

Ports-to-Plains Advisory Committee Meeting #5 Summary

WebEx September 17, 2020 | 8:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Attendees

Advisory Committee Member	Organization	Attendance
Mayor George Arispe	City of Eldorado	Present
Mayor John Baker	City of Tahoka	Present
Judge Steve Floyd Designee: Commissioner Rick Bacon	Tom Green County	Present
Judge Mike Braddock	Lynn County	Present
Judge Charlie Bradley	Schleicher County	Present
Mayor Bob Brinkmann	City of Dumas	Not Present
Judge Terri Beth Carter	Sherman County	Present
Judge Bryan Cox	Martin County	Not Present
Mayor Wanda Shurley Designee: City Manager Arturo Fuentes	City of Sonora	Present
Judge Ronnie Gordon	Hartley County	Not Present
Mayor Brenda Gunter	City of San Angelo	Present
Judge Kim Halfmann	Glasscock County	Present
Judge Deborah Horwood	Sterling County	Not Present
Mayor Lane Horwood	City of Sterling City	Not Present
Judge Ernie Houdashell	Randall County	Not Present
Judge Terry Johnson	Midland County	Not Present
Judge Harold Keeter	Swisher County	Present
Mayor Bruno Lozano Designee: Matt Wojnowski	City of Del Rio	Present
Mayor Shannon Thomason Designee: Asst. City Manager John Medina	City of Big Spring	Present
Mayor Ginger Nelson Designee: City Manager Jared Miller	City of Amarillo	Present
Judge David B. Mull	Hale County	Present
Judge Foy O'Brien	Dawson County	Not Present

Advisory Committee Member	Organization	Attendance
Judge Lewis G. Owens, Jr.	Val Verde County	Not Present
Judge Curtis Parrish	Lubbock County	Present
Patrick Payton, Mayor	City of Midland	Not Present
Judge Francisco G. Ponce	Dimmit County	Not Present
Mayor Dan Pope (<i>Chairman</i>)	City of Lubbock	Present
Mayor Ricky Reed	City of Stratford	Not Present
Judge Wesley Ritchey	Dallam County	Not Present
Mayor Pete Saenz Designee: Economic Development Director, Tecló Garcia	City of Laredo	Present
Judge David R. Saucedo	Maverick County	Not Present
Mayor Wayne Seiple Designee: City Manager Ronnie Guest	City of Carrizo Springs	Present
Judge James Tullis Shahan	Kinney County	Present
Judge Souli Asa Shanklin	Edwards County	Not Present
Mayor Luis Sifuentes	City of Eagle Pass	Present
Judge Steve Smith (<i>Vice-Chairman</i>)	Sutton County	Present
Judge Hal Spain	Coke County	Not Present
Mayor Josh Stevens	City of Lamesa	Not Present
Mayor Phillip Hass Designee: Asst. City Manager Brent Walker	City of Dalhart	Present
Judge Tano E. Tijerina	Webb County	Present
Mayor David Turner Designee: Asst. City Manager Phillip Urrutia	City of Odessa	Not Present
Judge Johnny "Rowdy" Rhoades Designee: Commissioner Dee Vaughan	Moore County	Present
Judge Kathryn Wiseman	Howard County	Present
Judge Nancy Tanner Designee: Director Sebastin Ysaguirre	Potter County Road and Bridge Department	Present
Texas Transportation Commission		
Commissioner Alvin New	Texas Transportation Commission	Present

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

Caroline Mays
Brian Barth
Roger Beall
Loretta Brown
Jessica Butler
Blake Calvert
Emily Clisby
Gabriel De Ochoa
John DeWitt
Kylan Francis
Lauren Garduno
Michael Haithcock
Bill Hale
Cliff Hallford

Cory Henrickson
Steve Linhart
Sherry Pifer
Roberto Rodriguez, III
David Salazar
Jarred Shaffer
Randee Shields
John R. Speed
Akila Thamizharasan
Trent Thomas
Steve Warren
Casey Wells

Consultant Team

Wendy Travis	Garver	Sean Wray	Garver
Jerry Holder	Garver	Robert Ryan	Blanton Associates
Tracy Michel	Garver	Kari Anne Sutton	PCI

Other Attendees

George Antuna	City of Eagle Pass
Kale Driemeier	City of Del Rio
Shannon Harmon	Representing Senator Charles Perry, District 28
Duffy Hinkle	Ports-to-Plains Alliance
Marshall Hoak	Representing Senator Pete Flores, District 19
Cheri Huddleston	Hance Scarborough, LLP
Sondra Johnson	City of Del Rio
Joe Kiely	Ports-to-Plains Alliance
Ivan Morua	City of Eagle Pass
John Osborne	Lubbock Economic Development Alliance and Chairman Ports-to-Plains Alliance

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Advisory Committee Chair and City of Lubbock Mayor Dan Pope opened the meeting at 8:09 am. Mayor Pope welcomed the attendees and asked Caroline Mays, TxDOT Director of Freight, Trade, and Connectivity for the roll call to be conducted prior to opening comments and the agenda review. Mrs. Mays asked Steve Linhart, TxDOT Project Development Manager, to call roll.

Mayor Dan Pope asked Mrs. Mays to review the agenda.

Agenda Review

Mrs. Mays reviewed the agenda and summarized as follows: summary of the public meetings; conduct a page turn of the revised draft Advisory Committee Report; page turn of the draft Advisory Committee Report Executive Summary; and open discussion.

Commissioner Alvin New, Texas Transportation Commission, asked if the quorum for the meeting had been met. He iterated there are 19 on the phone according to the roll call, and a quorum is 23.

Mayor Pope asked Commissioner New to make comments. Commissioner New's comments focused on the importance of a quorum for this process and for the next meeting. He encouraged the Committee leaders to make sure representation is high and to reach out to encourage Committee members to attend the next meeting. He expressed gratitude for the work the Advisory Committee is doing on the project and moving forward.

Mayor Pope thanked Commissioner New and asked for another roll call to be conducted after review of the summary of the public meeting.

Mayor Pope said the meeting would move quickly since the previous meeting had been an in-depth review of the report. He asked the Committee members to be ready to provide feedback per page. He announced the next meeting would be on October 15th and he is excited about the Committee completing its work.

Mrs. Mays asked other TxDOT representatives to offer comments.

Bill Hale, TxDOT Chief Engineer expressed gratitude for everyone being on the call. He commented on the importance of this study and the need for a quorum.

Brian Barth, TxDOT Director of Project Planning and Development expressed gratitude to the Committee members and noted they are in the home stretch, reiterated the need for a quorum, and appreciated everyone's participation.

Mrs. Mays introduced Jessica Butler as TxDOT's new Director of Transportation Planning and Programming (TPP) Division. Ms. Butler expressed gratitude and indicated she is looking forward to the great work coming from the Advisory Committee.

Mrs. Mays expressed gratitude for the participation by Roger Beall, Deputy Director of the TPP Division and several other TxDOT District Engineers for their assistance and presence on the call.

Summary of the Public Meetings

Ms. Akila Thamizharasan, TxDOT Corridor Planning Branch Manager, provided the summary of the public meetings held on August 25 and 26, 2020. The public attended the virtual, online public

meeting due to COVID-19. According to website analytics, 140 new users viewed the web site with 567 pageviews. Approximately 110 persons attended the live meetings with 65 attending on August 25th and 45 attending on August 26th. The team has been monitoring the web pages for views and comments. The online presentation included information about the entire study including the analysis of existing and forecast conditions followed by the preliminary Advisory Committee recommendations. Many questions were asked during the live session. Overall, positive support and gratitude were expressed, and most questions were about the next steps. Three comments were received from the meeting regarding positive support and an alternative route between Lubbock and San Angelo. Ms. Thamizharasan expressed credit to the Advisory Committee for the hard work that has been done during the past year.

Next, Mr. Linhart took another roll call to capture Committee members and/or representatives that may have joined the meeting after the first roll call. (All attendees from the roll call are represented at the beginning of this document.)

Draft Advisory Committee Report

Mayor Pope asked Mrs. Mays to begin the review of the report page by page. Mrs. Mays asked Wendy Travis of the consulting team to begin the review the report including updates since the last meeting. Mayor Pope reminded the Committee members the review would be conducted quickly and to be prepared.

Mrs. Travis noted in the Energy Production section, a map was added showing energy, agriculture, and trade in the Corridor, including the Eagle Ford shale. During the last meeting, a request was made to add southbound truck crossings at the border crossing in the International Trade section; however, TxDOT does not have that information right now, but it will be added if it becomes available. Additionally, statistics were reviewed, and footnotes and references were added to the report. In the “What are the key corridor challenges?” section, a request was made to add a bullet on economic development for energy, and this bullet was added. Lastly, a request was made to highlight key information and formatting was updated to accomplish this request.

Mr. Jared Miller noted on page 4 the total commodities added up to more than the different numbers per commodity. Mrs. Travis responded the number is based on different sources and this would be clarified based on numbers for Texas versus the nation. Mr. Miller asked for the photo on page 5 (photo of Eagle Ford Shale) to be changed to reflect pump jacks with clear blue sky. Mrs. Travis said the image would be modified.

Mayor Pope solicited additional comments on Chapter 1, and no additional comments were added.

Mr. Curtis Parrish said he was very pleased with the graphics and expressed his gratitude for the team’s work. Mayor Pope agreed with the comment and expressed gratitude. Mrs. Travis said thank you and that she would tell the team.

Mrs. Mays asked Mrs. Travis to continue to Chapter 2.

Mrs. Travis referred to the request to make Chapter 2 clearer regarding the current (baseline) and future conditions of the corridor. A few sentences were added to clarify the chapter parameters. The team corrected a few editorial comments in the corridor maps, highlighting locations of military assets, and other changes to the map. Military bases were added to Chapter 1 on Figure 1.2. A

Committee member asked to correct the name of the airport on Fig. 1.2: Midland International Air & Space Port.

Referencing page 7, Mr. Miller asked the team to clarify which portion of I-27 is on a strategic highway network within the entire corridor versus areas that need to be upgraded. He requested Border Security be added to the National Defense and Security section. Mrs. Travis said Fig. 1.2 shows some general locations, but because the text does not highlight border inspection stations, changes would be made.

Next, Mrs. Travis discussed the questions Committee members had on the population and employment numbers in Chapter 2. She said the population projections used in the report are derived from the Texas Demographic Center and the employment projections come from Moody's. She explained the team added language to explain where each dataset came from. She said information was also added about the passage of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and COVID-19 pandemic which could beneficially impact employment such as the manufacturing of personal protective equipment.

Mayor Pope announced the quorum was met at 24 Committee members/representatives. (Subsequent to this announcement, a total of 26 Committee members were counted present).

Mr. Miller commented about page 15 regarding sentences distinguishing commercial and smaller airports. Judge Wiseman mentioned Big Spring Airport was not listed, but the Committee agreed the list of cities in the sentence regard commercial airports only and no changes were recommended.

Mr. Miller asked for "million" to be added following "167" on page 31 to result in showing the total volume transportation discussing freight flow as "167 million tons."

Regarding the title of Table 2.1, "Actual Ports-to-Plains Corridor Crash Rates by Route Types" on page 27, Mayor Pope asked for the denominator of "per 100 million vehicle miles travelled" to be added. He noted the denominator is called out in the narrative but not in the chart.

Mrs. Travis moved to Chapter 3. Mr. Wojnowski asked to review page 39 in the blue callout box. Following Committee discussion, the requested edit was to change "Improve Congestion and Reliability" to "Alleviate Congestion and Improve Reliability."

Mr. Miller asked to revise the bullet in Chapter 3, page 39 from "Expand the Local Tax Base" to "Increase and expand the local tax base."

Mayor Pope asked for additional comments on Chapter 3, and none were offered.

Mrs. Travis moved to Chapter 4 and stated the only previous comments on this chapter were on formatting and those have been addressed.

Mayor Pope asked for any comments on Chapter 4, and none were offered.

Mrs. Travis moved to Chapter 5.

Mr. Wojnowski asked for a concluding statement, such as a paragraph/sentence/statement, to be made on page 72. Mrs. Travis pointed out that a concluding statement follows the table under the heading, "Next Steps." on page 78. Since the statement is separated from the main discussion by the table and footnotes, Mrs. Travis responded the text will be rearranged as requested. Mrs. Mays

asked if the Advisory Committee would like more detail beyond the single statement. Mayor Pope asked to review this portion of the report following review of the executive summary.

Mrs. Travis asked for review on the order of the topics listed on page 66 based on comments at the last meeting. Mayor Pope approved of the order of the topics and showed appreciation for the effort. Mr. Wojnowski suggested swapping travel times and reduce travel costs.

Mrs. Travis pointed out at the previous meeting the Advisory Committee noted the full-page text boxes with color were preferred and highlighted important topics. Therefore, full page text boxes were added in the report to help items stand out.

Mayor Pope asked to review page 67 and clarify the statistics for each sector. He asked if the statistics are all annual. Mrs. Travis said yes but would review clarifying the statements.

Judge Wiseman requested modification to the top callout box on page 67: change “could” to “will”.

Judge Parrish requested edits to the bottom callout box on page 67: reduce the number of “ands” and check grammar.

Judge Wiseman requested the statement on the bottom callout box on page 67 be turned into a positive statement. For example, ‘the upgrade will benefit and stimulate the prosperity of the region, state, and nation.’ The Committee members agreed with this modification.

Committee members asked if the Advisory Committee would be continued and kept intact or if a smaller committee would be formed to make recommendations.

Judge Parrish responded HB 1079 does not address the ongoing role of the Advisory Committee. In essence, “there is no more HB 1079.” He said if an unofficial Advisory Committee continues to meet, it would be as West Texans to promote the Ports-to-Plains Interstate Corridor.

A decision was made to add the continued role of the Advisory Committee to the policy recommendations on page 68.

Mrs. Mays asked if there were any additional comments on the policy recommendations, and none were offered.

Mrs. Mays asked if there were any comments on the Implementation Plan, and none were offered.

Mr. Miller asked that the report to mention an increase in state sales taxes based on growth.

Mayor Pope asked for additional comments, and none were offered.

Draft Advisory Committee Report Executive Summary

Mrs. Mays reminded Committee members the executive summary is very important, and copies will be printed for many people to review. She emphasized the team wants to make sure this report accurately conveys the Advisory Committee’s message and that it is captured in a meaningful and impactful way. She asked for the Committee members to please review and ensure that “it is your voice”.

Mayor Pope asked for the review to begin.

Mr. Wojnowski said he emailed some minor comments to Mrs. Mays. A general comment was made to be consistent in the reference to “Corridor” as either upper or lower case. Mrs. Mays said “corridor” would change to “Corridor.” On page 3 in the blue text, third sentence, Mr. Wojnowski asked to add something at “beyond” (i.e. “beyond the State or region”).

In the next sentence, Judge Wiseman requested the statement be made into a positive (e.g. “upgrading the entire corridor will stimulate...”). Mrs. Mays assured Judge Wiseman the team would review the document in its entirety and make negative statements into positive statements based on Judge Wiseman comments.

Mayor Pope asked why the last sentence on page 3 specifically stated the proposals in the document are not from TxDOT. Mrs. Mays responded the Advisory Committee is making the recommendations, not TxDOT. The report would be submitted to TxDOT. Mayor Pope would like the sentence reworded because TxDOT has helped and provided input. Mrs. Mays stated she would check with her leadership on rewording.

On page 5, Mr. Wojnowski asked for the backslash I-27 to be removed in the following statement as it has not been referenced this way before: “Why is the Ports-to-Plains Corridor/I-27 important?” He also asked to remove the blank line in middle section under Agriculture Production, requested the team check the \$11B as brought up in the main report, and remove the backslash and I-27 at the beginning of the sentence “Ports-to-Plains Corridor/I-27”.

While reviewing pages 6-7, Mrs. Travis stated all changes from the report will flow to the executive summary.

On page 7, under Economic Development, Mr. Wojnowski asked for the following changes: in the third bullet, change comma to period after “1992”; and in the fourth bullet, change comma to period after “growth.”

Mr. Miller suggested adding food security and energy security and in the first sentence on page 6. He suggested changing “Key Military Assets Along the Corridor” to “Key National Defense and Security Facilities.” The name of the Midland Airport on the map should be corrected as per the same correction indicated previously in the report.

Mayor Pope asked for any comments on pages 8-9, and none were offered.

On page 7, Mrs. Mays requested the second bullet under Connectivity be revised for clarity.

On page 4, the request was made to expand the green agriculture polygon on the map to cover the entire corridor in the northwestern Panhandle.

Mayor Pope asked for any comments on pages 10-11, and none were offered.

On pages 12-13, Mr. Miller asked if the reader would understand the meaning of “2050 (Baseline)” in the chart. Mrs. Travis suggested removing “(Baseline).” The graph heading would also be changed from “2018-2050” to “2018 and 2050.”

Mayor Pope asked for other comments. He praised the team for the really good work, especially with a small amount of comments, which underscores the great work.

Mr. Miller suggested highlighting the positive statements as Judge Wiseman had requested and switching the gray and blue colors on pages 12-13, indicating blue would be more positive than gray.

Mrs. Mays responded population would always be larger than employment. Employment growth would be less, especially during COVID. Mrs. Mays said population growth and job growth do not correlate perfectly. Mr. Speed noted the data are from two different studies (TDH and Moody). He believes staffers reviewing may have questions. Mrs. Mays said age groups must be reviewed and that piecing different data sources together is normal. Mrs. Mays said she is confident in the data that has been used for this study and the data is the best available.

Commissioner New reminded the Committee members the explanation was provided earlier and was now brought up again. He asked how clear it would be for the reader to see the data is from two different sources. Mr. Miller said it is a footnote in the report but is not in the executive summary. Mrs. Mays said a parenthetical source would be provided in the executive summary for population and employment.

On page 13, the request was made to change the entire page scheme as reflected by Mr. Miller: switch the blue and gray on the travel times and crash rate and remove “(Baseline).”

On pages 14-15, Mr. Wojnowski requested adding the two border crossings Del Rio and Eagle Pass in the second sentence. He stated the legends on the maps should be large for readability. Mrs. Mays expressed gratitude for the comments.

Mr. Miller requested adding “million” between “167” and “tons” under the truck icon.

A comment was made to change 2017 to 2018 under “Commodity Export and Import Tonnage”. In addition, carry forward comments from the report to the “Extending I-27 Is Essential To” highlighted text box on page 16, including “Alleviate Congestion and Improve Reliability,” and adding state taxes to the last bullet. And on page 16, top two paragraphs, add words to begin the statements to match the arrows for readability (e.g. “Baseline scenario...”).

Mayor Gunter asked if property tax, etc., should be added. Mrs. Mays responded local tax bases includes all taxes and the changes would be made the same as in the report. Mrs. Mays expressed gratitude to Mayor Gunter.

On page 18, Mr. Wojnowski asked for the totals to be added at the bottom of the blue callout with infographics for each category. After some discussion, this suggestion was accepted.

Mrs. Mays said to add “Product” after “Gross Domestic” in the infographic callout.

Mr. Miller suggested adding a statement about saving consumers money and consumer benefits as well under “Save Industries Money” on page 18. Mrs. Mays said the team would look for an opportunity to include this comment.

Mayor Pope asked for any comments on pages 19, and none were offered.

Mrs. Mays requested to change “Available” to “Potential” funding sources at the top of page 21.

Mayor Gunter requested combining the two sentences into one under “Infrastructure for Rebuilding America Grant Program.”

Mayor Pope said the Committee has blessed page 23 and asked for any comments on page 22. Mr. Wojnowski asked for consistency in the order of the listing of “Policy Recommendations” and the “Project Recommendations” in the report and the executive summary. Mrs. Travis said these could be reordered for consistency. Mrs. Mays stated the Committee should advise the team on the listing order. Mayor Gunter said to talk about projects then the policy to execute the projects. She suggested leaving it as is. Mayor Pope agreed. Mayor Gunter said to leave both reports as they are.

Open Discussion

Mayor Pope wanted more discussion around the timeline for implementation. He asked, after the report is delivered and adopted: “What does the Committee suggest TxDOT do? What is the role of the Advisory Committee?” Mayor Pope suggested proposing a 6-month recommendation. Each TxDOT District would produce a plan to talk about existing funding and funding challenges. He also suggested the Advisory Committee or subset of Advisory Committee (chairs and vice-chairs) serve in an oversight role, meet quarterly, and report back to TxDOT and stakeholders in the process. Mayor Pope asked for discussion/comments for next steps.

Mayor Gunter did not want to get too deep in the weeds with funding and politics. The overview and strategic plan were highly impacted by TxDOT District Engineers. She feels this may be a lot of work without a deep impact.

Commissioner New recommended the Committee look at I-69 because they had an Advisory Committee. He suggested reviewing how the I-69 Advisory Committee was formed, executed, organized, and determine what the Advisory Committee wants to recommend as a follow-up to the requirements of HB 1079.

Mayor Gunter agreed with Commissioner New on how to move forward with political issues and support at the state level and federal level. Mayor Gunter said political approvals are needed.

Mayor Pope asked Mrs. Mays to give advice on I-69.

Mrs. Mays asked TPP Deputy Director Roger Beall to advise about I-69 system development. Mr. Beall explained that in March 2008, the I-69 Advisory Committee was created by the Texas Transportation Commission and was doing similar things the Ports-to-Plains Advisory Committee is doing today, such as identifying community priorities. In setting up that framework, guidance and direction, the I-69 Advisory Committee advised TxDOT on how the I-69 system in Texas should be implemented. TxDOT prepared the I-69 System Implementation Strategy in 2016 and updated it in 2018. There is no dedicated funding for developing the I-69 system in Texas and projects must compete with other projects statewide for funding. Improvements to the Ports-to-Plains Corridor are dependent on potential future funding and prioritization of projects in TxDOT. TxDOT cannot lobby elected officials. The Alliance for I-69 Texas advocates for developing the I-69 system in the state.

Lauren Garduno then added the following information regarding I-69: In 2008-2009 the funding dried up for 10 years. Not until 2018 was funding added to Category 4 (corridor), and projects for the I-69 system started getting picked because they were ready and already prioritized and the process had been in place.

Mayor Gunter noted that the Ports-to-Plains Alliance is in place to advocate for developing the Ports-to-Plains Corridor. She also said the Advisory Committee must make sure the legislators have the statistics and use the report to inform them about the Corridor.

Tecló Garcia, representing the City of Laredo, said he agrees with these statements. He worked in conjunction with the Alliance for I-69 Texas from the beginning when he was in McAllen. The City of Laredo is also part of the Alliance.

Commissioner New said it's up to the Committee members to work these things out. He also stated to Mayor Pope for the Committee to finish its work on HB 1079 and then ponder the next steps.

Mayor Pope asked for any other feedback on the executive summary. No additional comments were provided.

Mayor Pope asked for Mrs. Mays to give a schedule for next versions of the report and executive summary. Mrs. Mays said comments need to be received by Wed. Sept. 23, 2020. The team would take one week to turn around revisions. All comments given today would be addressed.

The next Advisory Committee meeting is Oct. 15 and will be conducted virtually.

Mayor Pope asked for people to provide comments on the report and executive summary by the Sept. 23 date. He expressed gratitude for Committee members' time and participation.

Mrs. Mays expressed gratitude for Committee members' attendance and comments and look forward to future comments.

Adjourned at 10:43am.