

Ports-to-Plains Segment 2 Committee Meeting #2 Summary

February 5, 2020, 8:00 a.m.
TxDOT San Angelo District Office/WebEx*
4502 Knickerbocker Road
San Angelo, Texas

**Note: WebEx was provided as an option for participants due to inclement weather.*

Attendees

Segment Committee Member	Organization	Attendance
Guy Andrews	Economic Development Director, City of San Angelo	Present
Mayor George Arispe	City of Eldorado	Present via WebEx
Mayor John Baker	City of Tahoka	Present via WebEx
James Beauchamp	President, MOTRAN Alliance, Inc.	Designee Present via WebEx: Dustin Fawcett
Brad Bouma	President, Select Milk	Not Present
Judge Mike Braddock	Lynn County	Present via WebEx
Judge Charlie Bradley	Schleicher County	Not Present
Bobby Burns	President and CEO, Midland Chamber of Commerce	Not Present
Kasey Coker	Executive Director, The High Ground of Texas	Present via WebEx
Judge Bryan Cox	Martin County	Not Present
John Esparza	Texas Trucking Association	Present via WebEx
Judge Steve Floyd	Tom Green County Designee: Commissioner	Designee Present: Rick Bacon
Donna Garrett	Executive Director, Sonora Chamber of Commerce	Not Present
Mayor Brenda Gunter	San Angelo	Present
Judge Kim Halfmann	Glasscock County	Present via WebEx
Judge Debi Hays	Ector County	Not Present
Major Hofheins	Director, San Angelo Metropolitan Planning Organization	Present
Judge Deborah Horwood	Sterling County	Not Present
Mayor Lane Horwood	City of Sterling City	Present via WebEx
Judge Terry Johnson	Midland County	Not Present

H. David Jones	Director, Lubbock Metropolitan Planning Organization	Not Present
Michael Looney	San Angelo Chamber of Commerce	Present
Eddie McBride	President and CEO, Lubbock Chamber of Commerce	Designee Present via WebEx: Norma Ritz Johnson
Gloria McDonald	City Commissioner, City of Big Spring Designee: Big Spring Economic Development Corporation	Present via WebEx
Karen Mize	President, Lamesa Area Chamber of Commerce	Not Present
Judge Foy O'Brien	Dawson County	Not Present
John Osborne	Chairman, Ports-to-Plains Alliance Designee: Vice President of Membership and Marketing	Present via WebEx
Judge Curtis Parrish	Lubbock County	Present via WebEx
Mayor Patrick Payton	City of Midland	Not Present
Tim Pierce	Executive Director, South Plains Association of Governments	Not Present
Mayor Dan Pope, Ports-to-Plains Advisory Committee Chair	City of Lubbock	Present via WebEx
Stephen Robertson	Executive Vice President, Permian Basin Petroleum Association Designee: Community Relations Coordinator	Present via WebEx
Mayor Wanda Shurley	City of Sonora Designee: City Manager	Designee Present: Arturo Fuentes
Judge Stephen H. Smith, Ports-to-Plains Advisory Committee Vice-Chair	Sutton County	Present
Judge Hal Spain	Coke County	Not Present
Mayor Josh Stevens	City of Lamesa	Not Present
John Austin Stokes	Executive Director, Concho Valley Council of Governments	Designee Present via WebEx: Erin Hernandez
Mayor Shannon Thomason	City of Big Spring Designee: Assistant City Manager	Present via WebEx along with John Medina
Fred Thompson	Director, Sterling City Economic Development Corporation	Present via WebEx
Mayor David Turner	City of Odessa Designee: Assistant City Manager	Not Present
Debbye ValVerde	Executive Director, Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce	Not Present
Steve Verett	Executive Vice President, Plains Cotton Growers, Inc.	Not Present

	Designee: Director of Policy Analysis and Research	
Cameron Walker	Director, Permian Basin Metropolitan Planning Organization	Present via WebEx
Judge Kathryn Wiseman	Howard County	Not Present

Elected Officials

Lane Carter San Angelo City Council

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

Caroline Mays	Commissioner Alvin New (WebEx)
Loretta Brown	Becki Perkins
Emily Clisby (WebEx)	Randee Shields
Brian Crawford (WebEx)	John Speed (WebEx)
John DeWitt	Akila Thamizharasan
Michael Haithcock (WebEx)	Steve Warren
Cliff Hallford (WebEx)	Neil Welch
Steve Linhart	

Consultant Team

Wendy Travis	Garver	Audrey Koehler	WSP
Kirsten McCullough	Garver	Michael Penic	WSP
Tracy Michel	Garver	Rachel Lunceford	HG Consult
Mike Spayd	Garver	Lena Camarillo	PCI
Sean Wray	Garver	Colin McGahey	PCI
Joe Bryan	WSP		

Other Attendees

Cheri Huddleston	Hance Scarborough
Joe Kiely	Ports-to-Plains Alliance
Chuck Shore	San Angelo Chamber of Commerce
Daniel Valenzuela	City of San Angelo

Welcome

Mayor Brenda Gunter of San Angelo started the meeting by thanking everyone for participating. She said last night was a great public meeting with comments pertinent to the conversation and supportive. The information presented last night brought everyone up to speed. She commented it was great to see numbers backing up the desire to have an interstate; the data is so important as it backs up the passion everyone has. The supporting data for House Bill (HB) 1079 is very prescriptive, and we must stick to the bill. Segment #2 is from north of Lubbock to south of Sonora, where there is some great input and new statistics. She said it was great to have all the TxDOT staff at the meeting and encouraged members to ask questions and participate. The meetings are only as good as the participation. We've come a long way from twenty years ago, and probably further in the last nine months than in the total twenty years and that's due to the belief in the project. You

wouldn't be here if you didn't believe in it. It's about food, fuel, and fiber. We deliver products to the world and we've been blessed with West Texas, the Permian Basin, and its economic issues.

Mayor Dan Pope of Lubbock said he would like to echo Mayor Gunter's comments. He commented he had the chance to be in Laredo on Monday, which was a very productive meeting, and today will be the same. He thanked everyone for dedicating their time to this today and reminded them the next 90-120 days will be a lot of work in the segment. It's a bit of a sprint but stay with us. The information today is encouraging, and I look forward to moving forward.

Commissioner Alvin New of the Texas Transportation Commission commented he appreciates everyone's effort. When we're in a sprint, it makes things happen. He thanked everyone for attending and said he was looking forward to listening in.

Recap of Previous Segment Committee Meeting

Caroline Mays, TxDOT Freight, Trade and Connectivity Section Director, started the presentation by providing a recap of the first Segment Committee meeting held November 18, 2019 in Big Spring. She reviewed HB 1079, study goals, and existing conditions. She then updated members on the schedule and process.

Forecasted Conditions

Population Forecast

Kirsten McCullough of the consultant team started the presentation by explaining today's meeting would focus on forecasted conditions projected to 2050. From 2020 to 2050, the overall corridor is expected to grow by 61%. Segment #2 population growth is projected to grow by 101% with the largest growth in Andrews and Midland Counties. Overall corridor median household income is projected to grow by 161%. In Segment #2, it's projected to grow by 137%, with Glasscock and Lynn Counties having the highest projected growth.

John Osborne, Ports-to-Plains Alliance, asked if the forecasted growth is projected based off existing conditions or with the investment in the corridor.

Ms. McCullough responded it is based on existing conditions and does not include the corridor.

Mr. Osborne asked if adjustments would be made to the numbers if we have interstate standards.

Ms. McCullough responded while it does not include interstate numbers, it does include planned and programmed projects.

Cameron Walker, Permian Basin Metropolitan Planning Organization, commented he'd like to see exact data for Ector County. He said they were growing very rapidly and were exploring new ways to bring and treat water.

Mayor Gunter asked if there was a comparison to the state. She said the growth looks fantastic to those living there but was curious how it compares to I-35 and if it would make anyone notice relative to the rest of the state.

Ms. McCullough said the team would look into those numbers.

Ms. McCullough continued the presentation by discussing employment. Overall corridor employment is projected to grow by 17% while Segment #2 employment is projected to grow by 22% with most being in Andrews and Gaines Counties. Corridor employment by industry is projected to be government and trade, transportation and utilities. Segment #2 forecasted employment by industry is projected to be government, trade, transportation and utilities, natural resources and mining, professional and business service, and leisure and hospitality. Corridor domestic product is expected to grow by 69% while Segment #2 is projected to grow by 76% with the highest growth in Tom Green and Lubbock Counties.

Mayor Pope commented the employment numbers will need to be validated since the employment numbers are much lower than the population numbers.

Mr. Walker commented the GDP numbers seem low, as 70% has already occurred.

Ms. McCullough explained certain counties are expected to increase more, and that 70% was an average.

Mr. Osborne commented about the difference in employment and population numbers as well, and Ms. McCullough replied the study team would be looking into those numbers.

Ms. McCullough ended the discussion with land use in the corridor and in Segment #2. Along the corridor, 76% of the land is considered developable while 78% is developable in Segment #2.

Mentimeter Question #1: What factors do you think are influencing future population, economic, and land use conditions?

There were 18 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: natural resources – water, oil, natural gas and other energy production (7), emerging freight corridor because of the opening of the Presidio rail bridge may spur growth (1), strong economic growth in Texas and West Texas (1), continued westward migration from I-35 to the West (1), and education programs (1).

Major Hofheins with the San Angelo Metropolitan Planning Organization commented water availability can certainly limit future growth, but it can also have the opposite effect. Economic growth may go where water is available.

Mr. Osborne commented not having an interstate going through this area makes it extremely difficult to recruit companies. There is a perception there is no accessibility here. If you look at an aerial map, which many of these companies do, they'll go right for the urban areas.

Mayor Gunter commented the area has not seen the impact of the pipelines being laid down, which transfer goods as well, but not by freight. What will that do in the future? We don't know what the effect will be.

Mentimeter Question #2: Do you envision the local population, economy, and land use changing if improvements are made to the Ports-to-Plains Corridor? If so, where?

There were 16 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: yes, high volume of truck traffic and need for truck parking and other amenities as the corridor is improved for freight movement (4), yes, more economic development in the region and connection to international trade with Mexico (3), interstate development has helped to spur growth along its path with a need for support services and housing (3), more programs to develop and manage water resources and energy development (2), and businesses may choose to relocate or expand to our region with further transportation accessibility (1).

Mayor Gunter commented if you look where existing interstates are, you can see that cities build up around them. I-35 is a perfect example. Interstates drive population, freight, and the economy.

Mr. Walker commented an interstate will also impact the global economy.

Gloria McDonald, City of Big Spring, commented if the burden is taken off I-35, it makes sense to travel that way to get to the central part of America and that could change with another route.

Mayor Gunter commented it was all about equity; are we getting our fair share of investment? If you look at investment, it's the I-35 corridor. We know it's less expensive to put a highway here. You can make the best investment and dynamically change the story. It's much cheaper to put in I-27 unless you find an alternate route, and you can't keep putting money into I-35 when it isn't making an impact.

Forecasted Traffic Conditions

Michael Penic of the consultant team continued the presentation by discussing traffic. He explained traffic counts and how the TxDOT travel demand model called the Statewide Analysis Model (SAM) is used for future traffic conditions. The team reviewed traffic growth scenarios that included No Build, 4-lane Divided Highway, and Interstate Highway. After applying the SAM to each scenario, it was found growth in a 4-lane Divided Highway scenario was very similar to the No Build scenario. Urban mobility and reliability are an issue in both scenarios. For the Interstate Highway scenario, there was 100 to 200% growth in all three segments. Mr. Penic continued with data about current traffic volume on Texas rural interstates and Ports-to-Plains Corridor rural traffic volume as an interstate in 2050.

Mayor Gunter noted the original interstate system was not based off population. It was based off the best way to get military and equipment west to east. It's not always about population, but about movement of traffic and freight.

Mayor Pope commented the future traffic counts are one of the most significant findings to him. I-27 would not only be viable but would have considerably more traffic that goes through rural Texas. I-27 is viable, and this helps prove our point. It needs to be served.

Dustin Fawcett from MOTRAN– commented from I-20 to Big Spring, we're seeing traffic counts near 50,000. Why aren't we seeing higher numbers?

Mr. Penic explained this is just looking at rural areas, since that makes up the majority of the corridor. Urban areas would be much higher.

Mr. Penic concluded with traffic forecasts in Segment #2 included US 277 north of Sonora, SH-158 near Midland, and US 87 south of Lubbock.

Mentimeter Question #3: What are the opportunities and challenges related to the difference in traffic volumes between the 4-lane divided and interstate options?

*There were 12 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as:
Opportunities: safety and traffic flow (4), potential for business expansion (3), job growth, boost to tourism and development, connectivity with Mexico and Western Canada (Alberta), increased Department of Public Safety presence.
Challenges: added strain on existing emergency services and funding.*

Mayor Lane Horwood of Sterling City noted a challenge in rural towns is that their budget barely allows them to do what they want to do. For example, if they add a loop, they may not be able to provide services due to the budget.

Mr. Osborne said from a development standpoint, without any traffic coming to the community, the entire city shuts down. He provided an example of a mining town in Colorado. He said he thought traffic was the lifeblood for the region and the state. It can dramatically affect our corridor and small towns. He asked if the team is looking at estimated numbers around San Angelo.

Mr. Penic replied the team is looking at the entire corridor, and all official sources are in the current forecast, but a separate economic forecast will be discussed at a future meeting.

Ms. Mays added the data is at the county level.

Freight Forecasts

Joe Bryan of the consultant team proceeded with freight forecasts. Total truck tonnage is projected to grow by 78% through 2050 along the corridor. Corridor truck traffic connects across the state and is forecast to grow broadly. He noted the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) trade deal was passed very recently, so the uncertainty of trade with Mexico is gone. Shipping across oceans is at a much higher cost, and the top recipient of sourcing change is Mexico.

Mr. Bryan continued the presentation with freight growth in Segment #2. Total truck tonnage in Segment #2 is projected to grow by 87%. The fastest growth is forecasted in Ector, Howard, and Borden Counties. Inbound freight is projected to grow 81% in Segment #2. Outbound freight growth

is projected to grow 85% in Segment #2. Truck trade growth is expected to grow in the corridor and Segment #2 as well.

Mayor Gunter pointed out this is purely freight numbers, not population. Mr. Bryan confirmed that. He also said there is a need for strong anchors to validate a corridor, and they are present in this area.

Ms. Mays said to remember within this corridor, and particularly in this segment, there is a lot of energy development. It's coming from outside of the U.S., especially from Mexico. We are seeing so many imports which supports all the energy production here.

Mayor Gunter noted Laredo is the number one port, and there is no alternative for those trucks coming in, so we haven't even seen the impact of that.

Mr. Bryan also discussed the corridor supply chain network. The corridor trade network is extensive and is forecast to grow everywhere. Food and agriculture categories and energy/oil field products are forecast to remain the same in 2050.

Mr. Osborne asked if this was trade from counties along the corridor to other places in Texas.

Mr. Bryan explained this was foreign trade. It's showing what is moving, and it's going to gateways including ports.

Commissioner New commented in times before, in a growing area that has petroleum, you end up with businesses that are distribution-related such as Walmart or Family Dollar. It brings other type of trucking besides petroleum.

Mr. Bryan replied yes, indirectly. If you look at the degree of inbound growth, that's why it's concentrated around populated areas. There is a need for warehouse growth.

Mayor Gunter asked if distribution growth followed interstates.

Mr. Bryan said when selecting a site location, a topline review of warehousing and distribution will be conducted and one of the first things they look at is access to interstate, not highways.

Mentimeter Question #4: What are the opportunities and challenges related to the increase of freight within the corridor?

There were 13 responses. The number of responses is in parentheses. They are summarized as: Opportunities: ancillary industry growth to support trucking and freight movement/distribution (3), need for hotels, restaurants and fueling stations, economic development, and opportunity for intermodal transfer infrastructure rather than concentration in one area of Texas. Challenges: safety concerns with increased truck movement in small towns (3), Infrastructure maintenance (regularly scheduled and increased need) (3), uniform safety enforcement on commercial vehicles with focus on border security (1), lack of full interstate impedes freight movement, and required truck parking, litter and pollution complaints.

Michael Looney, San Angelo Chamber of Commerce, asked if this was talking about precision rail.

Mr. Bryan explained precision is making sure that every connection is made precisely when planned. Rail will say it's more important than schedule. You end up with a more concentrated network.

Major Hofheins commented we glossed over funding. He realizes it's going to be cheaper than I-35, but funding is still necessary to maintain the current system. We will still have maintenance. We need funding to maintain feeder roads.

Mr. Osborne asked if we were talking about regionally generated freight, and are we looking at local production. He asked if that was being accounted for.

Mr. Bryan said yes, some of this work being done for the Permian Basin will feed into that as a part of this study.

Planned and Programmed Projects

Akila Thamizharasan, TxDOT Corridor Planning Branch Manager started the presentation by defining planned and programmed projects. A planned project is a project identified in a TxDOT or Metropolitan Planning Organization Plan. A programmed project has been funded or partially funded. Within Segment #2, there are 212 miles of 4-lane divided or controlled access roadway. Five miles of planned and programmed projects will be upgraded to 4-lane divided or better. Ms. Thamizharasan reviewed each planned and programmed project within Segment #2.

Mr. Osborne asked what the timeframe was for those projects.

Ms. Thamizharasan responded each have a different timeframe and they are listed in Handout #5.

Mayor Gunter noted there was a huge gap of 480 miles which was almost half the corridor. We have Laredo as the number one port, but have a huge gap, and that's a problem.

Mr. Osborne asked if on the west side, between Midland and Odessa, that was the high priority corridor.

Ms. Mays said the bill describes it that way, but she will double check. *(It is State Highway [SH] 349 and is part of the high priority corridor.)*

Identification of Gaps

Ms. Thamizharasan continued the presentation by identifying gaps. For this study, a gap in the corridor is where the existing roadway is not a 4-lane divided roadway or interstate. A gap is also where there are no planned or programmed projects that will upgrade the existing roadway to a 4-lane divided roadway or interstate. She reviewed known gaps within Segment #2.

Next, a work session was conducted so committee members could identify gaps within the Segment #2 corridor. The Gap maps were provided, and committee members were asked to draw or write

opportunities, issues and strategies they would like to see proposed. An online, interactive map was provided for members using the WebEx.

Preliminary Corridor Feasibility Analysis

The presentation continued with Ms. Thamizharasan explaining the definition of a feasibility analysis and how it's performed. She explained the difference between a 4-lane divided highway and an interstate with frontage roads. She also explained the feasibility analysis criteria is detailed in HB 1079.

Next, Mr. Penic continued a discussion of the feasibility analysis and whether a Ports-to-Plains Corridor would relieve traffic condition and provide reliability, as freight traffic relies heavily on this.

Mr. Osborne said the way he is hearing it, developing an interstate along the corridor would help alleviate traffic in the red areas (from the map).

Mayor Gunter said it would be a more direct route than the route they take today.

Next, Mr. Penic explained diversions. Modeling did not show any significant diversion from other routes with 4-lane option versus the 2050 No Build. He discussed the diversions from the Interstate option and showed where anticipated diversions would be statewide and nationally. Statewide diversions were low to moderate from I-35 and I-45, and moderate from I-10 and I-20. Significant diversion occurred on US 385 south of Hartley, US 385 to US 62 between Odessa and Lubbock, and US 84 between Lubbock and I-20. Diversions in Segment #2 included south of Lubbock, SH 349, SH 158, and south of San Angelo.

Mr. Penic continued to discuss safety and mobility. He reviewed travel time savings in the corridor and within Segment #2. He also presented data on 2050 truck traffic not diverted by a 4-lane corridor and 2050 truck traffic diverted to a full interstate corridor and within Segment #2.

Mayor Pope commented it's easy for some of us to think in terms of economic development, but we miss something if we don't underline safety. This is very important. We experience increases in auto crashes in our area, and it's doubled since last year. Anything that helps safety is necessary.

Mayor Gunter said we talk a lot about freight which is important, but people talk about saving money, and time is money in this situation. Going from point A to point B as quickly as possible saves money.

Mr. Osborne said along the same lines, with all the heavy tonnage that's coming, when we start looking at full interstate development, we need to look at correct, allowable weight that's allowed on the interstate. He'd like to see a higher weight standard.

Commissioner New said the group needs to understand that this is a federal highway. It's harder to get oversize/overweight permits on a federal highway. Some loads are just not allowed on interstates. They are built on higher restrictions, and there are some laws you will need to read through and understand as we move along.

Mr. Osborne asked if even with the increase an updated interstate it would still show an additional 135% diverted truck tons above the 2050 forecast.

Mr. Penic confirmed that.

Mr. Osborne thanked the team for the comprehensiveness of the data presented.

Mayor Gunter said she wanted to emphasize the important of the data. Statistics tell the story better than our passion. Thank you to everyone for putting together the data and the storyline that tells our needs.

Ms. McDonald also thanked the team for putting this information together.

Review and Discussion of Report Chapters 1 and 2

Ms. Mays reviewed changes made to the Segment Committee Report outline before asking committee members for comments and questions on draft Chapters 1 (Introduction) and 2 (Existing Conditions and Needs Assessment).

Overall, the members would like to see more Segment #2 unique information added to Chapter 1. They want to show how Segment #2 stands out from the rest of the Corridor. In Chapter 2, they would like to see an emphasis on safety and more discussion about the Permian Basin and its statistics. All comments were noted during the meeting and are listed in the table below.

Ms. Mays extended the deadline for committee members to provide comments to TxDOT on the two draft chapters to February 14, 2020. All comments that were received during the meeting and by the Feb 14 deadline will be added to a comment matrix to ensure each was addressed.

Comments from Segment #2 Meeting

Comment	Commenter
Chapter 1 Comments	
We refer to west Texas, but we need to recognize both west Texas and south Texas	Mayor Pope
Need to capture the uniqueness of each segment	Mayor Pope
Need to mention Tahoka and Odessa	Mayor Pope
Add Eagle Ford Shale and discuss natural gas in this segment	Mayor Pope
Emphasize safety	Mayor Gunter
Reiterate freight issues – time is money, money is time	Mayor Gunter
Add more information on safety	John Osborne
Acknowledge congestion (relieving I-35) and increasing quality of life by relieving congestion. May be creating congestion in some communities as we build this.	Major Hofheins
Update oil/natural gas/wind statistics – <i>(John to send this information)</i>	John Osborne
Include the national security aspect, it's vital that we could move these commodities if foreign trade stopped	Mayor Thomason
Add more detail to safety, agriculture, wind, and median household income	Mayor Pope
Chapter 2 Comments	

Focus on percentage of population (if only actual numbers are used, it will be small compared to DFW, Austin, Houston, etc.)	Mayor Gunter
Include solar, it's becoming big in Tom Green County	Rick Bacon
Include Permian Basin contributions to the University system, water industry, sand mines, etc.	John Osborne

Next Meeting

The next meeting is proposed to be held Thursday, April 2nd in Lubbock at the American Windmill Museum.

The meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Action Items:

Schedule the next Segment Committee Meeting on Thursday, April 2, 2020