

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 2021
10:00 AM
VIDEOCONFERENCE**

Members Present:	Councilmember Manny Pelaez, <i>Co-Chair, District 8</i> Councilmember Rebecca Viagran, <i>District 3</i> Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia, <i>District 4</i> Councilmember Clayton Perry, <i>District 10</i> Commissioner Trish DeBerry, <i>Bexar County Commissioner's Court, Precinct 3</i>
Members Absent:	Commissioner Justin Rodriguez, <i>Co-Chair, Bexar County Commissioner's Court, Precinct 2</i>
Staff Present:	Jeff Coyle, <i>Assistant City Manager</i> ; Camila Kunau, <i>Assistant City Attorney</i> ; Shreya Shah, <i>Assistant City Attorney</i> ; Tomika Monterville, <i>Director, Transportation Department</i> ; Gen. Juan Ayala, <i>Director, Military & Veteran Affairs</i> ; Sally Basurto, <i>Assistant Director, Government & Public Affairs</i> ; Christine Wright, <i>State Relations Manager, Government & Public Affairs</i> ; Nancy Cano, <i>Office of the City Clerk</i>
Others Present:	Pedro Martinez, <i>Superintendent, San Antonio Independent School District (ISD)</i> ; Dr. Sean Maika, <i>Superintendent, Northeast ISD</i> ; Julia Grizzard, <i>Executive Director, Bexar County Education Coalition</i> ; Naomi Miller, <i>Director of Governmental Relations, Northside ISD</i> ; Melissa Shannon, <i>Director, Governmental Affairs, Bexar County</i> ; Lauren Lipin, <i>Attorney, Government & Regulatory Affairs Group, Clark Hill, PC</i> ; Baltazar R. ("Walter") Serna, Jr. <i>Attorney, Serna & Serna, San Antonio</i> ; Henry Bonilla, <i>The Normandy Group</i> ; Ron Eritano, <i>The Normandy Group</i> ; Letty Mederos, <i>Senior Managing Director, Clark Hill, PC</i>

Call to Order

Co-Chairman Pelaez called the meeting to order.

1. Approval of the minutes from the April 14, 2021 meeting of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to approve the minutes from the April 14, 2021 meetings of the Intergovernmental Relations Committee. Councilmember Rocha Garcia Viagran seconded the motion, with the changes as noted. The motion prevailed unanimously by those present.

2. School District's federal relief funding

Assistant City Manager Jeff Coyle reported that on April 28, 2021, Governor Abbott announced that the State would be releasing \$11.2 billion to schools, which represented approximately two thirds of the total \$17.9 billion available under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) passed by Congress. He added that the funds were

supplemental to all other funding sources and School Districts were to use the funding for pandemic response and to address student learning loss. He stated that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) would make the funds available through a grant process and the deadline to apply was May 23, 2021. He noted that Bexar County School Districts were eligible to receive nearly \$500 million from the initial allocation announced by the State.

Pedro Martinez, Superintendent, San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD), explained that the \$11.2 billion in State funding was passed through three different Federal packages, with the first two, SR-1 and SR-2, released under the previous Administration and the third package, SR-3, passed by the current Administration. He reported that the SR-3 was the largest package which represented two-thirds of the funding and stipulated a set time limit for the State to release the funds to the school districts once the funds became available.

Superintendent Martinez reported that SAISD would receive approximately \$200 million under the SR-3 funding package and would expend approximately \$70 million annually until the SR-3 funding expired in September 2024. He stated that the funds would be used to help students recover from the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic and included mental health support systems established at every school, additional instruction time, and infrastructure safety investments.

Superintendent Martinez stated that SAISD needed advocacy for SR-2 funding which would enable SAISD to create an even more robust and aggressive four-year plan for the students. He voiced his concern for SAISD high schools which were experiencing the lowest percentage of on-campus students. He emphasized that SAISD had a disproportionate amount of children living in poverty and many high school students had jobs and worked late into the night to help support their families out of need, but they should not be working 40 hours a week. He added that SAISD had established night programs to facilitate working students and staff were making all efforts to ensure students graduated. He made a plea to the community to do whatever could be done to make sure the students finish this school year strong, and to start the next school year strong by ensuring all students went back into the classrooms.

Dr. Sean Maika, Superintendent, Northeast Independent School District (NEISD), stated that SR-2 funding would give schools the ability to be reimbursed for the amount of money expended from their regular school budgets beginning in March 2020 to offset their costs incurred by the COVID-19 Pandemic. He reported that NEISD would open up 24 elementary school campuses for summer school this year instead of five to help their students catch up for lost work during the COVID-19 Pandemic. He expressed concern for the amount of students that did not want to return to campus because they found a job that paid \$12 an hour and believed that they were rich. He noted that NEISD was in discussions about compulsory attendance for next year and a profile would be established to ensure children were extremely successful in school and the virtual learning environment would be only be available to a small number of students that would qualify for it based on a three-fold system profile: A learner (the student), a learning coach (a parent), and a teacher in a virtual learning environment that would be limited in scope.

Julia Grizzard reported that school funding was based on attendance and investments that were made under House Bill (HB) 3 were not reflected for school districts which would have to make up for the gaps from the lack of expected investments. She noted that HB-3 added \$2 billion into compensatory education, but that funding was not reflected for school budgets. Ms. Grizzard added that the \$5.5 billion in SR-2 funding was cited in several pieces of legislation in both the House and Senate which

would direct the Commissioner to utilize the funding in designated ways with a potential of a percentage to be used for programs the Commissioner would select for School Districts.

Chairman Pelaez asked how the Committee and the City could assist with advocacy. Superintendent Martinez stated that a unified voice from City and County Leaders mattered and he asked for their outreach to peer cities for a collective impact. He noted that funding was a universal issue for all school districts across the State and called for more pressure to be put upon State legislators.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if Senior High School Students in the area were on track to complete high school and if many suffered a loss of learning due to an inability to learn in a remote classroom setting. She requested an offline discussion with Ms. Grizzard and others present on how to incentivize student attendance and Texas Home Learning Program opportunities for students in vulnerable communities without technical and digital infrastructure. Superintendent Martinez reported that a third of SAISD seniors were failing during the first semester of remote learning and now half of those students were passing, many were anticipated to complete their senior courses by midnight before graduation day, and a large group would graduate over the summer. He stated that the biggest concern was for the ninth and tenth graders, as students usually dropped out at those levels. He reiterated that an aggressive, in-person enrichment student programs were needed to retain them.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if School District policies would be in place to require COVID-19 vaccinations during the current school year and for student participation in next year's extracurricular activities. Superintendent Martinez stressed that School Districts would do whatever was needed to get school children vaccinated, but the main concern was that student demand for the vaccine would wane, which was now a common mindset among adults community-wide. Dr. Maika stated that NEISD was creating a vaccination plan and needed help encouraging students to participate, due to vaccine hesitancy. He noted the difference between virtual classroom attendance versus virtual classroom engagement and stated that NEISD had the best attendance during the COVID-19 Pandemic, but that student engagement was much lower. Ms. Grizzard reported that the passing of HB 999 would allow as estimated 1,500 High School Seniors at-risk of not graduating to participate in the Individual Graduation Committee program.

Commissioner DeBerry asked if School Districts would require vaccinations for enrollment in the next school year. She implored the School District Representatives to collaborate with the City and the County in conjunction with their behavioral and mental health programs because a stipulation in the Treasury regulations allowed for City and County spending towards those efforts. She stated that she would advocate on behalf of Bexar County to promote a campaign to get more adults and children age 12 and over vaccinated to achieve herd immunity goals. Superintendent Martinez stated that School Districts were not in a position to require vaccinations just yet because there were still being distributed on an emergent basis. He stated that he had checked with academic colleagues nationwide and the consensus was to encourage vaccines and make them available to students. He emphasized that the School Districts still needed the assistance of the City and the County to get vaccine messaging out. He reported that the community lacked adequate mental health services pre-pandemic and now the need for students and families was through the roof. He stated that SAISD needed to invest in having clinicians at every school and to fund their master's degree level social

workers to obtain State licenses to become therapists. Dr. Maika clarified that only the Texas Education Agency (TEA) could mandate vaccines, not School Districts.

Councilmember Viagran noted that many high school students were working full-time with corporate sponsors and City partners such as HEB that were advocates for education and asked if School Districts had made contact with employers to advocate for student attendance. She asked if a letter of support could be drafted for Councilmembers to circulate to colleagues in other cities to advocate for SR-2 funding. Superintendent Martinez reported that many school counselors were calling employers to discuss high school employee school attendance and most employers were comprised of small businesses and restaurants that desperately needed workers.

Chairman Pelaez stated that the City would reach out to Texas Municipal League (TML) partners and request their advocacy on SR-2 funding needs for School Districts.

Councilmember Perry requested expanded details on how to entice students to go back to school instead of working. He voiced concern for the 30% of local small businesses that closed their doors due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and stated that he would continue to advocate for small business funding for COVID-19 relief as small businesses provided vital jobs for families and needed to get back on their feet. Superintendent Martinez explained that families were still hurting from the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and faced challenges with evictions and housing assistance. He encouraged a holistic, deeper understanding of these pressures that were put upon students to go to work. He added that SAISD would continue to provide remote learning options because to remove them would be more punitive to the students. Superintendent Martinez emphasized that obtaining more Federal funding for School Districts would provide the opportunity to help the families in need.

Chairman Pelaez highlighted the symbiotic relationship between getting students back into the schools and businesses succeeding as it was difficult for parents to return to work when they had children at home that needed care. He stated that the School Districts could rely on the support of the Committee in many different ways. He requested an offline meeting with Assistant City Manager Jeff Coyle to deploy lobby campaign efforts to deliver letters of support to Legislators and engage TML in SR-2 funding efforts.

3. Federal update on appropriations and surface transportation legislation

Sally Basurto reported that the House Appropriations launched its FY 2022 Community Project Funding (CPF), previously known as earmarks, and allowed congressional members to submit infrastructure projects for funding consideration. She stated that the City was successful in obtaining \$18.6 million in funding requests that were sponsored by various congressional members, as follows:

CPF Member Sponsored COSA Projects Approved		
Project	Amount	Member Sponsor
Equity-based Home Expansion & Rental Preservation Program	\$2 million	Congressman Castro
Mental Health Unit Expansion	\$1 million	Congressman Gonzales
SAWS, Power Generators	\$500,000	Congressman Castro
University Health, Comprehensive Health Assessment	\$306,000	Congressman Castro
Project Quest, IDEA Workforce Initiative	\$1 million	Congressman Castro
Saint Mary's University, Family Life Center – Mental Health Clinic	\$884,000	Congressman Castro
Alamo Colleges, WETC Lab Equipment	\$94,000	Congressman Castro
Communities in Schools, SA Program Expansion	\$500,000	Congressman Castro
VIA Transit, Wayfinding Technology	\$894,000	Congressman Castro
Bexar County Sheriff's Office Animal Cruelty Investigations Unit	\$151,000	Congressman Gonzales
San Antonio College, RN Program	\$500,000	Congressman Doggett
HemisFair Conservancy, Rehabilitation of Historic Homes	\$1 million	Congressman Doggett

Ms. Basurto stated that the House Appropriations Committee would mark up 12 Appropriations Bills in June 2021 and House Floor Passage would occur in July 2021.

Ms. Basurto reported that the FY 2022 Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill would consider member submitted infrastructure projects which were included on local Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP) and which addressed the priorities set out by the White House and Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chair. She noted that Government & Public Affairs Department and the Transportation Department identified three TIP projects that best aligned with the priorities to submit to members for consideration. She stated that the \$15.6 million Zarzamora/Frio City Road RR Overpass Project submitted by Congressman Castro was accepted and noted it was the highest-priced project. Ms. Basurto noted that the Presa [SE Military to W. Boyer St. and the Broadway [IH35 to Burr Rd.] projects sponsored by Congressman Doggett remained on the TIP List for funding.

Ms. Basurto provided a list of other FY 2022 Surface Transportation Reauthorization Projects submitted for the City, as follows:

FY 2022 Surface Transportation Reauthorization City Projects Submitted		
Project	Amount	Member Sponsor
San Antonio River Authority (SARA), Zarzamora Creek Trails	\$6.4 million	Congressman Castro
SARA, Menger Creeks	\$3 million	Congressman Doggett
VIA, Operating & Maintenance Facility	\$15.6 million	Congressman Castro

Ms. Basurto stated that the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure would advance the Surface Transportation Bill by the end of May 2021.

Ms. Basurto reported that the FY 2021 RAISE Grant was a competitive \$1 billion grant program for surface transportation infrastructure projects with a significant local or regional impact. She added that the maximum grant award was \$25 million, no more than \$100 million could be awarded to a single State, and up to \$30 million would be awarded to Planning Grants, including at least \$10 million to areas of persistent poverty. She described the program as highly competitive and indicated that the Government and Public Affairs and Transportation Departments were coordinating efforts to meet the July 12, 2021 application deadline.

Tomika Monteville reported that next steps in the FY 2021 RAISE Grant process was the hiring of Booth Consulting Firm, a Transportation Consultant that would expertly identify Federal discretionary grant opportunities, develop a schedule with a very aggressive timeline, and collaborate with other local and regional transportation stakeholders to identify, coordinate, and prioritize projects.

Councilmember Perry asked if \$100 million in RAISE Grant funding was the capped amount to be awarded per State and if there would be a designated Texas agency to serve as a clearing house for project submittals. He asked if an Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting would be scheduled to discuss proposed projects among local and regional transportation agencies. Assistant City Manager Coyle stated that the capped amount per State was \$100 million, the capped amount per project was \$25 million, and there was no designated agency or clearing house. He stated that the highly competitive funding program had an 8% success rate and was very oversubscribed. Ms. Monteville recommended that the Committee members individually and collectively review TIP proposed projects and leverage the City's equity atlas to agree on a project submittal.

Chairman Pelaez requested a meeting with Assistant City Manager Coyle, Ms. Basurto, and Ms. Monteville to address RAISE Grant matters and coordinate an MPO meeting in advance of the deadline.

Councilmember Viagran noted that some of the community projects were unfamiliar and requested that information be shared on the collaborative process between the City and the County to leverage and link programs together for posterity and overall regional growth going forward. She requested more information on the project requests submitted by local City partner agencies and the County so that future projects alignments could be assessed. Assistant City Manager Coyle replied that he would provide a information summary on each proposed project to the Committee. He noted that the lifting of the earmark moratorium did not provide enough lead time for Congressional members, and not enough clarity and guideline parameters were provided. He added that the City, the County, and regional transportation partners would be provided with more information on TIP projects next year.

Commissioner DeBerry noted the opportunity for the City, the County, and Agency partners to collaborate on a strategic, foundational level that would make a long-term positive impact on the community, and not just work together in a reactionary mode on a short timeline. She stated that

the City, the County, and Agency partners needed to be provided with more advance notice from a lobbyist standpoint.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that the TIP project submittal process provided the perfect opportunity to conceptualize and adopt a working regional strategy and noted that the City and the County currently worked in silos. She asked for status on the Moving Forward Act. Ms. Monteville stated that she would confer with Booth Consulting for further status on the Moving Forward Act. She noted that a framework that addressed poverty transportation, and economic and workforce development was key in identifying prioritized projects. Ms. Monteville added that Booth Consulting would start the initiative process and would prepare a list of identified projects for collaborative partnerships with TIP projects. Assistant City Manager Coyle explained that initial process was complicated, competitive, and more coordination was needed. He noted that Ms. Basurto asked each Member to identify the projects in their districts they wanted to sponsor and no clear direction was received, so City staff worked to identify the top three most competitive projects. He recommended that the Congressional Member Sponsors be consulted on the type of streamlined process they preferred.

Chairman Pelaez requested an offline discussion with Ms. Monteville regarding the role of Booth Consulting Firm and coordinated strategic planning for TIP projects.

4. 87th Legislature update

Chairman Pelaez asked the Committee members for their comments or questions regarding State matters.

Councilmember Viagran asked if the Committee would consider taking up a Resolution of Support for the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Assistant City Manager Coyle confirmed that he received this request from Councilmember Pelaez and requested the Federal Consultant Team to provide background information on the issue; thereafter, City staff would provide the Committee with a recommendation.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia requested status on HB 793 that pertained to expanding criminal areas around schools. Assistant City Manager Coyle reported that HB 793 did not receive a committee hearing and the deadline for House Bills to be voted out of committees was May 10, 2021, so the Bill was officially dead.

Adjourn

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:32 am.

***Councilmember Manny Pelaez,
Co-Chairman***

***County Commissioner Justin Rodriguez,
Co-Chairman***

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Cano, Office of the City Clerk