



# WCCLRMA

## WEBB COUNTY- CITY OF LAREDO REGIONAL MOBILITY AUTHORITY

### **2019 PROJECT REPORT**

**By: Antonio Rodriguez, PE, LGPP**

**WCCL-RMA General Engineering Consultant (GEC) Deputy Program Manager**

**December 31, 2019**

#### **Background -**

The Webb County City of Laredo Regional Mobility Authority (WCCL RMA) was formally petitioned jointly by Webb County and the City of Laredo to the Texas Transportation Commission for its formation on April 15, 2013 (City of Laredo) and August 18, 2013 (Webb County). The Texas Transportation Commission approved the creation of the WCCL RMA on February 27, 2014.

The WCCL RMA is unique in Texas as it is the only RMA that was jointly formed by both a City and a County. The WCCL RMA Board of Directors consists of nine (9) members. Four members of the Board of Directors are jointly selected by City Council Districts 1 and 2, Districts 3 and 4, District 5 and 6 and Districts 7 and 8. Four members of the Board of Directors are individually selected by members of Commissioners Court from each of the four precincts. The ninth member is the Chair of the Board of Directors who is directly appointed by the Governor of the State of Texas. Each Director serves as a volunteer and is not compensated for any of his or her time spent in service on the Board of Directors. Furthermore, no Director can have any financial interest that would benefit from the actions of the WCCL RMA.

Since its formation, the RMA Board was entrusted to organize the agency which entailed hiring consultants, developing policy, holding meetings and filing regulatory annual and periodic reports, including the annual audit as required by the City and County.

The single revenue source for the RMA is from the \$10 fee per vehicle registered in Webb County which was approved by the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature to fund long-term transportation projects of a regional mobility authority. With these monies, the RMA has been able to perform its role in developing solutions for helping to advance mobility priorities for Webb County and the City of Laredo. It should be noted that, at this time, the RMA does not have any paid employees or facilities from which to conduct its business; however, it does have startup and operating expenses. TxDOT and other entities have provided their facilities and resources for RMA Board meetings.

As of December 12, 2019, the WCCL-RMA has an asset balance of **\$9,429,093.82**.



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The current members of the Board of Directors are the following:

1. Chairman of the Board of Directors – Mr. Jed A. Brown
2. County Precinct No. 1 Director – Mr. Jesus D. Romero
3. County Precinct No. 2 Director – Mr. Oscar O. Lopez, Treasurer
4. County Precinct No. 3 Director – Mr. George Beckelhymer
5. County Precinct No. 4 Director – Ms. Viridiana Fernandez
6. City District 1 & 2 Director – Mr. Jose Murillo
7. City District 3 & 4 Director – Alfonso Mendiola
8. City District 5 & 6 Director – Douglas B. Howland, Vice Chair
9. City District 7 & 8 Director – Arturo Dominguez, Secretary



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### What has the WCCL RMA done to date?

- I. *Initial Project - Vallecillo Road, from FM 1472 to the IH-35 Southbound Frontage Road (February 2015 to Present)* - The Laredo MPO Policy Committee requested that the RMA take on this new location roadway in early 2015, to assist in alleviating congestion on FM 1472. Improvements consist of the installation of a 5-lane roadway with curb, sidewalk, lighting and utilities for a total length of 2.75 miles. The project would begin at the eastside of the intersection FM 1472 and Muller Memorial Blvd. and will extend approximately 2.75 miles to the East and terminate at the southbound frontage road of IH 35. The implementation of this project will provide a relief route for egress from the commercial area to IH 35 which will decrease the level of congestion along FM 1472. The implementation of this project will also provide a direct egress route for the Citizens of Laredo living in the La Bota Ranch Subdivision that is located on the west end of Muller Memorial Blvd. This roadway also opens prime property for industrial development and leads to future developments east of IH 35. To date, the WCCL RMA has investigated multiple avenues to develop funding for the implementation of the project through local, state, and federal sources as well as the feasibility of a corridor Transportation Reinvestment Zone (TRZ). The current **total project cost** (not including the value of the donated ROW which is roughly \$2 million) for the implementation of Vallecillo Road is **\$31,471,000**. The current **total construction cost** of the project is **\$26,825,000**. Due to the importance of the project to the community, the WCCL RMA, the City of Laredo and local businesses are contributing to implement the project.
  1. WCCL RMA: \$4,000,000 (13.0% of Total Project Cost)
  2. City of Laredo: \$5,000,000 (16.3% of Total Project Cost)
  3. Local Business: \$5,000,000 (16.3% of Total Project Cost)

The private-public team will be approaching members of the Texas Transportation Commission to request approximately \$17,471,000 which equates to 55.5% of the total project cost in financial assistance from TxDOT to finalize the funding plan for the project. As the project leader, the WCCL RMA is responsible for the development and implementation of the project and has initiated the development of the project schematic and will ultimately pursue environmental clearance through an Environmental Assessment. When funding is approved and a Finding of No Significant Impact is provided by TxDOT, the WCCL RMA will implement the project via Design-Build.



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### Vallecillo Road

NET LENGTH OF PROJECT = 14,918 FT = 2.83 MI  
NET LENGTH OF ROADWAY = 14,918 FT = 2.83 MI

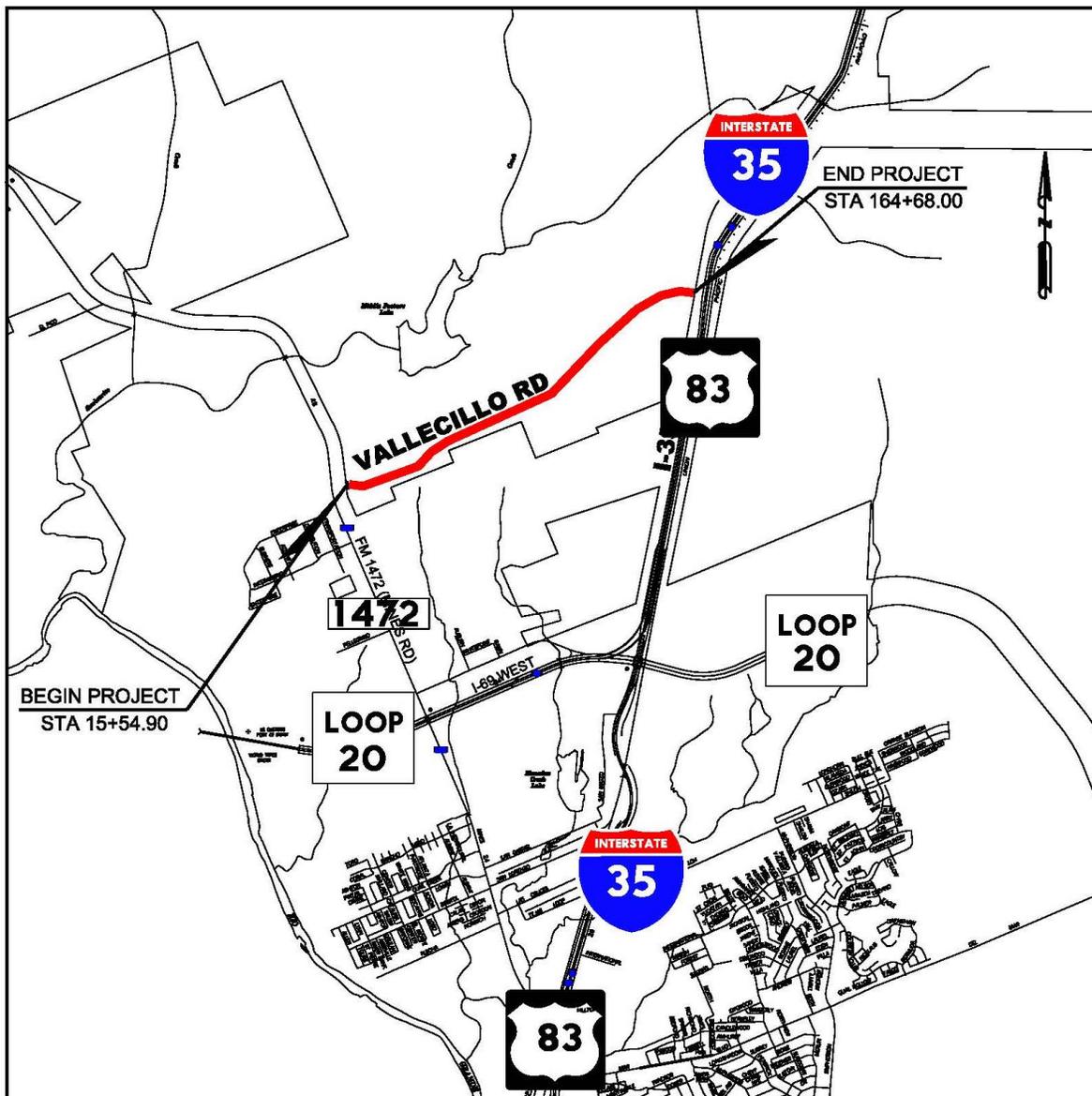


Figure 1 – Location Map



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- II. Loop 20 (Upgrade to Interstate Standards), between the International Boulevard and the US 59/Loop 20 intersection** – This is a Priority Project for the RMA and one of the main reasons for the formation of the RMA. The RMA developed a financial plan to implement the project to interstate standards via Design Build Finance. The financial plan determined that the use of TRZ from IH 35 to US 59 coupled with current funds projected to be dedicated to the Laredo Community from federal and state sources could advance the project for completion within five years. To that end, the RMA conducted an industry review workshop with prospective design build developers to gauge the level of interest from the developer community. The workshop was well attended with over 60 attendees from the construction, design build and engineering community. The RMA followed-up the industry review workshop with a series of one-on-one meetings with prospective design build developers. The Community is currently utilizing projected funding from the UTP to begin implementing the five proposed overpasses within the project limits (Shiloh, Del Mar, University, Jacaman and Airport). As part of the community effort, the TxDOT Laredo District has contracted multiple consultants for the development of plans, specifications and estimates for the full ultimate corridor improvements (main lanes and frontage roads). In support of the community, the WCCLRMA provided grant application services to the City of Laredo and TxDOT to obtain an INFRA Grant Application in 2019 to request \$42 million from the Federal Highway Administration to construct the proposed frontage roads in addition to the overpasses and complete the conversion of US 59 to IH 69W.
- III. Grant Application Efforts** – In addition to the INFRA Grant Application services that the RMA provided to the City of Laredo and TxDOT, the RMA invested monies to develop and submit applications for other federal grants such as.
- A FASTLANE Grant Application in 2016 for the development of the overpass at Jacaman Road and Loop 20. A highly competitive grant where communities across the United States of America were competing for a share \$500 Million, the USDOT received over \$9.8 Billion in applications. It should be noted that no community nor the DOT in the State of Texas received a grant award. Subsequently, the RMA provided support with their GEC and pledged to provide funding support as part of the community local match for the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of FASTLANE Applications, as well the INFRA Applications. In addition to the FASTLANE/ INFRA Grant Program,
  - The RMA has provided support to the community through their GEC for the TIGER Grant Program in 2017 and the BUILD Grant Program in 2018.



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- IV. Transportation Reinvestment Zone Studies (TRZ)** – The RMA has performed the following TRZ efforts to date:
- In its efforts to advance the Vallecillo Road Project and the Loop 20 Project, the RMA commissioned its GEC to perform TRZ Feasibility Studies for the advancement of Vallecillo Road.
  - The RMA commissioned its GEC to perform a Countywide TRZ Study for the advancement of all road projects in the Webb County area and in 2018.
  - The RMA commissioned its GEC to perform a TRZ Study for the advancement of Loop 20 South from US 59 to US 83 to upgrade the existing rural divided facility to a controlled access freeway facility with a direct connection to the future Port of Entry, International Bridge 5.
- V. Other Tasks** – The RMA has worked tirelessly to provide support and value to Webb County and the City of Laredo.
- Hosted 2 Strategic Workshops (March 2016 and October 2017) to have a “meeting of the minds” with the leaders of the community and the TxDOT Laredo District regarding the short term and long-term mobility priorities of the community.
  - Facilitated an audience with TxDOT Chief Engineer Bill Hale to meet with the leaders of the City of Laredo and Webb County for a discussion on funding opportunities for mobility improvements in the community.
  - Provided an independent engineering review for the Webb County Espejo Gates project.
  - Provided a funding option for the City of Laredo for completion of the Hachar Schematic, for the City to not exceed its programmed budget.



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- VI. North Laredo Webb County Transportation Planning Study** - The RMA is conducting a long-term transportation study for mobility improvements in North Webb County from Loop 20 to Camino Columbia along FM 1472 in order to remove the current and future congestion on FM 1472. The Purpose is to provide a clear assessment of mobility conditions in North Laredo and to provide a roadmap for growing the transportation network that can meet increasing mobility demands into the future. The goals of the study are to:
- Identify feasible projects that will help relieve congestion impacts in North Laredo
  - Promote safety for all uses of the transportation network.
  - Coordinate implementation and planning efforts comprehensively with International Bridge, Port-of-Entry logistics and the Freight Network.
  - Coordinate private land development and public investments in mobility infrastructure
  - Promote efficient movement of goods while reducing impacts of freight operations on neighborhoods and sensitive land.
  - Improve overall transportation network connectivity and resiliency in North Laredo

The study process includes public input in the form of stakeholder meetings and public meetings, planning and engineering to define and evaluate transportation solutions for the development of an ultimate implementation plan that will have a list of project priorities for the community to program and execute over the next 20 years.

Total cost of the Study is \$634,421. Funding for the study consists of both federal and local vehicle registration fees monies. Eighty percent of the study is funded by the Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) money which is federal money that is supervised by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). The remaining twenty percent is funded by the Webb County Vehicle Registration Fees which supervised by the WC-CL RMA. Below is a breakdown of the funding for the study:

1. TxDOT = \$507,538.80
2. WC-CL RMA = \$126,884.20



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### North Laredo Webb County Transportation Planning Study

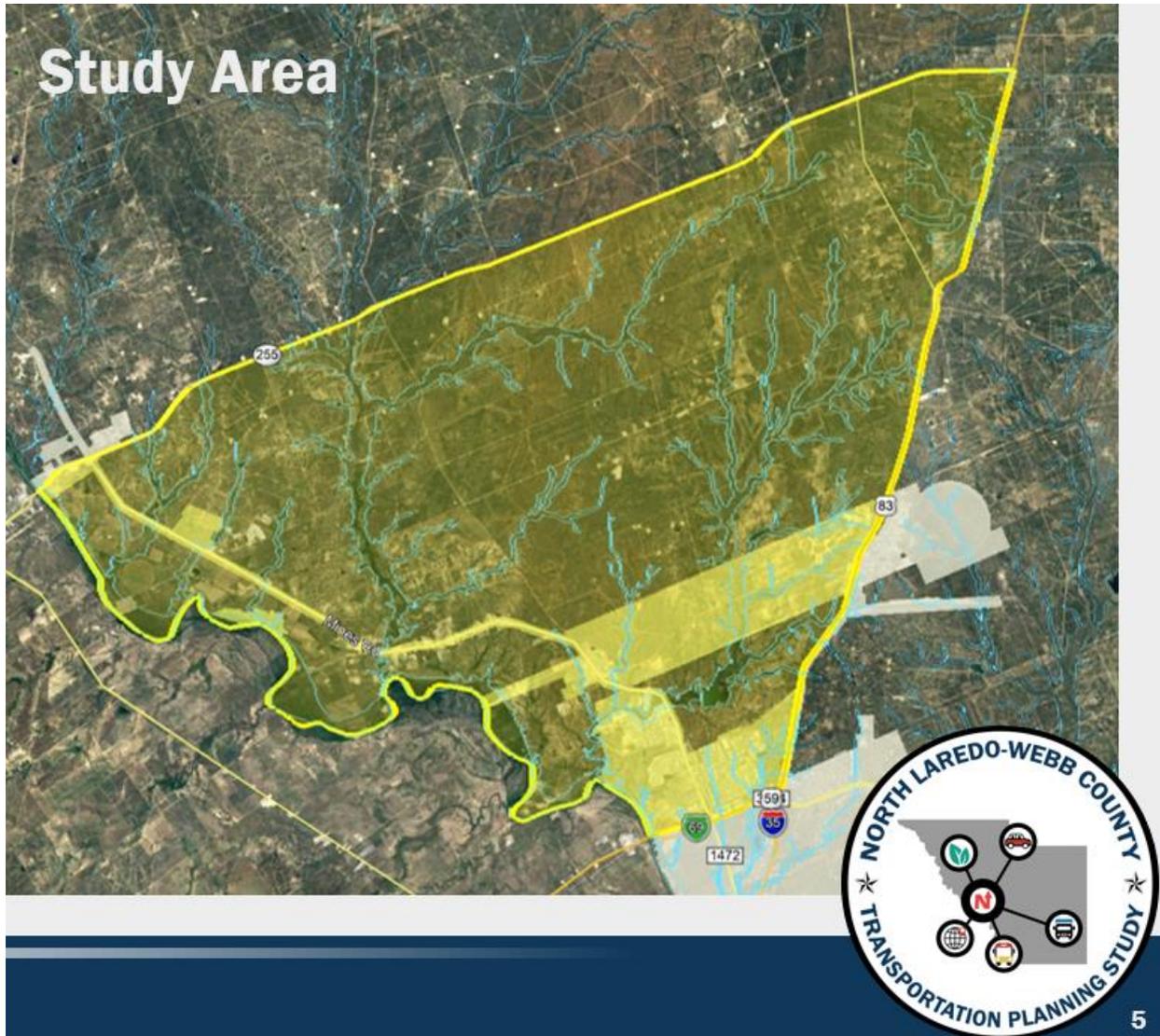


Figure 2 – Study Area



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**VII. Los Presidentes from Loop 20 South (Cuatro Vientos) to Concord Hills** – RMA will develop plans, specifications and estimate for the implementation of a new location Modified Major Arterial that will extend from the intersection of Los Presidentes and Loop 20 South (Cuatro Vientos) for a length of 0.60 miles to the intersection of Los Presidentes and Concord Hills. The proposed roadway will consist 4 -12' lanes, sidewalk, raised median and a contained storm drain system. Construction of the project will be let and overseen by the City of Laredo. The project will also include an acceleration and deceleration lane on Loop 20 South (Cuatro Vientos). This portion of the project will be constructed by the TxDOT Laredo District.

Total cost of the project is \$3,798,426.00. A breakdown of the funding of the project is below:

1. WC-CL RMA =	\$1,153,801.00
2. City of Laredo =	\$1,400,000.00
3. Webb County Drainage District No. 1 =	\$600,000.00
4. TxDOT =	\$644,625.00

This project is due to commence construction in **August 2020** and scheduled for completion by **October 2021**.



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### Los Presidentes

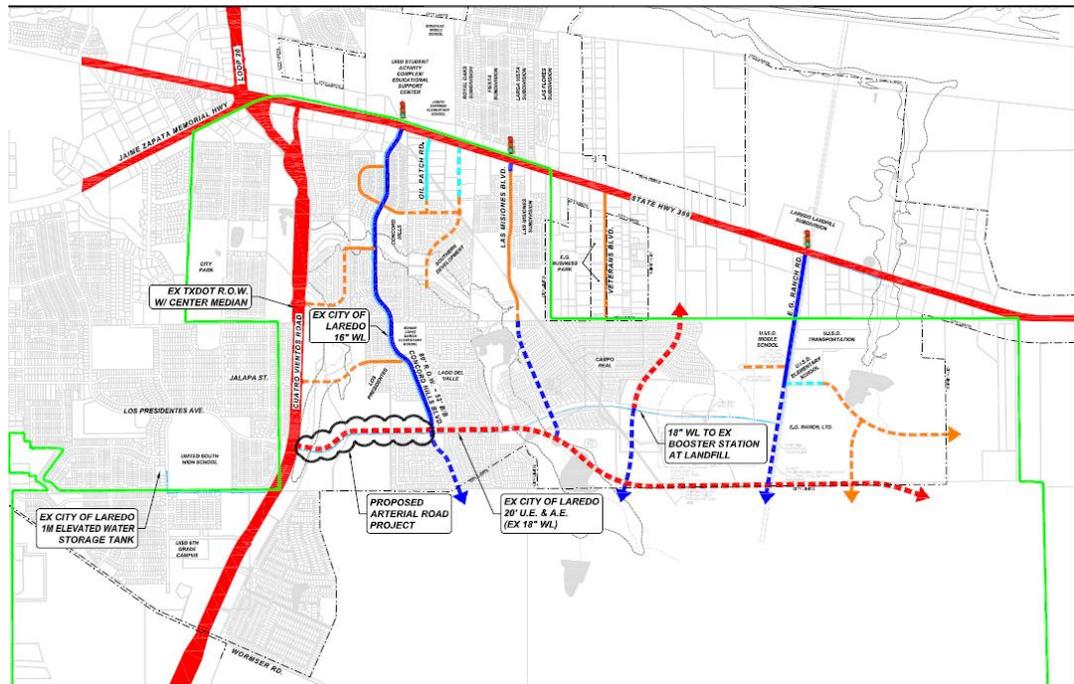


Figure 3 – Location Map



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**VIII. Killam Industrial Blvd and FM 1472 Turn Lane Additions** – RMA will develop plans, specifications and estimate for the implementation of proposed right turn lanes on FM 1472 heading northbound approaching Killam Industrial Blvd. and on Killam Industrial Blvd. heading westbound approaching FM 1472. Construction of the project will be let and overseen by the TxDOT Laredo District

Total cost of the project is \$2,700,00.00. A breakdown of the funding of the project is below:

- |                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. WC-CL RMA =      | \$1,100,000.00 |
| 2. City of Laredo = | \$1,600,000.00 |

This project is due to commence construction in **December 2020** and scheduled for completion by **October 2021**.



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## Killam Industrial Blvd. Turn Lanes

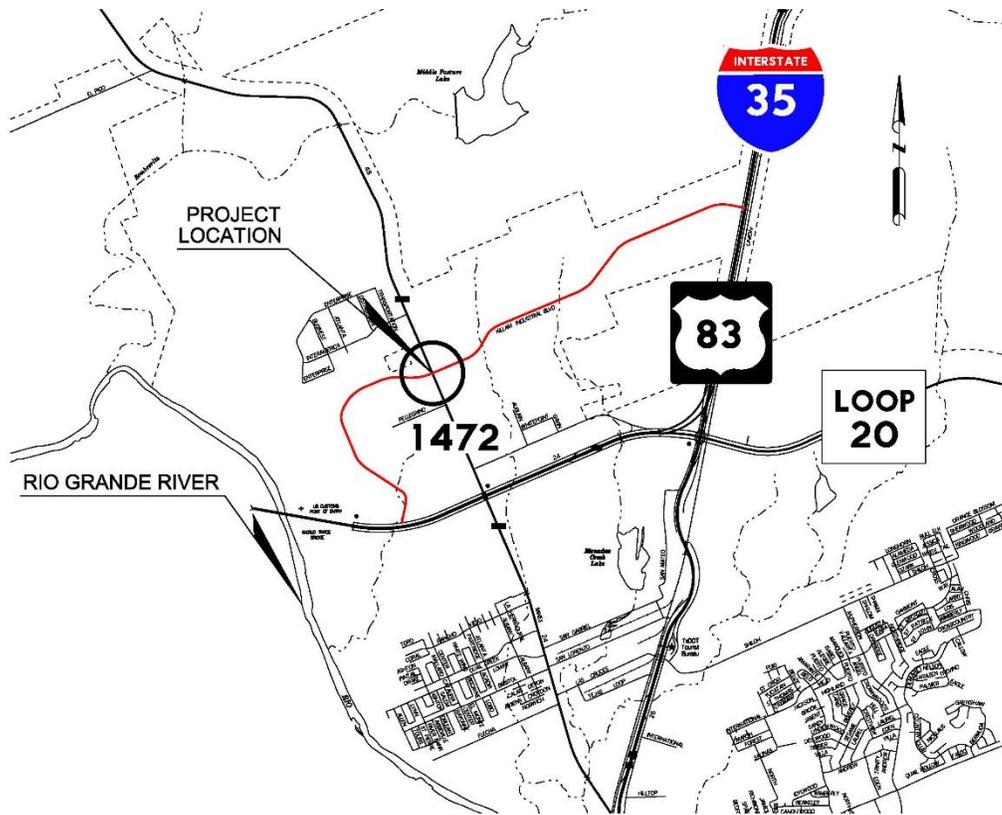


Figure 4 – Location Map



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### WCCL RMA Plans for 2020

- IX.** Transportation Reinvestment Zone Studies
  - Upon final concurrence by the City of Laredo, the RMA will work with the City of Laredo to develop a defined zone for Loop 20 South from US 59 to US 83. The Zone could also be extended along SH 359, westward from Loop 20.
  
- X.** International Bridge 4-5 - The RMA has been communicating City and County leadership and a possible developer for the full implementation of a new Port of Entry in Southern Webb County. One of the extensive abilities of the RMA is to work across County, State and International jurisdictions on behalf of its sponsored communities. The RMA is the ideal vehicle to serve as the main sponsor the project Presidential Permit that will be required for the project to be implemented. The project is still in the early planning stages.
  
- XI.** Other Projects in 2020 and beyond
  - A. IH 69 W Improvements
    - 1. Upgrade US 59 to Interstate Standards from Business 59 to Duval County Line and ultimately to Houston, TX.
  - B. Loop 20 (Cuatro Vientos)
    - 1. Southern Extension from Mangana Hein Road to US 83
    - 2. Loop 20 Overpasses from SH 359 to US 83
    - 3. Extend Loop 20 (Cuatro Vientos) South of US 83 to intersect with the Future Outer Loop and Ultimately the International Bridge 4/5.
  - C. FM 1472 (Mines Road)
    - 1. Mines Road – Future Expressway
    - 2. FM 3338 Improvements and connections to FM 1472 and SH255
    - 3. Extension of Mines Road to Eagle Pass
  - D. Hachar Road
    - 1. Hachar Rd. Direct connectors: North bound FM 1472 to East bound Hachar Rd, South bound FM1472 to East Bound Hachar
  - E. Vallecillo Road
    - 1. Vallecillo overpass at Vallecillo Rd and IH35
    - 2. Vallecillo Direct connectors/ Overpass with dedicated right turn lanes
      - North bound FM 1472 to East bound Vallecillo
      - South bound/ Overpass with dedicated left turn lanes from FM1472 to East Bound Vallecillo
    - 3. Vallecillo Loop from IH 35 to SH59 - Possible expressway/ freeway section (main lanes and frontage roads)



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- F. River Bend Road from Aquero Rd to FM 1472
- G. Outer Loop - Construction of the Outer Loop, from US 83 in southern Webb County to Camino Colombia north of Laredo with priority emphasis on the segment from Hwy 59 to Hwy 359.
- H. International Bridge 5/6 between existing Columbia and WTB Bridges
- I. Rail Improvements
  - 1. New International Rail line aligned crossing Bridge 4/5 and aligned with Outer Loop (East Rail By-Pass)
  - 2. Improvements to existing at grade crossings and potential future route for hyperloop/express rail for passenger/light freight
- J. Ports to Plains
  - 1. Improvements (widening) to Hwy 83 to Eagle Pass & Del Rio and to I27
  - 2. Connectors/interchanges at SH255 and Hwy 83
- K. Bridge Operations
  - 1. Increase use of automation and dynamic scanning to increase freight movement
  - 2. Best practices at ports should be shared with others
- L. Technology
  - 1. Lanes dedicated to autonomous vehicles
  - 2. Integration of 5G network (or newer) with autonomous vehicles and traffic signalization

In summary, the RMA has historically been utilized by communities in different ways. Due to the vast powers of the RMA, it has been used as a vehicle for the development of toll roads, to pool the tax bases of multiple pre-dominantly low moderate-income Counties to apply for a State Infrastructure Bank Loan, to develop multi-modal solutions for communities, etc. Here in Laredo, the RMA can utilize its funding sources to perform studies to help develop new funding sources for transportation, work to develop projects and make them shovel ready for future funding from the state and federal sources, can act as bridge in project delivery between the County, the City, TxDOT, Mexico, etc. How it is utilized is at the behest of the leaders of our community.