

I-27 Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

Etter-Harbin Alumni Center (Legends Room), Austin, TX/Teams | April 10, 2025

1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Advisory Committee Member	Organization	Attendance
Mayor Brenda Gunter, Committee Chair	City of San Angelo	Present
Judge Curtis Parrish, Committee Vice-Chair	Lubbock County	Present
Mayor Alvaro “Al” Arreola	City of Del Rio	Not Present
Mayor Lori Blong	City of Midland	Present
Mayor Robert Moore	City of Big Spring	Not Present
Mayor Mark McBrayer	City of Lubbock	Present
Mayor Cole Stanley	City of Amarillo	Present
Mayor Dr. Victor D. Trevino	City of Laredo	Not Present
Judge Lane Carter Proxy: Rick Bacon	Tom Green County	Proxy Present
Judge Alicia Law	Sherman County	Not Present
Judge Randy Johnson Proxy: Brian Klinksiek	Howard County	Proxy Present
Judge Terry Johnson Proxy: Andrew Avis	Midland County	Not Present
Judge Lewis Owens	Val Verde County	Not Present
Judge Rowdy Rhoades	Moore County	Not Present
Judge Wes Ritchey	Dallam County	Present
Judge Nancy Tanner	Potter County	Not Present
Judge Tano E. Tijerina Proxy: Guillermo Cuellar	Webb County	Proxy Present
Tracee Bentley Proxy: Debra Richmond	Permian Strategic Partnership	Proxy Present
Kevin Carter	Amarillo Economic Development	Not Present
John Osborne	Lubbock Economic Development	Present
Gerry Schwebel	IBC Bank	Present
Dee Vaughan	Texas Corn Producers	Present

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)

Aslan Zarafshan
Billy Dezern
Caroline Mays
Cary Karnstadt
Claudia J. Lagos Galindo
Emily Clisby
Epigmenio “Epi” Gonzalez
Eric Lykins
Gabriel Ramirez
Humberto “Tito” Gonzalez
Jeremy Dearing
John DeWitt
Julie Rogers
Kit Black
Kylan Francis

Leah Casey
Lorena Echeverria de Misi
Meera Nguyen
Michael Haithcock
Mildred Litchfield
Nicole Lawson
Rebecca Herrera
Robert Ornelas
Roberto Rodriguez III
Robin Ayers
Sergio Vasquez
Steven Warren
Trent Thomas
Wesley Starnes
Yvette Flores

Consultant Team

Kendall Smith	Garver
Leigh Mercer	Garver
Sean Wray	Garver
Tracy Michel	Garver
Wendy Travis	Garver
Zachary Ashburn	Garver
Jon Hetzel	Garver
Keegan Doan	Garver
Lena Camarillo	PCI
Tamara Rodriguez	PCI
William Long	PCI

Other Attendees

Joe Kiely	Ports-to-Plains Alliance	John Burkholder	City of Midland
Lauren Garduno	Ports-to-Plains Alliance	Jose Ortiz	City of Midland
Cheri Huddleston	Ports-to-Plains Alliance	Blake Vineyard	US Senator Ted Cruz
Tina Scarborough	Ports-to-Plains Alliance	Lori Wilson	State Rep. Drew Darby
John Medina	City of Big Spring	Major Hofheins	San Angelo MPO
David R. Saucedo	City of Eagle Pass	Ramona Ferguson	Lamesa EDC
Lindsey Adams	City of Midland	Victoria Vara	Sonora EDC
Tommy Gonzalez	City of Midland	James Beauchamp	MOTRAN Alliance
Brian Stubbs	City of Midland	Quincy Allen	BGE

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Committee Chair Brenda Gunter, Mayor of San Angelo, welcomed the attendees to the I-27 Advisory Committee Meeting and provided opening remarks. Mayor Gunter provided a summary of the momentum of the I-27 effort to date and the marked support of the program on a federal level following meetings members of the committee had in Washington D.C. in March.

Commissioners Alvin New and Alejandro “Alex” G. Meade III were not online at the beginning of the meeting to provide remarks.

Ms. Caroline Mays, TxDOT Director of Planning and Modal Programs, provided remarks highlighting the importance of widespread engagement of stakeholders to push I-27 projects forward and acknowledging the effort TxDOT has made on the program to date. She noted the continued emphasizes on planning of future interstate developments to enhance mobility and connectivity in response to the state’s growing population. She remarked on the importance of keeping the impetus on the development of I-27 as a response to this growth.

Roll Call/Safety Minute

Mayor Gunter took a roll call. Lorena Echeverria de Misi, TxDOT Transportation Planning and Programming (TPP) Corridor Planning Branch Manager, provided a safety minute, highlighting the number of crashes and fatal crashes on the future I-27 corridor in the past five years, including the urban areas with the most fatalities and the main contributing factors. She concluded by providing tips on basic safety and urging the attendees to join in raising awareness on the efforts of the End the Streak Campaign.

I-27 Implementation Plan Updates

Mr. Lauren Garduno of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance provided information on the I-27 signage ceremony in Lubbock scheduled for April 14th, 2025 celebrating AASHTO’s approval of 4.2 miles of new I-27 interstate completed south of the City of Lubbock. He acknowledged TxDOT District staff Steve Warren and Kylan Francis on their efforts, achieving the first designation in this corridor since 1992. He extended an invitation to all attendees to join in the signage ceremony. Mayor Gunter celebrated the effort and added they have submitted two requests for signage, so there is an expectation for more of these ceremonies as I-27 is built out.

Ms. Echeverria de Misi presented a high-level summary of the current TxDOT investment on the future I-27 corridor, including those on the 2025 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) or under planning stages outside of the UTP. She summarized the totals assigned for I-27 development including planning funding (\$7.6B) meant for preliminary studies; engineering funding (\$2.7B) meant for development of schematic designs and other requirements needed to secure construction funding; and programmed construction funding (\$3.3B). She highlighted the most significant categories within the UTP and a brief explanation of their meaning.

John Osborne, Lubbock Economic Development, asked how the funding from the 2025 UTP compares to previous years (i.e. 2024, 2020). He explained that this would be a useful comparison to present to current and new members to help visualize the impact of TxDOT’s investment on the corridor. Ms. Echeverria de Misi acknowledged Mr. Osborne’s input, stating that TxDOT has not been tracking this comparison as the focus has been on projects programmed since the adoption of the I-

27 Implementation Plan (July 2024), but a look into historical data is something that could be provided if the Committee deems it appropriate. She noted this as an action item for the TxDOT team for the next update meeting in response to Mr. Osborne's request

Humberto "Tito" Gonzalez, TxDOT TPP Director, highlighted the magnitude of additional UTP funding (\$2.3B) for I-27 outside of the major mobility funding categories (i.e. Categories 2, 4, and 12). Mr. Gonzalez stated that this demonstrates the commitment from TxDOT Districts and Divisions to fund projects with money from other funding categories. He explained that these internal partnerships for funding illustrate avenues to continue closing funding gaps on I-27 projects.

Mr. Osborne echoed Mr. Gonzalez's comments and expressed appreciation for the statistics provided as a means to present TxDOT's efforts. He reiterated that presenting such statistics against a base year prior to the implementation plan's adoption, such as from the interstate designation, would show the continue level of commitment in a very positive manner.

Mr. Garduno clarified that though there is a considerable amount of funding from non-major mobility funding categories, it is important to make a distinction on funding like Category 1 - Preservation, since those are meant for the upkeep of the existing interstate section and not for roadway upgrades to interstate standards. He also confirmed with Ms. Echeverria de Misi that the engineering funding figure provided refers to the 10-year window of project development known as Develop Authority. Mr. Garduno suggested highlighting the engineering funding even more since it shows TxDOT is committed for five Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) cycles to allocate Develop Authority funding on the future I-27 corridor. Mayor Mark McBrayer, City of Lubbock, expressed appreciation for Mr. Garduno's input.

Ms. Echeverria de Misi continued by highlighting the breakdown of an estimated \$5.8B investment on I-27 broken out by project type, with a detail for added capacity projects only (81 projects, \$1.9B) under the UTP construction and engineering funding. She delineated estimate totals for added capacity projects by each project phase, including projects in construction (\$792.8M), projects funded in the 2025 UTP (\$1.2B), projects that are programmed but partially funded (\$233.4M) and the currently unfunded (\$616.8M). Mr. Gonzalez and Mr. Osborne confirmed with Ms. Echeverria de Misi that the projects shown are a subset of what is currently programmed in the UTP and reflect projects only along the corridor. Ms. Echeverria de Misi continued the presentation, providing maps with the number of added capacity projects by project phase shown by district.

Ms. Echeverria de Misi continued by introducing the I-27 Dashboard, emphasizing its role in dynamically showcasing progress on the I-27 Implementation Plan. Zachary Ashburn from Garver presented the draft of the dashboard to the committee, explaining that it is designed to help Districts identify the most critical projects for advancing the I-27 corridor. The dashboard will provide detailed metrics to track each project's status against the Implementation Plan and offer insights into each district's performance in securing funding. He noted that the dashboard would serve as a data-driven interface to address questions from Districts and their stakeholders, thereby reducing the reporting burden and increasing transparency. Mr. Gonzalez provided a disclaimer for the dashboard, stating that the metrics shown are subject to change based on scope and cost estimate refinements among other factors.

Mayor Lori Blong from the City of Midland asked about the timeline for TxDOT to enable the committee's use of the tool. Mr. Ashburn responded that the dashboard is still in development, gathering data from the Districts and refining its accuracy based on feedback. Mr. Garduno requested a target roll-out date for the dashboard's publication. Ms. Echeverria de Misi mentioned that fall would be ideal, making Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 the target date. Mr. Garduno expressed concern over the slow timeline. Ms. Mays noted that delaying the dashboard until the release of the 2026 UTP would be strategic.

Tommy Gonzalez, Midland City Manager, asked if there was a master plan to identify funding gaps and request funding at a federal level instead of the state UTP level. Ms. Mays confirmed with Mr. Gonzalez that the I-27 Implementation Plan outlines this.

Mayor Blong noted that waiting for the dashboard to be perfected could result in missed opportunities to strategically plan UTP funding for the Districts. She proposed an expedited launch of a simplified version of the dashboard for committee. She emphasized that the current granularity of the dashboard metrics would enable stakeholders to push for significant progress.

Mr. Tito Gonzalez agreed, stating that TxDOT will work on the dashboard to provide a streamlined tool that meets the committee's needs and enables more informed discussions. Ms. Echeverria de Misi echoed the committee's comments, stating there is currently no vehicle to publish the tool externally; however, a dashboard made available exclusively to the committee could be the mechanism that allows TxDOT to share the information. Mayor Blong and Mr. Garduno supported this approach. Mayor Gunter commented on the lack of money and resources across the Districts. Ms. Mays suggested returning to this conversation once more access options for the dashboard are explored and emphasized that dashboard data needs validation before it is ready for publication.

Mayor Gunter reminded the committee of the established short-term, mid-term and long-term priorities from the implementation plan, explaining how the focus of the committee now is to connect the priorities to funding opportunities.

Each TxDOT District representative then provided updates on projects within their Districts that are in the I-27 Implementation Plan.

Mr. Epigmenio "Epi" Gonzalez, District Engineer for TxDOT Laredo District, began by sharing updates on projects along the future I-27 corridor. He reported that the Laredo District has procured two General Engineering Consulting (GEC) contracts that will assist in advancing individual projects within the Laredo District along the future I-27 corridor. The District has selected the firms they will collaborate with and is currently developing a detailed scope. Mr. Gonzalez continued by highlighting CSJ 0018-05-089 as a ready-to-let project that may be deferred to next year for level letting, noting that all necessary right-of-way has been acquired. He then discussed CSJ 0018-05-094, a new direct connection from US-83 to I-35, explaining that CSJs 0018-05-094 and 0037-10-041 will be let simultaneously. He also mentioned CSJ 0018-06-185, which will complete the remaining direct connectors for the I-35/I-69 interchange. Additionally, he corrected the dashboard entry for CSJ 0023-01-101, clarifying that it should be listed as a US-277 project rather than a US-90 project.

Mr. Gonzalez highlighted the fully funded project CSJ 0037-10-040, an adjacent project to the US-83/I-35 interchange the first one by the District to be a digital delivery. He noted that the GEC currently being procured should help prioritize the remaining Plan Authority projects.

Mr. Tito Gonzalez clarified that anything listed as let year 2035 is outside of the UTP. If the listed projects are not included in the 2026 UTP, their let years will update to 2036, and they will be considered outside of the UTP.

Mr. Osborne confirmed with Mr. Epi Gonzalez that at least 400 feet of right-of-way is being acquired for projects along the I-27 corridor in the Laredo District to establish an interstate footprint. Mr. Osborne asked if environmental studies have an expiration date, or do they remain valid for future projects that currently don't have funding or haven't been programmed. Mr. Gonzalez stated interstate feasibility studies remain valid for three years following environmental clearance. Mr. Gonzalez explained that maintaining such a project under active status beyond this timeline would necessitate a re-evaluation of the project's environmental document. He noted that the Laredo District's goal with these planning studies is to divide projects into smaller sections to ensure interstate right-of-way acquisition within the environmental clearance timeframe. Mr. Gonzalez emphasized the importance of resolving utility issues along the corridor early in each project to facilitate timely right-of-way acquisition.

Mr. Gonzalez continued by highlighting efforts on State Loop (SL)-79 in Del Rio and SL-480 in Eagle Pass. He explained that when the relief routes were initially developed, the future I-27 corridor was not a consideration. Consequently, the Laredo District did not plan for the loops to be upgraded to interstate status, and they are considered as four-lane divided facilities. Now that these loops are being considered as part of the future corridor, the District will need to revisit them to acquire additional right-of-way for an interstate footprint.

Mr. Gonzalez highlighted the numerous City Location Studies (CLS) located in Laredo District. He explained that the GEC, currently under procurement, is meant to develop alternatives for potential relief routes. He then opened the floor for questions while noting that most of the projects planned along I-27 for Laredo District are outside of the UTP.

John Osborne asked about the possibility of TxDOT using border protection funding for future interstate development in port-of-entry cities. Ms. Mays responded that this was not feasible. Mr. Osborne then asked if congressmen and senators could be approached to assist in exploring this topic. Ms. Mays deferred the question to Mr. Trent Thomas from the TxDOT Government Affairs Division for later discussion.

John DeWitt, Director of Transportation Planning and Development (TP&D), TxDOT San Angelo District, shared updates from the San Angelo District on projects along the future I-27 corridor. He highlighted CSJ 0907-24-055, which serves as the northern connection of the relief route around San Angelo, which will also eventually connect to future I-27 and future I-14. The project is currently under schematic development and is expected to be completed in FY 2026. He noted it has some strategic priority funding attached to it but that there is still a funding gap that the District will continue to address with each UTP cycle. They expect to develop it as a staged project, right-of-way acquisition and frontage roads construction before development of the interstate level main lanes.

Mr. DeWitt also highlighted another project on the San Angelo relief route, a freeway segment connecting the east segment of US-277 with US-277/US 67, that is fully funded for construction in FY 2026. He explained that the primary challenges for these projects are right-of-way acquisition (only two parcels missing), and utility relocation.

Mr. DeWitt highlighted the collaborative efforts with the Laredo District on upgrades to US-277 south of Sonora through Sutton and Edwards Counties in their jurisdiction and tying to Val Verde County, which the Laredo District is priming. He explained that the GEC procured in the Laredo District will assist in advancing this project.

Mr. DeWitt continued by discussing the initiation of the schematic development phase for the Sonora relief route, following a previous feasibility study. He is working with Mr. Garduno to offset planning costs for this project. The San Angelo District aims to procure contracts for the relief route in FY 2026, contingent on budget constraints.

Mr. DeWitt also highlighted the southern connection of the San Angelo relief route, noting that budget issues delayed procurement this year. However, the District aims to secure contracts in FY 2026. He mentioned the ongoing local discussions on the possibility of re-evaluating alternatives for this interstate-to-interstate segment based on the complexity of the project. Mr. DeWitt then opened the floor for questions.

Mayor Gunter pointed out to Mr. DeWitt that the Christoval area was excluded from his talking points. Mr. DeWitt recounted a March meeting with Mr. Garduno and stakeholders in Christoval, to discuss ongoing misinformation that had been causing uncertainty and concerns among local citizens and business owners about potential immediate impacts of interstate development on the community. He reported that the meeting facilitated a healthy discussion, which helped clear up confusion for the stakeholders, explain the timeframe and process of interstate development, reassured them of their involvement in the planning process, and potentially resulted in some project champions. He also added there is no planning effort currently underway in this area, but it is on their list of future efforts. Mr. Garduno added that the situation in Christoval will likely resonate in other towns (e.g. Dumas) along the corridor. Cities may come to realize that interstate development could be a positive change for their areas if committee members effectively communicate with their communities. Mr. DeWitt and Mr. Garduno are considering setting up meetings with other municipalities, such as Eldorado, that may be hesitant or confused about the I-27 development. He noted that he and Mr. DeWitt also had a positive conversation in Sonora with Victoria Vara of Sonora's Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

Mr. Garduno asked Mr. DeWitt about the procurement status for the I-14/I-27 connection on the south side of San Angelo. Mr. DeWitt confirmed that there is no procurement, explaining that this was the previously mentioned project affected by budget delays. Mr. Garduno suggested looking for the opportunity to add tracking of planning and engineering phase projects to the dashboard to better reflect the level of effort present in some of these segments

Eric Lykins, District Engineer, TxDOT Odessa District, shared updates from the Odessa District. Mr. Lykins highlighted CSJs 0005-14-092, 0005-14-093, 0005-14-094, and 0005-14-100, stating that these projects are I-20 freeway upgrade projects. He continued, identifying the corridor that follows

the Craddock reliever from I-20 to SH-176, stating that the projects are moving to the schematic phase, a consultant has been selected, and the work authorization is being procured. He explained that the Craddock relief route section is in a good spot as interstate right-of-way has already been acquired. Mr. Lykins detailed that priority for the Odessa District is to acquire sufficient right-of-way for the rest of the section, from FM 1788 to I-20. He continued, identifying the segments of work from SH-158 to the south and SH-349 at SH-146 to Lamesa, stating that schematic development for these projects will be started in the coming years. There were no questions from the committee about Mr. Lykins's updates.

Jeremy Dearing, District Engineer, TxDOT Abilene District, shared updates from the Abilene District. He highlighted CSJs 0069-01-061 and 0069-02-030, stating that though the Abilene projects are smaller in nature and would not be fully built out to interstate standards, the necessary interstate right-of-way footprint will be obtained as part of both projects. Mr. Dearing explained the project development for both is underway, on schedule and funded and they expect to let them on time by September 2027.

Mr. Garduno emphasized the need for development authority funding to re-evaluate upgrading the entire Big Spring relief route to interstate standards. He acknowledged current statewide funding restrictions that may limit this effort and asked Mr. Dearing what the committee and TxDOT can do to facilitate this process. Mr. Dearing responded that the Abilene District has begun consideration of this effort internally. Mr. Tito Gonzalez explained that Plan Authority funding would be the most suitable to obtain for this re-evaluation, as the funds are available. He noted that resource availability and budget constraints within the Professional Engineering Procurement Services (PEPS) Division are the primary challenges. Mr. Gonzalez mentioned that there is a mechanism to move forward, but it depends on how the Districts choose to utilize their available funds. Mr. Michael Haithcock, Director of TP&D, TxDOT Abilene District, suggested an offline meeting with Mr. Dearing and Mr. Garduno to discuss further. He agreed that upgrading the Big Spring relief route to interstate standards would be a viable and practical endeavor. To address funding constraints, he proposed that some of the re-evaluation work could be completed internally.

Steve Warren, District Engineer, TxDOT Lubbock District, shared updates from the Lubbock District on projects along the future I-27 corridor. He highlighted CSJ 1502-01-031 from Midland to Lamesa, noting that the Odessa District has taken over responsibility for this project. Mr. Warren discussed the District's project in Lamesa to evaluate relief route or one-way pair options through or around the city. He clarified that a schematic had been approved in the past for the Lamesa route, but it has since lapsed due to a lack of construction funding. He remarked that the District will revisit the evaluation at some point, although it is currently not a high priority. Mr. Warren then highlighted the Lubbock District's more active pursuit: the schematic development and preliminary environmental study of US-87 from existing I-27 to Tahoka to bring it up to interstate standards. He also mentioned two additional programmed projects, including the SL-88 connection currently under construction and I-27's interchange with Marsha Sharp Freeway, which would replace a diamond interchange with direct connectors.

Mr. Osborne confirmed with Mr. Warren that the direct connections at SL-88 would be eastbound/northbound and southbound/westbound. Mr. Warren explained they would for the listed project but that the long-range plan is to extend SL-88 further to the east.

Mr. Warren stated that the Lubbock District is working to find a consultant to assess the feasibility of the interchange as Marsha Sharp Freeway. He mentioned that the last time the District looked at the feasibility of the connection at Marsha Sharp, the proximity of major rail crossings and other constraints made the interchange impractical.

Mr. Warren added that the Lubbock District will be moving forward with a resigning project that would renumber exit signs to match the mileage for the I-27 designated interstate over the next 12 months. He echoed Mr. Dearing and Mr. Garduno's comments in support of the Big Spring bypass re-evaluation. He remarked that when it was built, it was designed close to interstate standards, and he believes that the effort of re-evaluation can be completed in-house. Mr. Warren offered Abilene District the expertise of Shelley Harris, Director of TP&D for the TxDOT Lubbock District, should they require it to expedite the process. There were no additional questions from the committee about Mr. Warren's updates.

Mr. Kit Black, Director of TP&D, TxDOT Amarillo District, shared updates from the Amarillo District on projects along the future I-27 corridor. He began by highlighting CSJ 0168-09-083, a project under construction that will expand I-27 to six lanes. He then presented on work related to SL-335, detailing which segments are complete, under construction, funded, unfunded, and in the planning process. The current SL-335 interchange with I-27 is fully funded and expected to let in FY 2028. Mr. Black emphasized the importance of the loop, explaining that the existing northern limit of I-27 terminates in Downtown Amarillo, where a continued alignment through downtown is not feasible for future interstate development. Therefore, a loop around Amarillo that can be upgraded to interstate standards will be crucial for the corridor.

Mr. Black continued by discussing the District's interstate feasibility study from Amarillo to Dumas (CSJ 0904-00-242), which is currently in the planning phase and expected to be completed by Fall 2025. This study will include consideration of a relief route around Dumas and the feasibility of extending I-27 to the north. Although this project falls outside the 10-year plan of the UTP, Mr. Black stated that the study would help initiate progress. He then presented on CSJ 0425-01-021, an expansion of US-87 to a four-lane divided highway. He mentioned that this project was started prior to the interstate designation, so interstate right-of-way was not preserved in anticipation of future I-27. Consequently, the facility will remain a four-lane divided highway until it can be revisited. There were no questions from the committee regarding Mr. Black's updates.

Mayor Gunter commended the Districts for their work on the future I-27 corridor.

Review of Legislation Related to I-27

Mr. Trent Thomas, Director of the Government Affairs Division, presented a brief update on legislation related to I-27. He started by informing the committee that both congressional and legislative sessions are currently underway and were currently in budget discussions. He highlighted House Bill (HB) 2775, proposed by Texas House Representative Brooks Landgraf of District 81, which intends to add Ector County and the City of Odessa to the I-27 Advisory Committee. The bill has been voted out of committee and is progressing to the next steps in the legislative process. If passed by the State Senate, the bill will go into effect on September 1st, 2025.

From a congressional standpoint, Mr. Thomas highlighted the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act, which is set to expire in 2026. He reported that TxDOT, along with other DOTs, is working closely with congressional members and the appropriate committees to address needs. The U.S. House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has been formally accepting legislative and policy proposals for authorization in their portal since March 31st. The deadline for submissions is April 30th at 6 p.m. Mr. Thomas encouraged those in attendance to consider submitting a proposal, as doing so may help modify some of the processes that currently slow down projects under the current authorization. He also mentioned TxDOT has made available online which federal priorities they are tracking for anyone that might be interested.

Mr. Thomas also detailed funding opportunities during this congressional session, noting that the U.S. House Committee on Appropriations portal is open for members to submit community-funded project proposals. The deadline for submissions is May 23rd at 6 p.m., and all projects from 2025 will need to be resubmitted for the 2026 funding bill. Mr. Thomas then opened the floor for questions.

Update from Ports-to-Plains Alliance

Mr. Lauren Garduno of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance provided updates from the Alliance. He reflected on his recent trip to Washington D.C. two weeks ago. The Alliance plans to submit community funding requests along the entire corridor, including sections outside of Texas. Regarding Texas projects, Mr. Garduno stated he would resubmit a community funding request to Congressman Ronny Jackson (TX-13) in Amarillo for development in Dumas and along a small section of SL-335. Additionally, he reported that the previous community funding request in Lubbock will be revised to focus on the feasibility study of corridor redevelopment through Lamesa and resubmitted. Mr. Garduno will also submit a request to Congressman August Pfluger (TX-11) for the SH-349 segment of Future I-27 north of Midland, and another request emphasizing the planning needs from San Angelo to Sonora. He noted that while Congressman Tony Gonzales (TX-23) does not often take community funding requests, ideally a request would be made for SL-79 in Del Rio. Finally, Mr. Garduno submitted a request for construction funding to Congressman Henry Cuellar (TX-28) for a section of US-83 near SH-255.

Mr. Thomas added that any request is included in STIP, so it is important to communicate with TxDOT Government Affairs Division when submitting so funds are appropriated correctly.

Mr. Garduno addressed the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act, initially brought up by Mr. Thomas. He mentioned the need for a follow-up meeting with Mr. Thomas to discuss his ongoing proposal. Mr. Garduno elaborated on the Ports-to-Plains Alliance's goal for the upcoming year: pursuing a new Interstate Highway Act at the national level, which will require broad national support. He emphasized the strategic advantage of key congressional players along the I-27 corridor, which the Alliance plans to leverage. Additionally, the Alliance aims to collaborate with the I-69 and I-14 groups to revisit historical research on 30 interstate highways recommended for upgrades, evaluating them based on energy security, food security, and defense criteria to advocate for the future interstate program. Mr. Garduno highlighted potential funding avenues through TxDOT, referencing estimates from the 2050 Plan. He concluded by stating that the alliance will submit a joint proposal with the I-69 and I-14 groups for authorization.

Ms. Caroline Mays mentioned that Congress had commissioned a study years ago to revisit the 30 interstates, and she offered to share the findings with Mr. Garduno, who accepted her support.

Mr. Garduno referenced the existing Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IAJA), highlighting the substantial investment it has made in highways. He explained that funding will likely be allocated from other discretionary sources back to highway funding during the current administration. Mr. Thomas noted that Texas did not fare well under the IAJA due to the manner in which discretionary grants were distributed. He pointed out that Texas has high growth rate and lane miles numbers, but the federal grant funding formula relies on outdated census data. Mr. Thomas emphasized that securing funding authorization before the November election cycle would be ideal.

Debra Richmond from the Permian Strategic Partnership asked if any other states show upward growth trends. Mr. Garduno stated that Colorado does, however they have different strategic objectives. Mayor Gunter highlighted that North Dakota has an upward trend. Mr. Garduno commented that the funding formula needs to be re-evaluated with more accurate data and noted that the AASHTO committee is actively working on this prior to the November deadline.

Ms. Mays commented on the interstate criteria being evaluated by the Ports-to-Plains Alliance, noting that economic development was excluded from the criteria. Mayor Gunter echoed this observation, adding that while defense is an important pillar, it is more relevant to I-14 than I-27. This might be Mr. Garduno's intention if he is evaluating multiple interstates. Mr. Garduno mentioned significant defense systems on I-27 outside of Texas, but Mayor Gunter pointed out that these were not analyzed in TxDOT's I-27 study.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Update

Jose Ortiz, Assistant City Manager of Midland and member of the Permian Basin MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), along with Ms. Lindsey Adams, Strategic Partnerships Officer of Midland and fellow TAC member, presented updates on the Permian Basin MPO on behalf of Mr. Cameron Walker, Executive Director of the Permian Basin MPO. Mr. Ortiz provided an overview of trends within the MPO, including population growth (2-3% in 2025), housing market expansion (4.09% over 15 years), building permit numbers (4x higher in the last decade), average daily vehicle miles traveled (3% growth annual average), and commodity movement. He explained that the data presented distinguishes the Permian Basin from other regions in the country. Mr. Ortiz highlighted existing roadway deficiencies, noting that an additional interstate system could address the issue of energy industry freight traveling on roads that are inadequate for their needs.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

Mayor Gunter shared her experience in Washington D.C., where she and Mr. Garduno met with representatives from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency. She highlighted the group's engagement, noting that the conversation was productive. Mr. Garduno explained that the meeting was arranged on behalf of Mr. Epi Gonzalez to initiate discussions for the Laredo District on collaboration between TxDOT and CBP on potential upgrades and technology. He also mentioned that the Alliance is considering including considerations of border funding in their new Interstate Highway Act effort.

Ms. Caroline Mays explained the difficulty of allocating transportation funding to relocate border patrol checkpoints, which has been a significant impediment in the past. She expressed satisfaction with the ongoing discussion and asked Mr. Garduno to consider how this process could be streamlined through the Act in the future. Mr. Garduno suggested that funding could be reallocated from other sources to support this program. Ms. Mays emphasized the importance of using precise language in the document to ensure that funds can be directed toward security operations.

Mayor Gunter addressed another topic from the meetings in D.C., specifically the delays in opening the Presidio Rail Bridge. She read aloud an email from Customs and Border Protection to the committee, which explained that while the railroad portion of the bridge is complete, US Customs inspection facilities are still under improvement or construction and outlined the expected dates of completion for each of them. All components are expected to be completed between 2025 and early 2026. Ms. Mays suggested that she, Mayor Gunter, and Mr. Garduno coordinate further on the D.C. meeting and the Presidio Rail Bridge effort offline.

Mr. Gerry Schwebel, International Bank of Commerce, clarified that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the agency that handles border checkpoints, not CBP. He highlighted his involvement with DHS checkpoints as a member of the Texas Freight Advisory Committee and requested to be included in the dialogue related to facilities at the border. Mr. Schwebel emphasized the need for input from those that have experience with I-35 and I-69 in consideration of other factors that affect the function of border checkpoints (e.g. levels of DHS staffing). Mr. Garduno agreed with Mr. Schwebel's comment.

Mayor Gunter discussed technological advancements being considered at border checkpoints, including artificial intelligence applications and more sophisticated systems to enhance the use of existing systems for improve efficiency. Mr. Schwebel concurred, noting that the future of this technology will be centered around biometrics, trusted shipper dedicated lanes, among others.

Election of New Chair and Vice Chair/Elect Economic Professional Member

Mayor Gunter stated to the committee that a new chair and vice chair of the I-27 Advisory Committee will be selected at the next meeting in September. She then brought the committee's attention to the election of a new economic professional member to replace the Segment 3 representative. Mayor Gunter opened the floor for nominations and nominated Ms. Victoria Vara from the Sonora EDC. She highlighted Ms. Vara's active involvement in the EDC and endorsed her as a strong candidate for the committee. Lubbock Mayor McBrayer seconded the nomination, praising Ms. Vara's contributions to discussions in Washington D.C.

Ms. Victoria Vara of the Sonora EDC was unanimously elected to the I-27 Advisory Committee.

Adjourn

Mr. Lauren Garduno of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance took a moment to invite the attendees to the Ports-to-Plains annual meeting in Lubbock on the last day of September.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.