

## I. INTRODUCTION

The 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act required states and local governments to conduct cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing (3C) transportation planning to continue receiving federal funds for highway and transit improvements. Subsequently in 1973, an amendment to this act further required the governor of each state, with local concurrence, to designate a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for every urbanized area to coordinate area wide transportation planning. In 1973, the Governor of the State of Texas, acting by, and through its State Department of Highways and Public Transportation designated the City of Corpus Christi through the Transportation Policy Board, to be the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Corpus Christi Urban Transportation Study Area. The MPO designation changed in June 2000. The Transportation Policy Committee is now the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization.

In 1991, the role of the MPO changed with the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). ISTEA emphasized on the efficiency of the intermodal transportation system and the MPO focused on these aspects. The **Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)** was enacted August 10, 2005, as Public Law 109-59. SAFETEA-LU authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009. Until a new surface transportation bill is introduced, we will continue to utilize SAFETEA-LU as guidance for our transportation programs.

Each year the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) identifies planning factors for consideration regarding the metropolitan planning process. The Corpus Christi MPO addresses these factors in the MPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). In FY 2010 and 2011, the MPO will be focusing on the areas of supporting economic vitality, increasing the safety of the transportation system, increasing the ability of the transportation system to support homeland security and increasing the accessibility and mobility of people and freight. The Transportation System Management (TSM) strategies, access management policies, and transportation demand management strategies will be considered as a means by which to maintain an acceptable level of service on the transportation system. Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) improvements will also be considered as a means to improve the performance of the current system.

The MPO strives for cooperative planning efforts with the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). The MPO funds and participates in various transit-related studies.

The MPO continues to follow a multimodal approach to transportation planning by adopting policies and objectives identified in studies completed as a part of previous Unified Planning Work Programs. These studies enhanced the MPO's capacity to improve safety, security, efficiency, as well as promote alternative transportation modes in the Corpus Christi Metropolitan Area.

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Traffic Safety Study
- Access Management Study
- Freight and Hazardous Material Movement Study
- Regional Travel Speed Studies

The findings and recommendation from these studies are used in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) policies and strategies to enhance the overall transportation system.

The MPO will continue to pursue an active public involvement campaign. The Metro-Mobility Talks, the newsletter of the MPO, will continue to be distributed to facilitate public involvement and improved coordination with the local media. The MPO website plays an important role in reaching out to the community for their involvement in the Transportation Planning Process. To inform and educate the community about the MPO and the planning process, regular articles are published in local business journals and newspapers. The MPO staff is in the process of developing performance measures for Title VI/Environmental Justice.

All MPO plans and programs comply with the public involvement provisions of Title VI which states: "No person in the United States shall, on grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

#### **A. PURPOSE:**

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) describes transportation planning and related activities to be performed during the year by the MPO and partner entities. The document shows in sufficient detail "who will perform the work, the schedule for completing it, and the expected products."

The SAFETEA-LU lists eight factors that must be considered as part of the planning process:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the ability of the transportation system to support homeland security and to safeguard the personal security of all motorized and non-motorized users.
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
7. Promote efficient system management and operation.
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Each work element in the UPWP satisfies at least one element listed above.

Citizens' involvement is vital in the success of transportation planning. Public meetings are arranged in the areas with high concentration of low-income and elderly population and other minorities. Citizens are informed of MPO plans and activities through public notices, advertisements, and press releases. In addition, the MPO's web-site provides up to date information regarding MPO activities. The Metro-Mobility Talks, the MPO newsletter, is mailed to interested public and organizations. Citizens are also notified and encouraged to attend the monthly meetings of the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

## **B. DEFINITION OF AREA:**

Based on the 2000 Census, the Census Bureau defined a new boundary for the Corpus Christi urbanized area which includes the cities of Corpus Christi, Portland, and Gregory. The region consists of 1,873 square miles with a population density of approximately 203.3 residents per square mile. The metropolitan planning area further extends to include parts of the rural areas of Nueces and San Patricio Counties that are expected to become urbanized in the next twenty years. Appendix B shows the Map of the existing Metropolitan Planning Area.

## **C. ORGANIZATION:**

Nueces County is the fiscal agent for the Corpus Christi MPO. Since June 2000, the Corpus Christi MPO's TPC is the designated MPO. The Corpus Christi MPO has a two-committee organizational structure. The TPC provides policy guidelines and approves the work of the TAC which provides technical support and direction necessary in the transportation planning process. The MPO's Transportation Planning Director and staff provide assistance to both Committees.

The Transportation Policy Committee is comprised of seven voting members. They include the mayors of Corpus Christi and Portland; county judges of Nueces and San Patricio; Chairpersons of the Regional Transportation Authority and the Port of Corpus Christi Authority; and the District Engineer of the Texas Department of Transportation. The 2000 Urbanized Area Boundary designation added the City of Gregory in the Metropolitan Area Boundary. Gregory is represented by the San Patricio County Judge and the County Commissioner at the TPC and TAC meetings, respectively.

The responsibilities of the MPO TPC described in the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Contract (MTPC) are as follows:

1. Ensure that requirements of 23 USC Sections 134 and 135 and 49 USC, Chapter 53 are carried out.
2. Use funds provided in accordance with Article 2, Section 1 of MTPC to develop and maintain a comprehensive regional transportation planning program in conformity with requirements of 23 USC Section 134(f) and 49 USC Section 5303.
3. Develop and adopt a Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the metropolitan planning area that will complement the Statewide Transportation Plan required by state and federal laws, a Transportation Improvement Program and Unified Planning Work Program and such other planning documents and reports that may be required by state and federal laws and regulations.

4. The MPO Policy Committee shall have sole responsibility to hire, supervise, evaluate and terminate the Transportation Planning Director.
5. The MPO Policy Committee shall provide planning policy direction to the Transportation Planning Director.

The TAC includes seven voting members appointed by the TPC for their technical expertise in transportation planning. Appendix A shows the list of our current TPC and TAC members. The TAC is responsible for the following as drafted in the Bylaws and Operation Procedures of the Corpus Christi MPO:

1. Assist the Transportation Policy with technical tasks associated with developing the Unified Planning Work program (UPWP) and recommend its adoption by the TPC.
2. Review transportation related studies within the Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Area and make recommendations to the TPC and other agencies.
3. Provide technical support in the preparation of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and recommend its adoption by the TPC.
4. Review the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and other high priority projects. Recommend its adoption by the TPC.
5. Advise the TPC on technical matters and, if specifically authorized by the TPC, on the policy matters with accompanying recommendations and supporting rationale.

#### **D. PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT:**

The MPO plans to perform all UPWP subtasks utilizing MPO staff and some assistance from partner entities. However, depending on local resources, and federal funding availability – yet to be determined by the new anticipated transportation bill, the MPO may hire professional services to perform the needed studies identified as unfunded. The MPO also seeks input into the planning process by meeting with the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce Infrastructure Committee and the City of Corpus Christi's Planning Commission, Transportation Advisory Committee, the newly reorganized Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee, Transportation Coordination Network of the Coastal Bend, and the Committee for Persons with Disabilities.

#### **E. PLANNING ISSUES AND EMPHASIS:**

##### Urban Growth:

The economic character of the community and region continue to have the existing infrastructure developed and revitalized. The Port of Corpus Christi Authority's plans for the La Quinta Trade Gateway project which will accommodate a modern, multi-modal facility providing seamless transfer of cargo, trailers, and containers between highway, rail, ferry, coastal and deep sea conveyances continues to progress forward. Area Economic Development Corporation partners have worked to secure an operational establishment for China's largest manufacturer of steel pipe – to be located just outside of Gregory, Texas. Zachary American Infrastructure is in the process of negotiating a public-private partnership with local

governmental entities to develop and build Highway 77 up to Interstate standards. As part of the funding available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the completion of the Joe Fulton International Trade Corridor – connecting Interstate Highway 37 and the Port of Corpus Christi is being realized.

The City of Corpus Christi's land use plan shows ongoing growth in the Southside. Land use changes along South Padre Island Drive (SPID) are challenging to the transportation network. With SPID as the only major highway corridor connecting the mainland to the island, it is operating at a lower level of service causing traffic congestion and delays. The arterial system adjacent to SPID has been identified as congested requiring traffic studies to determine if access management improvements can provide relief.

The cities of Portland, Gregory, Ingleside and Robstown are neighboring communities for the Corpus Christi area. The Corpus Christi Naval Air Station and the Corpus Christi Army Depot are the largest employers in the area. Many people commute from neighboring communities to Corpus Christi. Tourist attractions which bring many tourists to this area for short durations include: the USS Lexington Museum, the Texas State Aquarium, Padre Island National Seashore, Whataburger Field – Home of the Corpus Christi Hooks Double-A Baseball, Port Aransas Beaches, and the Botanical Gardens and Nature Center. The cumulative effect of these activities is an additional demand on housing and commerce that in turn generate more travel trips.

#### Hurricane Evacuation:

Hurricane preparation and evacuation routes are an essential planning element in our coastal community. Evacuation of the mainland away from the coast has resulted in added capacity to IH-37 - marked with the appropriate signs and lane markings for hurricane evacuation from Corpus Christi to east of San Antonio. The safe and efficient movement of residents and tourist out of harm's way is critical to public well being.

The JFK Causeway, the only permanent road link between the mainland and Padre Island, Mustang Island, and Port Aransas, has undergone enhancements that include elevated with improved travel lanes to promote safety and connectivity between the islands and mainland.

For the future, the Southside Mobility Corridor Study is a critical element in the long-range development plan. This project promises to alleviate existing elevation limitations evident on the only bridge from the island to the mainland. The Corridor will enhance safety issues by providing island residents with an alternative evacuation route from the island to the mainland – especially during hurricane evacuation.

#### Air Quality:

Corpus Christi remains in attainment of the new, more stringent ozone standard set forth by the US Environmental Protection Agency in 2008. Corpus Christi's continued attainment under these stricter standards is due to actual emissions reductions realized from local air quality work by a number of agencies including the MPO. We have worked as the Air Quality Committee under the leadership of the Pollution Prevention Partnership of Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. The air quality activities and programs funded by the legislature included identifying and implementing voluntary emission reduction measures by business and industry, local government, and the public in close collaboration with Texas A&M University in both Corpus Christi and Kingsville.

### "Interstate 69" Corridor

TxDOT is working with the consultants on the design and environmental impact analysis associated with the corridor development. The MPO has also participated in discussion with the US-77 Coalition, the SR 44 Coalition and the I-69 Segment 4 & 5 Advisory Committees on improvements to these major corridors and the impact on the MPO area. This project will connect port and industrial areas in Mexico to northern states and Canada, while enhancing trade and commerce for our metropolitan area and the Port.

### Port of Corpus Christi Authority

As one of the largest economic engines for this area, the port has been very proactive by expanding and diversifying its cargo base. The area, known as a major producer of petroleum based products, chemicals, cotton, and grain, is well supported by the port. Expansion efforts include the Port being designated a Strategic Port by the Department of Defense and the extensive movement of military vehicles and cargo associated with the conflict in the Middle East.

The MPO will participate in study projects that will enable the Port to accommodate larger cargo and cruise ships in the inner harbor and to develop new opportunities for increased industrial and commercial growth. The Port, in an effort to enhance their global competitiveness, is developing a facility for international container ship trade on the northern shore of Corpus Christi Bay (the La Quinta Container Facility Project). The need for intermodal connectivity has been factored into the development of the MTP. The Port, becoming a wind energy cargo center in America, is importing and distributing more wind turbine engines and wind blades than most Gulf Coast ports combined.

The IH-37 / Joe Fulton International Trade Corridor direct connector project was a direct response to community safety concerns of freight traffic conflicting with residential traffic generated by a nearby school. This project provides new and improved linkage to the Port of Corpus Christi from Interstate 37 and U.S. Highway 181.

### Transit Service

The 2006 development of the Regional Public Transportation Coordination Plan which provides improved transit service coordination is currently being updated. The coordination effort has provided the area with access to federal funding through Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedoms for projects in our region. Coordination entails collaboration of transit service providers and health and human services in the 12-county Coastal Bend region to identify gaps and overlaps in service, improve efficiency, and short and long term goals and objectives for improved access to jobs. Additional funding will permit continuation of the planning process.

### Intelligent Transportation System (ITS)

A regional ITS architecture and deployment plan was developed for the Corpus Christi Region. The stakeholders, including the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), FHWA, Cities and Counties in the Coastal Bend Region and the RTA, reviewed and inventoried the existing infrastructure to identify future ITS needs and opportunities. The ITS Regional Architecture

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was reviewed by the MPO and TxDOT District staff in 2008 to determine if additional interagency discussion was needed. Several ITS related projects include:

1. A link from TxDOT's SH 286 fiber network to the City of Corpus Christi – Emergency Operations Center at Port Avenue and Leopard Street.
2. Coordination of city 911 Center with TxDOT message signs for posting of information that may impact the flow of traffic entering or exiting the freeway system.
3. Explore a feed to San Antonio's traffic center to monitor and activate message signs in an emergency.
4. Explore the feasibility of a wind monitoring system on high bridges to warn high profile vehicles.
5. Explore the feasibility of locations for additional permanent counters.
6. Explore "traffic queue warnings" for freeway exits with frequent queues impacting freeway traffic.

#### MTP – Planning Process Project

Discussions with TxDOT staff have resulted in an agreement to review the total MTP planning process in Corpus Christi over a five-year period from start to the final deliverable of the 2010 – 2035 MTP. With the assistance of the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), the Corpus Christi MPO will be used as a case study. The TPC adopted a resolution November 2004 in support of a long-term commitment of staff time and resources with the objective being to evolve a model MTP process. The TPC acted January 2005 to amend the 2005 UPWP to allocate the necessary resources. The planning process study was completed and is hosted on the TTI web page.

#### SAFETEA-LU Compliance

The MPO incorporated and revised the 2010-2035 MTP to be fully compliant with the SAFETEA-LU planning regulations as well as submitting a SAFETEA-LU compliant 2011-2014 TIP. The MPO has conducted a "review and reappraisal" or SAFETEA-LU "gap analysis" of both the planning processes and the current MTP. Until a new transportation authorization bill is presented, the MPO will continue to take action to refine and enhance our planning process to remain compliant with SAFETEA-LU.

The 2010–2035 MTP was adopted in December of 2009 and the 2011-2014 TIP in June of 2010. It is recognized that subsequent amendments to the plans are anticipated. As needed the MOU or MOA documents will be developed as a single agreement by all stakeholders including MPO, State, and transit operators.

## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations denote agencies and programs:

### Local:

MPO	Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization
TMA	Corpus Christi Transportation Management Area
RTA	Corpus Christi Regional Transportation Authority
POCCA	Port of Corpus Christi Authority
LEPC	Local Emergency Planning Committee

### Regional:

CBCOG	Coastal Bend Council of Governments
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### State:

TxDOT	Texas Department of Transportation
TCEQ	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

### Federal:

FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
TMA	Transportation Management Area
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EJ	Environmental Justice