



Far West Texas El Paso Regional Transportation Coordination Committee (WTEP)

Meeting MINUTES January 25, 2024 @ 3pm

- I. Meeting Called to Order Victor Reta, WTEP Board Chairperson
- II. Approval of Minutes for meeting held October 26, 2023
- III. Presentation by Nominating Committee Re: Recommendation of Officers and Steering Committee Members (8 members)

Xavier Banales provided a summary regarding the meeting that took place on November 30, 2023, where the Nominating Committee proposed the below listed members for Officers and Steering Committee Members. All members proposed agreed to continue serving. In addition, Ms. Leah Wood, representing El Paso Region 19 agreed to be included as a Steering Committee member. Everyone was welcomed to their roles and Mr. Banales continued leading the remainder of the meeting as the newly appointed Chair Person of the WTEP Committee.

- IV. Recommended Steering Committee Members – 2024
 - A. Officers
 1. Chair Person Xavier Banales, Amistad
 2. Vice Chair Vacant
 3. Secretary Claudia K. Garcia, El Paso Sun Metro
 - B. Steering Committee
 1. Lourdes Torres New México Family Services
 2. David Armijo South Central Regional Transit District
 3. Yvette Lugo Rio Grande AAA
 4. Vacant
 5. Vacant

- V. Discussion regarding El Paso Area Transportation Services (EPATS) and WTEP Working Relationship
Mr. Xavier Banales provided a summary of the history of the WTEP Committee to include the transition from the County of El Paso to Amistad in 2016. Then he led into the reason for this item included in the agenda after discussing with Ms. Annette Gutierrez with the Rio Grande Council of Governments, who leads the EPATS Committee as to having a member represent EPATS in the WTEP Committee due to the nature of being involved with some of the planning regarding transportation. Commissioner Carlos Leon mentioned how he thinks it is important to be involved in the WTEP Committee and shared that it would be beneficial to see one system for the entire county, he is still learning, but he recognizes that the WTEP Committee will play a big role in the process. It was identified that Sal Alonzo was a previous Chair Person. Commissioner Leon reported that once they go back to their areas, they will discuss the possibilities and come up with an arrangement to take a more active role in WTEP.

Victor Reta then identified that there should have been a vote regarding the nominations for officers and steering committee members. He then posed the following motion:

“Do we have a motion to accept the officers and steering committee members with the changes that were discussed to reflect only two vacancies?”

Motion: Yvette Lugo **Second:** David Armijo

Victor Reta requested feedback from any members, and asked if there were any volunteers for the Vice Chair vacancy, no volunteers.

The vote was passed without opposition. The Motion carried.

Returning to item V, Victor Reta questioned the utilization of two acronyms EPATS and LGC. Commissioner Leon reported he didn't know why it was named the LGC.

Jesus Cerna in the formation, that was the legal term that was established until they got to the official start where the name was solidified as EPATS.

Victor Reta then questioned if the discussion was for EPATS to join WTEP or WTEP to join EPATS.

Xavier Banales responded that this was to encourage EPATS to have a designated member to be a part of WTEP.

Celia Garcia interrupted to acknowledge the joining of a new member online under the title Region 19. Leah Wood then introduced herself and reported she is a part of the Education Service Center Region 19 and runs the Transition Program, which gets students from Highschool into adult life and transportation is always an issue for students with disabilities and families with disabilities. She also reported that she sat on the Sun Metro Citizen's Advisory Council for many years and greatly enjoyed thoroughly enjoyed that appointment.

Celia Garcia welcomed Ms. Wood and mentioned that Claudia K. Garcia with Sun Metro invited Ms. Wood and we are glad to have her participate in the meeting.

Continued discussion over the EPATS representation for the WTEP Committee was mentioned and Celia Garcia commented that Ms. Annette Gutierrez assigned Mr. Mike Medina to attend the meeting, but he was unable to due to a scheduling conflict. He communicated through email he would attend the next meeting.

VI. Discussion regarding the presentation to County Commissioners regarding the Pollution Study requested by Commissioner Stout

Xavier Banales commented that last March, the WTEP Committee information was presented to County Commissioner's Court attended by different agencies. One of the questions asked by Commissioner Stout was, "What is the current state of pollution by vehicles such as Sun Metro, and others?" He asked if we could submit something back to the court with information. We have done some research by sharing this question with the group, as Amistad as the lead agency doesn't have the resources to perform the research ourselves, so consequently in communicating with the city, the County and transportation agencies, the MPO has provided multiple reports from TTI-Texas Transportation Institute, as well as other resources provided by Sun Metro. These will be analyzed and shared with the Commissioner's Court as well as the committee. If there are any members that would like to join us when going back to the Commissioner's Court, please let us know. Please think about that as it will be beneficial to have other members supporting during that presentation.

Commissioner Leon asked if the question was regarding a certain or specific area or in general.

Celia Garcia responded that it was in general.

Xavier Banales reiterated that it was a general question regarding pollution studies. He reported it has been very difficult as the studies done have been more for specific projects such as the one on the West side and others, but he asked if we had any information regarding pollution caused by Sun Metro or any other transportation agencies.

Victor Reta reported he would be glad to support so to please provide the date so they can support.

VII. Discussion Re: State of Transportation Summit in El Paso County 2024 **(Goals I through V)** – The last transportation summit was held in 2019. A second summit was planned for 2022. However, due to COVID, the summit was cancelled. The summit is within the scope of the current regional plan.

a. Current Transportation Summit 2024 Planning Committee Members: Yvette Lugo, Xavier Banales, Celia Garcia

Xavier Banales provided a quick summary regarding the Transportation Summit which took place in 2019 where approximately 100 to 120 representatives from different entities, service providers, etc. participated. In the new regional plan, we have also included the planning of a Transportation Conference to include social service agencies, public transportation providers, and others to be taking place in October of this year. We have a planning committee appointed but if any others are interested in joining, like Mr. David Armijo representing the New Mexico Transit District.

David Armijo agreed that he would like to attend and be included in the planning committee for the Transportation Conference.

VIII. Video regarding WTEP – Updates **(Goal IV - Objective 1)**

Xavier Banales requested an update from Victor Reta, he reported that some of the partners have been recorded already, but that there are some still needed such as Amistad and New Mexico Family Services. He reported he would reach out to schedule those as soon as possible and that maybe a draft can be available for the next meeting, and it can be shared with Commissioners court once the pollution information is shared.

IX. Next WTEP Meeting, Status re: implementation of the 2022 - 2026 Regional Plan- Review of the Goals and Objectives

Xavier Banales requested an update on this agenda item from Celia Garcia, who reported that it would be beneficial for the group to review the full list of goals and objectives listed on the 2022-2026 Regional Plan, due to the proximity of when the new plan will begin planning phases in 2025. She reported that although several goals and objectives have been met, others have not yet been reached. She urged members to review the information that will be sent to identify possible work each entity is performing that can count towards those listed goals and objectives. The information will be reviewed in the next meeting.

X. Other Business Items

Victor Reta requested that Celia Garcia check the chat feature on Zoom as Ms. Wood requested to be included in the Steering Committee. Celia Garcia checked and thanked Ms. Wood and reported she will provide the requested information.

Xavier Banales went into the process that is followed to begin the planning process into the next regional plan. He reported that in 2025 it would be planned out for final approval in 2026.

XI. Announcements and major events by member agencies **(Goal I – Objective 4)**

Xavier Banales asked if any announcements are available from any of the represented agencies:

Victor Reta began by stating that the City of Socorro is undergoing the writing portion of a new job description, they will be hiring a Transit Coordinator for the very first time, as it is getting to be too

much for the current staff. Therefore, he will be reaching out to Amistad to see if they would be willing to share their job descriptions and asking what other transit providers do and what the role of the Transit Coordinator position should be. Therefore, this person will be managing fleet services and transit management. This person will be handling all 5310 programs, fuel consumption, maintenance tracking and overseeing all services provided internally and externally through the 5310 services.

Xavier Banales asked if anyone else had other announcements, he also acknowledged Ms. Mary Nunez having logged on to the meeting. She was welcomed and she reported that she was sorry to be late after having some issues logging in to the meeting. She reported that there had been some changes within their organization, that she is unsure what will happen, that Family Crisis from Big Bend will be taking over and that she is waiting to see what they want her to do. Transportation will continue, there will be a new management team. She will send out information once she receives it. She is sorry for what happened, but that the new leader is Ms. Leticia Carrillo, CEO of Family Crisis at Alpine. She wants to say thank you to everyone and hopefully she can still stay with the WTEP Committee, and that they will still be involved with El Paso, and she sees the benefit and the interest of being a part of the WTEP Committee.

Xavier Banales highlighted the time Ms. Nunez has been a part of the committee and how Big Bend Community Action provides services to individuals needing dialysis taking them all the way to Fort Stockton and even to El Paso. Big Bend Community Action has been a very strong partner on this committee, and Mary Nunez's role in coordinating transportation services has been extremely important. He thanked her and let her know we would be waiting to hear from her regarding further information on their transition.

Yvette Lugo went on to recognize Ms. Mary Nunez, "Tita" for all the work she has done and acknowledging how difficult the past few months have been, and how she has held that transportation department together. She shared how Ms. Nunez should be commended for her hard work and recognize that she is very humble, but she needs to be recognized for her leadership during this transition and more than anything recognizes that transportation services in the region are very important, and she has been an integral part of the WTEP Committee. Yvette Lugo also commended Ms. Nunez for the services provided to the Area Agency on Aging clients within the region.

Mary Nunez thanked the group and mentioned that she is not quitting, that she knows transportation services are much needed, and therefore explained to her new leadership that transportation services should continue. She reported that Big Bend Community Action may not be the name of the organization anymore and may fall under Family Crisis, but whatever happens she will inform us of future information.

XII. Next WTEP Meeting
March 21, 2024

XIII. Adjourned "Motion to Adjourn" Motion: Victor Reta Second: Yvette Lugo

Meeting Adjourned at 3:43pm.

Attendance: Patricia Jaramillo (HHSC), Yvette Lugo (AAA-RGCOG), David Armijo (SSRTD), Xavier Banales (Amistad), Celia Garcia (Amistad), Victor Reta (City of Socorro), Miguel Pacheco (Amistad), Gabriela Lopez (EPMPO), Leah Wood (EP Region 19), Mary Nunez (Big Bend Community Action), Kristina Pena (Amistad), Commissioner Carlos Leon (EP County), Karl McElhaney (Commissioner Leon, Pct. 1), Jesus Cerna (EP County).