



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

### Meeting Minutes October 26, 2023 @ 3pm, In-Person and Virtual Meeting

- I. Meeting Called to Order Victor Reta, WTEP Board Chairperson  
In Victor's absence, Ms. Yvette Lugo called the meeting to order at 3:05pm.
  
- II. Steering Committee Members – 2023
  - A. Officers
    1. Chairperson Victor Reta, City of Socorro
    2. Vice Chair Yvette Lugo, Area Agency on Aging
    3. Secretary Mary Nuñez, Big Bend Community Action Committee
  - B. Steering Committee
    1. Lourdes Torres New México Family Services
    2. David Armijo South Central Regional Transit District
    3. Claudia Garcia El Paso Sun Metro
    4. Xavier Bañales Amistad
    5. Vacant

**Attendance:** Xavier Banales, Yvette Lugo, Ellen Smyth, Gerardo Fierro, Jesus Cerna, James Baca, David Armijo, Lorenzo Lopez

- III. Welcoming Comments / Introductions Victor Reta – In Victor's absence, Ms. Yvette Lugo and Celia Garcia welcomed committee members to this meeting.

- IV. Approval of Minutes for meeting held August 24, 2023

Motion set in place for the approval of Minutes by Ellen Smyth and Seconded by Xavier Banales.

- V. Business items

- A. Report re presentations to policy entities per Goal IV, Operating Objective 4. *"Inform Policy makers about WTEP events and activities through presentations at board meetings (City Council, Commissioners Court, MPO, COG, etc.)"*. **(Goal IV - Objective 1)** – Mr. Xavier Banales reported on the presentations to date, focused on the most recent presentation to the Mass Transit Board on October 10<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was attended by the City Council and general public as well. It fulfills Objective Goal IV, Objective 1 of the Regional Plan. Some members were appointed in the last year and therefore it was good for them to have the information. Mr. Banales referred to the request from Commissioner Stout regarding pollution reduction, and it was reported that WTEP does not conduct these studies, but that other committee members do. The MPO has provided some feedback and information and are pending Sun Metro feedback and information. This was prompted by

the city goal stating that pollution reduction would be a focus. In receipt of all information, a report summary will be drafted to provide to the Commissioners Court.

Ms. Ellen Smyth provided information regarding the study that is done by TTI. She suggested they write the report as Sun Metro and others only provide direct service.

Ms. Celia Garcia reported to Ms. Smyth that she has requested information from Claudia K. Garcia and Anthony Dekeyzer, but they have reported that they are pending legal approval to share.

Ms. Smyth asked that an email be sent CC'ing her to approve that sharing of information.

Mr. Banales continued to report regarding the completion of this goal and objective as stated in the Regional Plan.

Total audience included approximately 160 policy makers / upper management personnel from the following entities:

1. County Commissioners - El Paso County
2. City Council – City of Socorro
3. TxDOT Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
4. El Paso Transportation Council
5. City of Socorro
6. SC Regional Transit (NM)
7. Rio Grande Council of Governments – COG)
8. Strategic Briefing Review-City Management Staff- 34 on October 4,2023
9. Mass Transit Board/City of El Paso – 40 on October 10, 2023

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

Ms. Celia Garcia reported that due to Mr. Victor Reta's absence there is no update regarding the video. She stated that Mr. Reta had notified at the last meeting that his videographer would reach out to each entity through email to coordinate. In the meantime, this will be tabled until the next meeting.

Mr. Banales reported that this is not a requirement of the plan, but that Mr. Reta volunteered to develop the video for the benefit of sharing information regarding WTEP.

**C. Status re implementation of the 2022 - 2026 Regional Plan (Goal I – Objective 2)**

Ms. Celia Garcia reported that the Quarterly Progress Index has been shared with all members through the invitation for the meeting, for all to see the updates that have been reported regarding the work towards the Regional Plan. She encouraged the group to review the document and provide feedback as to the progress any organization is making towards the work in any of the goals and objectives. Ms. Garcia reported that there were compliments regarding the previous quarterly report, therefore it is important to continue reporting progress.

**D. 2024 Transportation Summit. (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. It is time to begin planning a summit in 2024. In the coming months, a committee will be appointed to plan and implement a summit in the fall of 2024. The summit is within the scope of the current regional plan.

Mr. Banales reported regarding COVID affecting the second Transportation Summit. It is therefore time to plan the 2024 Summit. It brings together agencies to communicate and reconnect and share on the status of Transportation Services. We will be meeting to coordinate the time, speakers, panel discussions, etc. We are anticipating the plan to take

several months. It will also be important to include our partners from Southern New Mexico and discuss post pandemic impacts to the transportation services. This is to meet the goals and objectives of the Regional Plan.

Ms. Ellen Smyth asked whether the Summit was for one day or two days, and where it took place.

Ms. Garica reported that the Summit took place in the Amistad Conference Center at the time. It was a one day event. She shared that for a time during the pandemic the conference center was utilized for some call center contracts but has since then been opened for full service and seats approximately 180 persons.

Mr. Banales reported on the list of speakers that came at the time, such as Erik Gleason, and others. He reported on the impact it makes to bring key speakers in the industry as well as local dignitaries. Member agencies then get an opportunity to interface with the speakers.

Ms. Yvette Lugo volunteered to be a part of the planning committee.

Mr. Xavier Banales asked for additional volunteers that were interested, there were no other volunteers. He reported there would be a future email sent to request additional volunteers as we enter 2024.

**E. Status - Letters of Participation (Goal I – Objective 3)**

Ms. Celia Garcia reported that there are currently six letters that have been submitted. She reported that there was a request for Letters of Support for the continuation application for RPTCP, and therefore received those from some partners. She acknowledged the busy environment that all agencies experience and thanked those that responded. Individual emails were sent out to the partners that have provided a letter previously. If those can be submitted that would be greatly appreciated. She also reported that Amistad and WTEP is available to provide Letters of Support to partners if necessary.

**F. Renewal of designation as Lead Agency**

**Per the bylaws, a motion is needed to reaffirm continuation by Amistad as the lead and fiscal agent for the Far West Texas El Paso Regional Transportation Coordination Committee (WTEP). Recommended Motion: Move that Amistad continue as the lead and fiscal agent for the Far West Texas El Paso Regional Transportation Coordination Committee (WTEP).**

**TX DOT has approved continuation funding in the amount of \$40,000.00 for Amistad to continue as the lead and fiscal agent for WTEP.**

Ms. Yvette Lugo requested that motion to reaffirm continuation of Amistad as the Lead and Fiscal agent for the WTEP committee.

Ms. Ellen Smyth set the motion and it was seconded by Mr. David Armijo.

**G. WTEP's Website (Goal IV - Objective 1)**

Ms. Celia Garcia gave a Quick update regarding the updating of Letters of Participation from current partners and the most recent agendas and minutes.

**H. New brand image: (Goal 4 – Objective 1 & 5).** WTEP's brand image needs to change. The committee has been known as WTEP since 2010ish, but it is time to rebrand the committee. Options discussed at the Steering committee meeting include:

- Transportation Regional Planning Committee TRPC
- Regional Transportation Committee RTC
- Transportation Regional Coordinating Committee TRCC

RTC seemed to be the consensus among the group. Since this has been discussed over the last three months, it is recommended that we move forward with officially changing the name of the committee from WTEP to RTC. Board Action is required.

Ms. Celia Garcia reported the previous discussion regarding the name and the research done on the internet looking for the names attached to the potential rename RTC. There was discussion on adding the regional portion to the name, and how not having the identifier makes the name shorter. It was also mentioned that on the logo there can be a map reference to identify the areas served. It is presented once again for finalization before going into the implementation stage of revamping the logo and name.

The Committee provided input (Ellen Smyth, James Baca, Yvette Lugo) and agreed to not change the name but keep the name as WTEP and just update the logo.

- I. Appointment of a Nominating Committee to recommend new officers and people to serve on the Steering Committee. The three officer positions coming up are Chairperson, Vice Chair and Secretary. We have one Steering Committee Vacancy. No further action will be taken other than moving forward with the change of the logo and marketing materials and incorporating the New Mexico component.

Ms. Yvette Lugo reported that this is necessary as the year is ending and the start of the new year is right around the corner. Therefore, a nominating committee is necessary, Ms. Lugo requested volunteers. Mr. Banales volunteered, and Ms. Ellen Smyth volunteered Ms. Claudia K. Garcia to be a part of the committee and a potential officer as well. The members of the committee will be Mr. Xavier Banales, Yvette Lugo and Claudia K. Garcia.

- J. Other Business Items

No further items were shared.

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

- Aging to Perfection

Ms. Yvette reported this has been the best attendance yet, all resources to support older adults, caregivers, over 2200 persons in attendance. There was educational booths and three sessions simultaneously including one from the Alzheimer's Association on the 10 warning signs of Alzheimer's disease, and the best attended session from the County Attorney's Office on the Transfer of Dead Deed or TOD, transferring real property, and the last was on the Most Common Scams Done to Elderly by the FBI, El Paso field office. The entertainment on stage was encouraging for everyone to age well.

- Amistad community events

Ms. Celia Garcia reported on Amistad events as reported on the Newsletter. In September Amistad celebrated Driver Appreciation Week. Also, in remembrance of September 11<sup>th</sup>, A Day of Service where approximately 30 volunteers showed up to assist with building clean up, as well as a hygiene item drive. Also, in the El Paso Inc. voting opportunity for voting for The Best of El Paso, Amistad was voted as the Best Non-Profit for 2023.

Ms. Ellen Smyth reported on the City of El Paso opening the Airport Station as a part of the Montana Brio, and in addition to being a Sun Metro stop, it is also a location for Ubers and Lifts. So, if you order an Uber or Lift, you can go to this same stop. It is over by the rental lot across the street therefore now a centralized location for all transport other than taxis. It is a very nice facility just without a restroom. The City of El Paso also continues to work on the grant towards 50 electric vehicles for the LIFT, the paratransit system which will potentially go live in 2025 since it takes a long time to get electric vehicles and even just buses. Also, streetcar hours were extended on September 1<sup>st</sup>, and run seven days a week now, Monday

through Thursday 7am to 7pm and on Friday 7am to 11am, Saturday noon to 11pm and Sunday noon to 6pm. Also, the Ghost Tour is coming up, the Trolley of Terror they are calling it, Saturday October 28 at 6:30pm. It is free but you do need to make a reservation because the trolleys only hold about forty people each. If interested go onto the City of El Paso Facebook page and be able to see all announcements. Free rides will be available on Election Day, November 7<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Banales commented that if there is the need to further share information on such valuable resources, that Amistad can share the information through the Newsletter as another vehicle to share information to the public. Ms. Smyth reported she would begin sharing all the information directly with Amistad.

Mr. Banales shared an announcement regarding the LGC meetings he has been attending, stating that Commissioner Leon requested he serve in an ad hoc committee with the LGC to review material prior to going to the Board as an additional review and participation for input from the community as opposed to just from staff. He reported that it was important to look at further involvement with the LGC as it is an important entity as it develops.

Mr. Jesus Cerna Transit Planner with the EP County reported that Wi-Fi is now available for riders in any of the El Paso County transit routes.

- Other

VI. Next WTEP Meetings

November 30, 2023

Mr. Banales reported that WTEP has met the requirements within the bylaws regarding the total number of meetings to have within a year, therefore, if agreed on, November 30 can be utilized for the nominating committee and planning committee to meet. Therefore, the next meeting would be in January 2024. With no objection, the nominating committee and planning committee will meet on that day.

VII. Adjourned

Motion by Mr. Banales and seconded by Ellen Smyth. Meeting adjourned at 4:06pm.