

I-27 Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

Ramada by Wyndham, Del Rio/Teams | September 19, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Advisory Committee Member	Organization	Attendance
Mayor Brenda Gunter, Committee Chair	City of San Angelo	Present
Judge Curtis Parrish, Committee Vice-Chair	Lubbock County	Not Present
Mayor Alvaro “Al” Arreola	City of Del Rio	Present
Mayor Lori Blong	City of Midland	Present
Mayor Robert Moore	City of Big Spring	Present
Mayor Mark McBrayer	City of Lubbock	Not Present
Mayor Cole Stanley	City of Amarillo	Present
Mayor Dr. Victor D. Trevino	City of Laredo	Not Present
Judge Lane Carter Proxy: Rick Bacon	Tom Green County	Proxy Present
Judge Alicia Law	Sherman County	Not Present
Judge Randy Johnson	Howard County	Not Present
Judge Terry Johnson	Midland County	Not Present
Judge Lewis Owens	Val Verde County	Present
Judge Rowdy Rhoades	Moore County	Not Present
Judge Wes Ritchey	Dallam County	Not Present
Judge Nancy Tanner	Potter County	Not Present
Judge Tano E. Tijerina	Webb County	Not Present
Tracee Bentley Proxy: Debra Richmond	Permian Strategic Partnership	Proxy Present
Kevin Carter	Amarillo Economic Development	Not Present
John Osborne	Lubbock Economic Development	Present
Jorge Ramon	Del Rio Economic Development	Present
Gerry Schwebel	IBC Bank	Not Present
Dee Vaughan	Texas Corn Producers	Not Present

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

Lorena Echeverria de Misi
Adriana Muñoz
Alejandro “Alex” Meade III
Austin Valentine
Caroline Mays
Cary Karnstadt
Claudia J. Lagos Galindo
Epigmenio “Epi” Gonzalez
Eric Lykins
Erika Esparza
Farideh Dassi
Francisco Almanza
Giacomo Yaquinto
Hyung Ahn
Joe Kiely
John DeWitt

Kit Black
Luis M. Villarreal
Melanie Alvord
Meera Nguyen
Michael Haithcock
Mildred Litchfield
Nicole Lawson
Robert Ornelas
Roberto Rodriguez III
Sergio Vasquez
Steve Warren
Tony Schell
Trent Thomas
Wesley Starnes
Yvette Flores

Consultant Team

Wendy Travis	Garver
Kendall Smith	Garver
Leigh Mercer	Garver
Sean Wray	Garver
Tracy Michel	Garver
Lena Camarillo	PCI
Elissa Garza	PCI

Other Attendees

Joe Kiely	Ports-to-Plains Alliance	Lindsey Adams	City of Midland
Lauren Garduno	Ports-to-Plains Alliance	Jose Ortiz	City of Midland
Cheri Huddleston	Ports-to-Plains Alliance	Karen Hesse Smith	City of San Angelo
Pat Liston	I-69 Advisory Cmte	Michael Looney	City of San Angelo
John Medina	City of Big Spring	Rick Mantooth	City of San Angelo
Shawna Burkhart	City of Del Rio	Blake Vineyard	US Senator Ted Cruz
Manuel Chavez	City of Del Rio	Major Hofheins	San Angelo MPO
Carmen Gutierrez	City Council of Del Rio	Juan Mendive	Laredo MPO
Greg Velazquez	City of Del Rio	Placido Madera	Eagle Pass MPO
Emiliano Zapata	City of Del Rio	Angie Hernandez	Lamesa EDC
Peter Ojide	City of Del Rio PR	Mona Ferguson	Lamesa EDC
Camila Rubio	City of Del Rio PR	Annalisa Bailey	Amarillo EDC
David Galindo	Del Rio Buzz Media	Eric J. Martinez	Middle RGV DC
Jake Carsten	Del Rio Parks Fndn	Garret Gervais	Val Verde City
Homero Balderas	City of Eagle Pass	Lynne Sharrock	Val Verde City
Laura Sanchez	City of Eagle Pass	Carlos Velarde	Val Verde County
Valeria Flores	City of Eagle Pass	Paloma Villasenor	Consulate of Mexico
Bobby G. Gonzales	City of Lamesa	Manal Gallegos	Consulate of Mexico

Lic Claudio B. Garza	State of Coahuila	Phil Barnes	Transystems
Ana Lidia	State of Coahuila	Shadi Hakimi	STV
Luis Angel Voraza	Acuña City	Kevin Young	STV
Ana L Ramirez	Cámara Comercio Acuña	Jaime Aguilar	STV
Quincy Allen	BGE	Amit Thomas	CDM Smith
Eric Busker	BGE	Stacey Benningfield	RK&K
Ignacio Hinojosa	Ardurra Engineering	John King	SW Intl Customs Services

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Committee Chair Brenda Gunter, Mayor of San Angelo, welcomed the attendees to the I-27 Advisory Committee Meeting and provided opening remarks. Mayor Gunter provided a summary of the momentum of the I-27 effort to-date and the goals of the meeting. She recommended to the attendees present to utilize the expertise of Lauren Garduno of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance within their communities.

Caroline Mays, TxDOT Director of Planning and Modal Programs, provided remarks virtually, acknowledging the committee’s efforts. She thanked Mayor Gunter for her leadership and all the Committee Members as well as Commissioner Meade and TxDOT staff. There is exciting news about the assigning of I-27 as new interstate. She commended the group for their diligent work as it takes time to get these items done.

Texas Transportation Commissioner Alejandro “Alex” Meade III echoed Mayor Gunter’s comments, commending the Committee for advancing Ports-to-Plains projects and its value to Texas. Commissioner Meade provided an anecdote about the support that I-27 is receiving from officials in the communities along the corridor.

Shawna Burkhart, City Manager of Del Rio, welcomed the attendees to Del Rio and highlighted the city amenities.

Roll Call/Safety Minute

Cary Karnstadt, Project Manager, TxDOT Transportation Planning and Programming (TPP) Division took roll call and provided a safety minute. Mr. Karnstadt introduced the new City of Lubbock Mayor Mark McBrayer to the committee.

Lorena Echeverria de Misi, TxDOT TPP Corridor Planning Branch Manager, took a moment to welcome Secretary Perez of the State of Coahuila to the meeting.

Mayor Gunter recognized John Osborne, Lubbock Economic Development, and other key partners in supporting the I-27 corridor development.

I-27 Designation

Ms. Echeverria de Misi summarized topics from the previous I-27 Advisory Committee meeting, highlighting the 4-mile section of US-87 that has been designated I-27 by FHWA and AASHTO. TxDOT is currently working internally with administration on the minute order to request the Commission

add it to I-27, which will occur next week. Once that is complete, there will be ceremonies to celebrate the achievement.

Update from Ports-to-Plains Alliance

Lauren Garduno of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance provided updates on the corridor, including a briefing on the recent annual Ports-to-Plains Conference in Dickinson, North Dakota. He shared that 47% of the entire corridor from Mexico to Canada is currently completed to a four-lane divided highway or better. He discussed elected officials in other states are pushing for funding for the Corridor within their states. Mr. Garduno explained the significant impact of Proposition 1 and 7 funding in Texas and federal funding in Nebraska and North Dakota. He highlighted the oil and gas industry in North Dakota and its parallels to Texas and stressed the importance of tourism in developing Purpose and Needs, citing the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library as an example of a nearby landmark. Garduno discussed successful funding efforts in New Mexico between Clayton and Raton. He discussed productive discussions with Mexico, particularly between Texas and Coahuila about the congestion issues at the border and northern trade. He also noted increased engagement from Alberta and Saskatchewan in Canada. Finally, he emphasized the importance of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance leveraging federal funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to develop rural corridors.

Mr. Garduno opened the floor for questions and comments.

Mayor Gunter echoed points Mr. Garduno made, including the increased engagement of Mexico and Canada and the importance of the oil and gas plays in North Dakota.

Mr. Garduno offered his help in speaking to communities along the corridor. He emphasized that the point of outreach is to establish the political will to develop the I-27 system.

2025 Unified Transportation Program Update

Each TxDOT District along the corridor shared updates to their projects in the 2025 Unified Transportation Program (UTP).

Kit Black, Director of Transportation Planning and Development (TP&D), TxDOT Amarillo District, began by sharing updates from the Amarillo District. John Osborne, Lubbock Economic Development, requested that Mr. Black and the Amarillo District further define the schedule for the section of highway from Amarillo to Dumas that will undergo a feasibility study to upgrade the segment to interstate.

Steve Warren, District Engineer, TxDOT Lubbock District, shared updates from the Lubbock District on projects along Ports-to-Plains. He briefly mentioned the upcoming unveiling ceremony for the newly designated four-mile segment of I-27 and the updates to mile markers and exit signs to reflect its connection to the future I-27 corridor across the state. John Osborne noted that City Location Studies did not appear to be reflected in the district updates and requested additional information on their status. Mr. Warren explained that the issue stemmed from a lack of funding allocated for the planning studies to be included in the UTP. However, he assured the Lubbock District would continue collaborating with the Transportation Planning and Programming (TPP) Division and the UTP group to

advance this effort. He also noted that Lamesa would be the first City Location Study to be prioritized once funding is secured.

Michael Haithcock, Director of TP&D, TxDOT Abilene District, shared updates from the Abilene District on projects along Ports-to-Plains. He noted US 87 widening is part of frontage roads of I-27, which schematic and environmental done by the end of the year. It is anticipated to let in September 2026.

Eric Lykins, District Engineer, TxDOT Odessa District, shared updates from the Odessa District on projects along Ports-to-Plains. Mr. Lykins highlighted that several of the unfunded or partially funded projects would be included in the upcoming Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). John Osborne requested clarification on how let years were determined. Robert Ornelas, Director of TP&D for the Odessa District, explained that let years were planned outside the 10-year window of the Unified Transportation Program (UTP) and could change based on funding. Mayor Gunter reminded the committee that each project is a crucial part of the overall corridor. Mr. Osborne asked about the projects that appear outside the boundary of the Odessa District but are still managed by the district. Mr. Lykins explained that the Odessa District is partnering with the Lubbock District on these projects due to their relevance and connectivity to Permian Basin activities, making it more logical for Odessa to take the lead on projects from Lamesa to the Midland/Odessa area on SH 349.

John DeWitt, Director of TP&D, TxDOT San Angelo District, shared updates from the San Angelo District on projects along Ports-to-Plains. Mr. DeWitt first shared updates on the sections of the San Angelo Relief Route, which is an I-27 and I-14 precursor. Mr. Dewitt then shared updates on the Sonora Safety Route. Mayor Gunter expressed that the southern US-277 portion of the San Angelo Relief route should be the priority due to traffic, safety, and right-of-way cost concerns.

Epigmenio “Epi” Gonzalez, District Engineer, TxDOT Laredo District, shared updates from the Laredo District on projects along Ports-to-Plains. He shared that Laredo District would be working with San Angelo District to procure a General Engineering Consulting (GEC) contract next year that would help prioritize and focus attention on the segments with greater needs. John Osborne asked Mr. Gonzalez whether the listed widening projects would be upgraded to interstate standards. Mr. Gonzalez clarified that while the right-of-way purchased would accommodate the ultimate footprint, the Laredo District plans to use existing infrastructure where possible to maximize construction funding.

John Osborne reiterated the need for the Districts to complete City Location Studies as previously discussed in committee meetings so they can be selected for the UTP. Mr. Gonzalez echoed Mr. Osborne’s comment.

Mayor Gunter reminded the committee that each project is a significant piece to the overall corridor. She then introduced Judge Lewis Owens, Val Verde County, to the attendees.

Homero Balderas, City Manager of Eagle Pass, requested a timeline for funding allocation for the section of SL 480 that connects Laredo to Eagle Pass. Mr. Gonzalez explained that as individual segments are developed following the GEC, securing funding for construction will be easier. Mr. Balderas highlighted the border improvements occurring in Eagle Pass including a Presidential

Permit for the expansion from 6-lanes to 12-lanes at the Camino Real International Bridge. He expressed his appreciation for the I-27 project to help promote trade growth across the border.

Lauren Garduno noted that a lot of funding will go towards engineering in the next two years. He suggested that more clarification on where funding dollars are going would be beneficial to planning. He explained the funding must go from future to move to the next UTP. Mayor Gunter commented there are multiple steps for funding, so key is getting the projects on a spreadsheet and determined planning funding. To do this, we must be working with MPOs and Districts.

Mayor Alvaro “Al” Arreola, City of Del Rio, welcomed the attendees and highlighted the commercial freight development in Del Rio. He noted the need for improvement to the route between Del Rio and Sonora, but it always lacks funding. He expressed interest in widening roads near border crossings. Mayor Gunter echoed his remarks by emphasizing the economic development opportunities in the Laredo District. Mayor Arreola shared the collaboration occurring between Texas and Coahuila and the importance of south Texas.

Claudia J. Lagos Galindo, Manager of TxDOT’s TPP International Trade and Border Planning Branch, explained the presidential permit process for improving border crossings, noting that all three crossings connected to the corridor have these permits. She mentioned that the improvements and capacity growth already happening in Eagle Pass are expected to occur in Del Rio as well, and that a new border crossing will soon be necessary. Ms. Lagos Galindo emphasized the need for District support to expedite the progress of these border crossing projects.

Lorena Echeverria de Misi took a moment to highlight the I-27 Implementation Plan, which was published in July. The development of the plan included close coordination with the TxDOT Districts and MPOs, and the work of the I-27 Advisory Committee was crucial to publication. The plan is a long-term implementation. It currently does not have construction dollars; however, it is to be used as a guide for Districts and MPOs as the long-range plan to implement the Corridor to interstate standards. Ms. Echeverria de Misi acknowledged the efforts of all parties involved, including bi-national coordination, who contributed, and she explained the plan’s significance.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Update

Juan Mendive, MPO Director, provided updates on the Laredo and Webb County MPO. Mr. Mendive provided a presentation that explained the background of the MPO and discussed population growth, the freight network, border crossings, safety, security, and resiliency. Mayor Gunter highlighted one of Mr. Mendive’s slides illustrating truck trip flows out of Laredo. She emphasized the need for an alternative route that relieves the congestion along I-35. Mr. Mendive’s presentation also featured select MPO and TxDOT projects, including SH 84 and Vallecillo Road.

Major Hofheins, MPO Director, provided updates on the San Angelo MPO, including a review of the San Angelo Northern Relief Route and a dialogue on adopting a more progressive approach to corridor development. He reviewed the history of the policy board and the Ports-to-Plains Corridor. He noted the issue of receiving funding to implement projects along the Corridor. He said there has been more effort and push for prioritizing project such as the Northern Relief Route. San Angelo is situated adjacent to the Permian Basin which caused truck traffic congestion on neighborhood

streets. This led to a change in truck routes, truck parking, and a new look at congestion within the City. Planning for throughfare plan has changed to accommodate a future interstate and future opportunities for the City and County.

Placido Madera, MPO Director, provided updates on the newly designated Eagle Pass MPO, including a review of port-of-entry and freight development, global economic changes, and future planning efforts. He noted the MPO will work to have planning documents in place to help with the I-27 development. He noted the excitement of being in a new and great position to take advantage of the opportunities within the Eagle Pass region.

Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan

Giacomo Yaquindo, Manager, TxDOT TPP Statewide Planning Branch, provided a presentation on Connecting Texas 2050, TxDOT's newest update to statewide transportation plan, which was adopted in July. His presentation focused on the context of Connecting Texas 2050, planning strategies, corridors of statewide significance, future interstates, I-27 investment needs, and short-term planning activities.

Pat Liston, a former member of the I-69 Advisory Committee, asked if the 109 miles from I-27 to I-2 are included in Connecting Texas 2050. Lauren Garduno confirmed that this corridor is considered a key strategic corridor and is included in the plan.

Adjourn

Mayor Gunter provided closing remarks, thanking the attendees for their participation.

Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.