



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

Meeting Minutes March 21, 2024 @ 3pm

- I. Meeting Called to Order Xavier Banales, WTEP Board Chairperson
Meeting called to order at 3:07pm by Mr. X. Banales. Invited members to go through roll call, Ms. Garcia offered to go down the list of participants to make it easier for attendance recording.

Attendance: Crystal Aguilar (A2C), Xavier Banales (Amistad), Celia Garcia (Amistad), Miguel Pacheco (Amistad), Ignacita Ramirez (LULAC), Sarah Gourges (A2C), Alfredo Gonzalez (TX DOT), Leah Wood (Region 19), George Inostroza (EPMPO), Reyna Mayorga (EPCounty), Oscar Ramirez (LULAC), Victor Reta (City of Socorro), Jesus Cerna (EP County), Gabriela Lopez (EPMPO)

- II. Approval of Minutes for meeting held January 25, 2024
Motion to approve: Victor Reta **Second:** George Inostroza

Mr. Banales reiterated the Mission and Vision of WTEP.
Mr. Banales named the Steering Committee Members and Officers, mentioning that there is still a vacancy for Vice Chair if any volunteers are interested to please contact him or Ms. Garcia to express their interest. In addition, Mr. Banales reminded members that if they are in need of an additional copy of the current Regional Plan one can be provided to them.

- III. 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. Leah Wood El Paso Region 19
 - 5. Victor Reta City of Socorro

- IV. Discussion regarding Access to Care (A2C) Summary and future role
Crystal Aguilar- Senior Operations Manager of A2C- presenting Sarah Gourgues, Medical Facilities Liaison presenting the services offered by A2C. Ms. Gourgues reported that she was recently introduced to Amistad as an organization and of the WTEP Committee. In reviewing the mission, she identified that A2C connects persons in the community to multiple transportation options. Ms. Gourgues continued to present details regarding A2C, which handles non-emergency medical transportation. (The presentation is attached to this document as a reference to the presentation details.)

At the end of the presentation Mr. Jesus Cerna from the County of El Paso asked what the service area was for A2C services if within City limits or outside the city limits as well. Ms. Gourgues responded that the coverage area is dependent on the member's insurance plan.

Mr. Banales asked if Medicare recipients were also eligible for services and she responded that yes, A2C does partner with some Medicare health plans. He also asked if non-Medicaid and Medicare recipients on a different insurance, and Ms. Gourgues responded that unfortunately those individuals would not qualify for services.

Ms. Crystal Aguilar addressed the first question asked regarding the coverage area and reported that A2C is currently divided into regions of which she and Ms. Gourgues belong to region 3. But A2C provides transportation services to all 50 states. In addition, she clarified that a qualified individual may transport a Medicaid or Medicare recipient if cleared appropriately to receive compensation per mile to transport the client to an appointment.

Ms. Gourgues completed the presentation and shared that the presentation will be sent to Ms. Garcia to disseminate to all members.

- V. Continue discussion relating to working relationship with El Paso Area Transportation Services (EPATS) Mr. Banales once again shared a short summary on the EPATS composition of members and general purpose of the committee, and shared that they meet on a monthly basis, and he has been in participation to represent the WTEP Committee. He mentioned that they have been in the process of rolling out the para transit services component to EP County. He requested that someone from EPATS jump in to provide additional information if present. He commented that Annette Gutierrez is the lead to the Rio Grande Council of Governments and leads the EPATS Committee but is not present. Ms. Reyna Mayorga jumped in to share that ADA Paratransit services are due to begin July 1, 2024. She clarified that EPATS has been in operation since November of 2021.
- VI. Report from Planning Committee Re: Conference – State of Transportation 2024 on October 17, 2024 Mr. Banales updated the Committee regarding the initial plans for the State of Transportation Conference tentatively taking place on October 17, 2024. He reported that the last planned Conference was to happen in 2021, but due to the pandemic and its aftereffects, it did not take place for the following few years. The intent is to share information about transportation services in the region, to include New Mexico. The concept of the Conference was discussed regarding time frame, cost, etc. The suggested time is between 8:00am and 1:00pm. The framework is also a topic of discussion regarding special speakers and topics. The plan is to have lunch provided and to have a presenter during that time frame to conclude the presentations for the day. The end time is planned at 1:00pm. Hopefully some policy makers will attend as they are the ones that make decisions regarding funding opportunities. There will also be an opportunity for attendees to ask questions, etc. It is planned to record the Conference to share it with others that do not attempt. This information/data will assist towards the planning of the next Regional Plan which will begin to be planned in 2025. Another discussion topic was the targeted audience. After much discussion the audience will be individuals that provide social services and transportation services, “providers of services”.
- Ms. Yvette Lugo commented that service providers was a better option as an audience as opening it up to the public may turn the focus of the meetings into possibly over focusing on concerns, questions, or complaints, rather than trying to learn about the relevancy of this group and how we are trying to coordinate and improve services. Mr. Armijo had very good ideas as he has participated in other conferences of this type. She then tagged Mr. Armijo.
- Mr. Armijo reported that we want to have something bold, have some good state reps, and other representatives on the border of El Paso or New Mexico, or elected officials. Also leveraging some of the EPMPO members. Right now, an emerging issue is electric vehicles and alternative fuels. What would that be in this region, especially in this world of paratransit services. It is a starting point, but

we are not quite there yet but it is a point of discussion. Other topics may include where is the funding going to go as we get into an election year. Those are some general concepts and to include EPATS and knowing more about them. It is exciting and timely to have this conference.

Mr. Banales reported it was 2019 the last time we had the conference, therefore this will be a great opportunity to share information with service providers. This conference fulfills one of the operating objectives regarding maintaining broad public knowledge of transportation services. It is important to have it documented through a motion:

Motion: "Move to proceed with the implementation of the transportation conference on October 17, 2024."

Motion to approve: Yvette Lugo Second: David Armijo

- VII. Discussion regarding the presentation to County Commissioners regarding the Pollution Study requested by Commissioner Stout projected in April 2024
Mr. Banales reported that last year we made a presentation to the County Commissioners regarding WTEP and the Regional Plan. During that meeting Senator requested information regarding pollution. We have gathered some reports from multiple entities. Yet we don't have a general report with data to indicate that specific data. Therefore, when we go back to the County, hopefully in May, we would like to invite any of you that may want to join us at the presentation. Despite not having major data, or as comprehensive data as we would like, we would like to share what we do have with the Commissioners.
- VIII. Discussion Re: State of Transportation Conference in El Paso County 2024 **(Goals I through V)** –The conference is within the scope of the current regional plan.
- a. Current Transportation Summit 2024 Planning Committee Members: Yvette Lugo, Xavier Banales, Celia Garcia
Per Mr. Banales, this item has already been discussed therefore we will move on to the next item on the agenda.
- At this time Ms. Garcia acknowledged the members who logged in to the meeting to include Tim McDaniel who is now with David Armijo with the Rural Transit D and not the EPMPO, Shelly Payne with Access 2 Care, and Patricia Jaramillo with Region 10 Community Care Services Eligibility with the Health and Human Services Commission.
- IX. Video regarding WTEP – Updates **(Goal IV - Objective 1)**
Per Victor Reta: the last people to record for the video are Project Amistad, Sun Metro and New Mexico Family Services. Mr. Banales asked if South Central Regional Transit District could be included in the video, Mr. Reta reported he would include them if Ms. Garcia could send their contact information. Mr. Reta reported they would do everything possible to get all agencies included in the next two weeks to hopefully have a finished product by the next meeting in May.
- X. WTEP Brochure – Synopsis of Regional Plan 5-year goals
Mr. Banales reported that there was a shorter brochure created to be a useful tool to see all goals and objectives at a glance, a lot easier. We can send it out electronically or mail it out if any of the members have not received it.
- XI. Status: Revised updated Logo – WTEP name stays the same
Mr. Banales reported that as of the last few meetings, it was decided to keep the name the same for the WTEP Committee even though consideration had been given to changing the name. The general concept now is to only update the logo design, and colors since the name has been engrained on all partners.

Per Ms. Garcia, there will be several options regarding the logo in the next few minutes to get feedback from Committee members prior to finalizing.

- XII. Status re: implementation of the 2022 - 2026 Regional Plan- Review of the Goals and Objectives
Ms. Garcia reported that the planning process for the next Regional Plan is right around the corner. She reported that she sent out the most updated Quarterly Progress Index in order for members to review and share what work has been done towards the individual goals and objectives, especially those that have not yet been addressed. In the next few meetings, we will be focusing on a few of each of those goals and objectives moving forward in the year. 2025 will be a key year in the planning for the next Regional Plan covering beyond 2026 therefore we want to make a major impact on the goals set for this current regional plan.
- XIII. Other Business Items
Victor Reta reported that the City of Socorro is hiring a Transit Coordinator, the position is active on their website, they are looking to hire a talented individual.
Celia Garcia shared the information regarding the Humanitarian Awards event information and how the funds are utilized to fund the Client Health and Welfare Fund to assist individuals who do not qualify for existing resources but are in dire need of something. This fund is also utilized to support grant programs with high unallowable expenses. Therefore, fundraising is extremely important. This year's theme is angels on earth. It will be a great time for businesses and agencies to make a difference through their donations.
- XIV. Announcements and major events by member agencies **(Goal I – Objective 4)**
No other announcements or comments were offered by any members.
- XV. Next WTEP Meeting
March 21, 2024
May 23, 2024
July 25, 2024
September 26, 2024
October 17, 2024 – State of Transportation Conference
- XVI. Adjourned
The meeting was adjourned at 4:15pm.