driven by energy and trade, not like other corridors that are driven by population. The Segments complement each other, the state, and the country. Keep in mind the Laredo Port of Entry is as large as Los Angeles. He asked everyone to please think about attending the public meeting later that afternoon.

The meeting adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

### **Action Items:**

Schedule next Segment Committee Meeting and Public Meeting on Monday, February 3, 2020