

Ports-to-Plains Advisory Committee Meeting #4 Summary

WebEx August 20, 2020 | 8:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Attendees

Advisory Committee Member	Organization	Attendance
Mayor George Arispe	City of Eldorado	Not Present
Mayor John Baker	City of Tahoka	Present
Judge Steve Floyd Designee: Commissioner Rick Bacon	Tom Green County	Present
Judge Mike Braddock	Lynn County	Present
Judge Charlie Bradley	Schleicher County	Not Present
Mayor Bob Brinkmann	City of Dumas	Not Present
Judge Terri Beth Carter	Sherman County	Present
Judge Bryan Cox	Martin County	Not Present
Mayor Wanda Shurley Designee: City Manager Arturo Fuentes	City of Sonora	Not Present
Judge Ronnie Gordon	Hartley County	Not Present
Mayor Brenda Gunter	City of San Angelo	Present
Judge Kim Halfmann	Glasscock County	Not Present
Judge Deborah Horwood	Sterling County	Not Present
Mayor Lane Horwood	City of Sterling City	Not Present
Judge Ernie Houdashell	Randall County	Not Present
Judge Terry Johnson	Midland County	Not Present
Judge Harold Keeter	Swisher County	Present
Mayor Bruno Lozano	City of Del Rio	Present
Mayor Shannon Thomason Designee: Asst. City Manager John Medina	City of Big Spring	Designee Present
Mayor Ginger Nelson Designee: City Manager Jared Miller	City of Amarillo	Designee Present
Judge David B. Mull	Hale County	Not Present
Judge Foy O'Brien	Dawson County	Not Present
Judge Lewis G. Owens, Jr.	Val Verde County	Not Present

Advisory Committee Member	Organization	Attendance
Judge Curtis Parrish	Lubbock County	Present
Patrick Payton, Mayor	City of Midland	Not Present
Judge Francisco G. Ponce	Dimmit County	Not Present
Mayor Dan Pope (<i>Chairman</i>)	City of Lubbock	Present
Mayor Ricky Reed	City of Stratford	Not Present
Judge Wesley Ritchey	Dallam County	Not Present
Mayor Pete Saenz	City of Laredo	Not Present
Judge David R. Saucedo	Maverick County	Not Present
Mayor Wayne Seiple	City of Carrizo Springs	Not Present
Judge James Tullis Shahan	Kinney County	Not Present
Judge Souli Asa Shanklin	Edwards County	Not Present
Mayor Luis Sifuentes	City of Eagle Pass	Not Present
Judge Steve Smith (<i>Vice-Chairman</i>)	Sutton County	Not Present
Judge Hal Spain	Coke County	Not Present
Mayor Josh Stevens	City of Lamesa	Not Present
Mayor Phillip Hass Designee: City Manager James Stroud	City of Dalhart	Not Present
Judge Tano E. Tijerina	Webb County	Present
Mayor David Turner Designee: Asst. City Manager Phillip Urrutia	City of Odessa	Not Present
Judge Johnny "Rowdy" Rhoades Designee: Commissioner Dee Vaughan	Moore County	Designee Present
Judge Kathryn Wiseman	Howard County	Not Present
Judge Nancy Tanner Designee: Director Sebastin Ysaguirre	Potter County Road and Bridge Department	Not Present
Texas Transportation Commission		
Commissioner Alvin New	Texas Transportation Commission	Present

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

Caroline Mays
Roger Beall
Loretta Brown
Blake Calvert
John DeWitt
Kylan Francis
Michael Haithcock
Cliff Hallford
Carl Johnson
Timoteo "Tim" Juarez, Jr.
Steve Linhart

Sherry Pifer
Roberto Rodriguez, III
Jarred Shaffer
Ranee Shields
Peter Smith
John R. Speed
Akila Thamizharasan
Trent Thomas
Steve Warren

Consultant Team

Wendy Travis	Garver	Michael Penic	WSP
Michele Lopez	Garver	Robert Ryan	Blanton Associates
Tracy Michel	Garver	Lena Camarillo	PCI
Sean Wray	Garver	Kari Anne Sutton	PCI

Other Attendees

Guy Andrews	City of San Angelo Economic Development Corporation
Paula Dowell	Cambridge Systematics
Shannon Harmon	State Senator Charles Perry's Office
Marshal Hoak	State Senator Pete Flores' Office
Cheri Huddleston	Hance Scarborough, LLP
Joe Kiely	Ports-to-Plains Alliance
Benjamin Lancaster	Texas Representative Brooks Landgraf's Office
Laura Lewis	State Senator Charles Perry's Office
John Osborne	Ports-to-Plains Alliance
Gerry Schwebel	IBC Bank
Matt Wojnowski	City of Del Rio

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Advisory Committee Chair and City of Lubbock Mayor Dan Pope opened the meeting at 8:06 am. Mayor Pope welcomed the attendees and said the Advisory Committee Meeting was meant to be in San Angelo this morning, but, regrettably, the meeting could not be held in person. He introduced Caroline Mays, TxDOT Director of Freight, Trade, and Connectivity and asked for opening remarks. Ms. Mays thanked the attendees for joining.

Agenda Review

Ms. Mays reviewed the agenda and said the focus of today's meeting was to review the five report chapters. The agenda was summarized as follows: Chapter 1 is an overview/introduction; Chapter 2 is the existing conditions and forecast; Chapter 3 is the feasibility analysis and findings; Chapter 4 documents the public involvement process; and Chapter 5 documents the Advisory Committee's recommendations. Ms. Mays also said they would discuss the next steps at towards the end of the meeting, including finalizing the report, meeting again in September and then in October, and conducting a pair of public meetings August 25 and 26 which will allow the public to continue to engage in the planning process and to provide comments on the Advisory Committee's preliminary recommendations.

Ms. Mays then asked Steve Linhart to conduct roll call.

Recap of Previous Advisory Committee Meetings

Mayor Pope recapped that the team has worked on this study for 10.5 months with 15 segment meetings and that this was the fourth Advisory Committee meeting. He thanked the TxDOT team and TxDOT's consultant team led by Wendy Travis for all their hard work.

Ms. Mays then welcomed Peter Smith, Division Director of TxDOT's Transportation Planning and Programming (TPP) Division, for opening remarks. Mr. Smith also expressed his gratitude to the team and to Mayor Pope for his effort, and iterated that the project remains on track due to the work of everyone on the committee.

Ms. Mays announced Peter Smith had plans to retire at the end of the month and said he has been supportive and instrumental during this process (especially during the pandemic).

Mayor Pope congratulated Peter Smith, expressing gratitude.

Mayor Pope also recognized and thanked TxDOT District Engineers Mark Jones, San Angelo District and Brian Crawford, Amarillo District who were also retiring.

Ms. Mays thanked all TxDOT District Engineers and their staff for their assistance with the study.

Commissioner Alvin New, Texas Transportation Commission, made a few remarks, expressing he had joined the call to listen and learn from the committee, and that he appreciated everyone's work and the progress thus far.

Review and Discussion of Advisory Committee Report Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction

Ms. Mays reminded the Committee that this should reflect the information the committee's wants conveyed and it needs to be presented in a manner that could be easily understood by someone who has not been part of the process.

Mayor Pope asked for Wendy Travis or Tracy Michel of the consulting team to discuss the formatting of Chapter 1, “How will it change from draft to final form?” Ms. Travis responded that this version is formatted in Word. It will be finalized in the software program InDesign like the Segment Committee Reports. The document will be revised to incorporate the committee’s comments and additional photos and formatted in InDesign.

Mayor Pope asked for any comments on page 1 or the map. No comments were provided.

Mayor Pope moved to page 3, asking where the revenue numbers came from, such as the cotton at \$2.6 billion a year and whether that data needs a source citation. Further, he commented that the number for cotton appears low.

Ms. Travis responded that this information comes from the United States and Texas Departments of Agriculture and the data will be checked for accuracy and the citations added to the report.

Mayor Pope moved to the energy production section where Permian Basin in energy production is discussed and the Eagle Ford Shale is mentioned mid-paragraph. He requested a map to show where basins, military installations, and other similar features are located. He asked that natural gas production in the Eagle Ford Shale be added.

Ms. Travis responded the team could add the natural gas information for the Eagle Ford Shale that was included in the Segment Committee reports.

Mayor Lozano asked that border inspection facilities be included in the interest of national security. He requested a map in the National Defense and Security section (page 4). He agreed that the natural gas basins should be included, especially with new discovery and how important this area is to energy production. Ms. Travis said the team will add a map that shows the military bases and assets, airports, border check points and border crossings.

Mayor Pope said that since northbound truck crossings are mentioned in the International Trade section, southbound truck crossings should also be mentioned. Ms. Travis said the team would look to see if they could find that information.

Mayor Pope solicited additional comments on the first 4 pages, and no additional comments were provided.

Mayor Pope moved to page 5 “What are the key corridor challenges?” He mentioned he liked the formatting of the page because it was easier to read. Ms. Travis said the format was a way to highlight information by utilizing text box shading, and to let the team know if the committee desires any other section to be highlighted. Mayor Pope commented the 3rd bullet regarding economic development and growth of trade was remarkable and really jumped out at him.

In response, Ms. Mays said the team was trying to communicate the critical nature of the corridor, and she was grateful this fact was resonating with the committee. She encouraged feedback so that this type of information could be highlighted. Mayor Pope suggested adding a bullet regarding energy on this page of the report. He solicited additional comments, and no comments were received. Mayor Lozano agreed with the addition of the energy bullet point.

Mayor Pope moved to pages 6, 7, 8, and 9. He liked the graphics on page 8 and thought page 9 summarized the organization of the report well.

Judge Terri Beth Carter, Sherman County Judge, mentioned there were references to Appendix A and B, but were not included in the draft they received for the meeting. Ms. Travis acknowledged that the appendices were not included when the draft chapters were sent to the committee for review, but she said they would be included when the committee receives the final draft.

Mayor Pope asked for bolding of the chapter names in the “Organization of the Report” section.

Review and Discussion of Advisory Committee Report Chapter 2

Chapter 2 – Existing Conditions and Needs Assessment and Forecasted Conditions

Mayor Pope began the discussion by stating Chapter 2 describes the setting of the corridor location without the interstate. Ms. Mays reiterated the chapter looks at historical conditions from 1990 to 2018, and the forecast predicts future conditions without the interstate to 2050. In the segment committee reports, this information was included in two different chapters, but this report combines them to improve the flow of the narrative.

Regarding page 1 in the last paragraph, Mayor Pope requested that the text mention Odessa since it is often difficult to separate Midland/Odessa from one another, and because the Odessa Airport is mentioned.

Mayor Pope mentioned on the top of page 3 it may be advantageous to use bullets for ease of reading to describe the corridor.

The City Manager of the City of Amarillo, Jared Miller, asked whether the 2050 forecasted conditions for with the interstate were discussed in in Chapter 2. Ms. Mays responded no, the forecasted only includes the baseline without the interstate.

Mayor Pope moved to page 4. He requested the team correct a typo (“of” instead of “fo”) in the first sentence. In the first paragraph on page 4 entitled, “What are the Populations Trends in the Ports-to-Plains corridor?” discusses population growth., The growth rate of less than the rest of the state is still significant for West Texas. He indicated approval of the callout box on page 4 and indicated that the forecasted corridor population growth is the message of the section. He indicated that he liked the second paragraph better.

Mr. Miller indicated that projected growth rates are anticipated to double over the next 30 years. He requested that the statements be rephrased to use positive language. Mrs. Travis confirmed that the team would rephrase the information as requested.

Mayor Pope moved to page 5 and page 6 that contained graphics.

Mr. Miller informed the committee that Joe Kiely of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance indicated that it is important that the reader understands that the report, from page 4 and beyond, discusses the future conditions without the interstate. Ms. Travis responded a sentence would be added at the beginning of Chapter 2 to make it clear the chapter discusses the existing conditions as well as the 2050 baseline without the interstate facility.

Mayor Pope questioned the future employment growth statistic (highlighted in blue), asking how a 60% population growth equated to an employment growth of only 17%. He requested the team double-check the statistics and projections, and Mayor Gunter agreed. Ms. Mays responded that these numbers do not always align intuitively. Population can come from other areas migrating

and/or representation of age cohorts not yet in the workforce. Employment is based on other factors and does not relate directly to population statistics. Mayor Pope indicated that he still suspects a disconnect in the data, and Mayor Gunter also responded that he expected a smaller difference between the two projections. Ms. Mays assured the committee the team would double check the projections. She added the population data comes from Dr. Lloyd Potter (Texas State Demographer), but the economic data comes from separate sources. Ms. Mays again reiterated that the projections do not exist in an intuitively close relationship and offered the committee an example to illustrate this point. Mayor Pope thanked Ms. Mays for the additional information.

Judge Carter said even though the Texas Panhandle and West Texas have lower populations, the transportation network still is utilized to move a significant number of agricultural products and other goods. Ms. Mays agreed, stating the ability of this region to attract employment and flip the narrative could be closer to 62% with the addition of an interstate, and then the region may move closer to the current statewide growth rates. She added this area of the state is the engine of the economy based on the energy sector and production, agriculture, and international trade.

Mayor Gunter added transportation drives economic development, the state needs diversity, and transportation will drive that diversity. Mayor Pope said we need to find a way to convey this message correctly.

Mayor Pope moved to page 8 and page 9. He pointed out that in the blue box, the information describes how this region lags the rest of the state, but the second paragraph shows a difference. He opened this item for comment and no comments were received.

On page 9, Mayor Pope noted that although mining is introduced, sand occupies the bulk of the topic. He affirmed sand is important, but asked which other items are mined that the report could highlight. Ms. Travis responded that mining is a subcategory within the energy sector. Mayor Gunter affirmed sand mining and its importance to energy production. Ms. Mays responded that mining is not used in the Segment Committee reports, so the report will delete “mining,” as it is an energy-related discussion. Mayor Pope solicited additional comments, and no comments were provided.

Mayor Pope moved to page 10, noting that it includes more information on energy and agriculture. He asked whether this meant that more information on international trade was warranted. Other committee members agreed. Regarding wind energy, Mayor Pope pointed out that nearly all the wind energy in Texas is west of I-35, and the report should clarify that wind and solar energy are West and South Texas industries. Mayor Gunter indicated that the solar energy sector is expanding as well, and the report should include this information

Mayor Lozano agreed with Mayor Gunter and asked the team to make sure to include a bullet point emphasizing ports where it discusses international trade. It should focus on the outbound traffic and not just the inbound traffic. Ms. Travis asked for clarification regarding moving the “international trade” section. Mayor Lozano said the section does not have to be moved but added to page 10 as a bullet.

Mayor Pope asked for comments on pages 11, 12, and 13. He indicated these pages are straightforward on traffic and clearly call out the data. He had no comments on these pages.

Next Mayor Pope moved to page 14 discussing travel time and safety topics and asked for comments. Ms. Mays asked the consultant team to modify the format of this page as it looked like safety was under “Travel Times”.

Mayor Pope indicated that the report calls out crashes in Midland, Amarillo, Dumas, and Dalhart, but wrecks there are due to trucks driving through town. Mayor Gunter mentioned that reliever routes are being reviewed and are the first step towards relieving the interstate segments. Mayor Pope asked the team to delete the second sentence in the blue box because the message is the first sentence. Mr. Miller agreed.

Mayor Pope loved the two blue boxes on page 16 pointing out limited economic development opportunities with a no-build condition.

Mayor Pope discussed the graphics on page 17 and 18 that show truck trip flow. Mayor Lozano appreciated these maps.

Mayor Pope asked if there were any comments on page 19, and no comments were received. He stated that the graphic on page 20 is one about which the Segment Committee has talked.

Mayor Pope moved to page 21 (International Trade) and mentioned he liked the formatting on this page. He requested data be added with a pie chart showing the current data to for comparison with the 2050 pie chart. Mayor Pope requested a picture in Laredo where one can overlook the traffic coming from both directions. Judge Tijerina indicated that this region is truly the “aorta of the United States,” and if this gets choked down, the country is in trouble.

Mayor Pope asked if the team would add a little more information at the end of Chapter 2 to summarize that the information presented informs the development of the information in Chapter 3. Ms. Travis said they would add some additional text to the summary at the end of Chapter 2.

Review and Discussion of Advisory Committee Report Chapter 3 Chapter 3 – Corridor Interstate Feasibility Analysis and Findings

Mayor Pope asked for a summary of Chapter 3. Ms. Mays said we used the data and information to analyze what an interstate brings to the corridor. She added this is really what the study is about: “Is the interstate upgrade feasible?”

Regarding the blue box on page 1 of Chapter 3 about interstate essentials, Mayor Pope asked whether the box should say “The Interstate is essential to...” Ms. Mays said it would be revised to read “Extending I-27 is Essential to:”.

Mayor Pope asked if there were any comments on page 1. None were offered.

Regarding page 2, Mayor Pope liked the organization of the chapter. He said safety is discussed and is very important. He asked if there were any comments on pages 2 and 3. Mayor Pope said Figure 3.1 was a little difficult to understand. Ms. Mays said it could be modified and the team will look at opportunity to make it easier to understand.

Mayor Pope moved to page 5 where freight movement was discussed and requested confirmation on the 3,800-truck statistic. Ms. Travis said it was correct for the 2050 baseline and the team would make sure to add “2050 baseline” to the text. He requested revision of the box at the bottom of page 5 to state, “Facilitate More International Trade.”

Mayor Pope reviewed pages 7-10. He suggested making sure the bullets on the first page of the Chapter were in order of the discussion in the chapter.

Mayor Pope said to fix the extra space in the formatting on page 11. Mayor Pope requested make sure to include the discussion on the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

He suggested moving the interstate designation before the funding sources.

Mayor Pope liked the top of page 13. The callout illustrates the different pieces such as frontage roads, ROW costs, and shows a deep look at these items. He was fond of the paragraph at bottom of page 15 including the COVID-19 discussion and USMCA, and he added that he trusts that the layout will make the data jump out even more. Ms. Travis said the team would put this information in a text box.

Mayor Pope asked for any other comments. None were offered.

Review and Discussion of Advisory Committee Report Chapter 4

Chapter 4 – Public Involvement and Stakeholder Engagement

Mayor Pope said Chapter 4 is very brief, summarizes what we have done, and appears to be well-written. He asked for any comments. None were offered. Ms. Mays added that Chapter 4 documents the stakeholder process.

Review and Discussion of Advisory Committee Report Chapter 5

Chapter 5 – Advisory Committee Recommendations

Mayor Pope asked to reorder the paragraphs on page of the Chapter, so the recommendation that the corridor be upgraded to an interstate come in the first paragraph. Mayor Gunter requests the report reiterate the entire corridor, not just segments, needs to be upgraded to see the true benefits realized and Mayor Pope agreed.

On page 2, the committee requested reorganization of the items the following order: improve safety, support economic development and competitiveness, improve access to markets, improve travel times, reduce travel costs, and improve mobility and reliability.

Mayor Pope commended page 3 of the report regarding jobs, GDP, etc. and he requested to add the word “ADDITIONAL” before 4,400 jobs statewide.

Mayor Pope also commended the return on investment information, stating that it is a compelling point. Mayor Gunter requested for the team to make it bold.

On page 4, Mayor Pope affirmed that the last two paragraph/sentences are important points and noted that they should be called out. Ms. Mays asked the consultant team to put these two sentences into callout boxes to emphasize them.

On page 5, Mayor Pope asked Ms. Mays to take the committee through the policy and project recommendations followed by implementation. Ms. Mays responded that a lot of this information

came from Segment Committees' work efforts. Ms. Mays reviewed the policy recommendations. Mayor Pope commended the box on page 5.

On page 6, Mayor Pope commended the call outs. He added that it would be appropriate to highlight points from Segment 2 (San Angelo) to keep the report balanced. Mayor Gunter agreed with the point. The Advisory Committee proclaimed support for the addition of the San Angelo relief route currently under study.

Next, Mayor Pope reviewed page 9, the Implementation Plan. Mayor Pope asked for clarity on projects listed as "C" for construction. Ms. Travis clarified.

The Advisory Committee commended the general direction of Chapter 5. On page 6, the committee requested that the report call attention to those projects that are underway.

Advisory Committee Next Steps

Ms. Mays reminded the committee there are two upcoming virtual public meetings on August 25 and 26. She explained the primary purpose of public meetings would be to get public input on the Advisory Committee's preliminary recommendations.

Next Steps

Ms. Mays requested the committee review the chapters and provide feedback by next Friday (August 28). The team will revise the chapters based the Advisory Committee's comments and format the report into InDesign. She informed the committee that Advisory Committee meetings are planned for September 17 and October 15. Mayor Gunter asked when reports would be turned around, and Ms. Mays responded that they would be completed and sent back to the Committee approximately 7 to 10 days before the next meeting.

Mayor Pope reiterated to the committee to send all input by August 28, and the consultant team would turn around the report in 7-10 days with the InDesign layout to review for the September 17 meeting. Mayor Pope asked if the next meeting would be shorter and would aim to review fine details and appearance of the report.

Ms. Mays responded affirmatively but added the next two meetings would be shorter.

Mayor Pope expressed his gratitude to TxDOT, consultants and the Advisory Committee members.

Adjourn at 10:58 a.m.