



For additional information please contact: Leah Olivarri

Telephone: 800-945-2156 x21 or (361) 887-0021

Date: January 5, 2011

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Public meetings for the Regional Economic Adjustment Plan for Building Disaster Resilient Communities will occur from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Monday, January 10, 2011 through Thursday January 13, 2011. A presentation about the project will start at 6 p.m. at each meeting.

The purpose of these meetings is to gather public input in each of the four counties (Starr, Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy) that the plan includes. The public can learn more about the project, ask questions and provide input for the planning effort. Meetings locations are:

DATE	CITY	LOCATION
Monday, January 10, 2011	Rio GrandeCity	Starr County Industrial Foundation 601 E. Main Street
Tuesday, January, 11, 2011	McAllen	McAllen Chamber of Commerce 1200 Ash Avenue
Wednesday, January, 12 , 2011	San Benito	Cameron County-San Benito Annex 1390 W. Expressway 83
Thursday, January, 13, 2011	Raymondville	L.E.FranksTouristCenter 501 South 7 <sup>th</sup> Street

**Background**

In 2009, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) applied for and was selected to receive an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant to develop a project entitled “Regional Economic Adjustment Plan for Building Disaster Resilient Communities (Regional EAP).” This grant will enable Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy and Starr Counties to work together to develop a regional master plan that will foster economic growth and economic recovery following natural disasters.

Hurricane Alex followed by Tropical Depression #2 were a reminder of the potential impacts of storm events. The overall goal of the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) Regional EAP is to provide a framework for governmental entities within the LRGV to work together to plan and manage their current and future public works infrastructure and stormwater-related systems in order to minimize storm related water damage and economic impacts in the event of a major event, such as hurricanes.



This plan will be a “big picture” plan that compiles information on major drainage systems, catalogs potential and known flooding problem areas and needed improvements, and incorporates these into a comprehensive document. The plan will include a Geographic Information System (GIS) centralized database for the collection and maintenance of information on infrastructure and assets. The plan will identify storm-related public works infrastructure critical to diversifying the region’s economic base, and recommend funding mechanisms and sources for a phased regional Capital Improvement Plan to complement the current and developing infrastructure in the study area.

This regionally-based collaborative effort relies on multi-jurisdictional cooperation among local, state and federal government agencies and includes a broad public involvement effort to help the public learn about and provide input for the plan. It is critical to overall recovery and the future growth of the region that the four counties have adequate storm systems to minimize storm-related water damage and associated economic impacts in the event of a disaster.

The Steering Committee and the Technical Committee are keys to guiding the project. These committees will assist with data collection and prioritization and help to amplify public outreach. The Steering Committee consists respectively of 29 members and the Technical Committee has 18 members. They include elected and appointed officials, business leaders, landowners and other stakeholders from the four counties and were appointed by the LRGVDC Board of Directors. The committees meet at intervals throughout the project. A second round of public meetings will be held later in the year. Other activities planned include regular reports to the Board of Directors of the LRGVDC and input from several focus groups.

At their first combined meeting in June 2010, the Steering Committee elected Godfrey Garza, Jr. P.E. representing Hidalgo County Drainage District #1 as chair of the Steering Committee. Sonia Lambert, General Manager of Cameron County Irrigation District #2 was elected chair of the Technical Committee. Vice-chair of the Steering Committee is Cameron County Commissioner David Garza and vice-chair of the Technical Committee is Raul Sesin, P.E. who is Planning Director for Hidalgo County.

A website has been established ([www.lrgv-regional-eap.com](http://www.lrgv-regional-eap.com)). Project newsletters and updates will be posted to this site. An 800 number is also available (1-800-945-2156 x21) to reach the Public Outreach Team Leader, Leah Olivarri, who is available to answer questions about the project.

A consultant team headed by S&B Infrastructure, Ltd., with assistance from Guzman and Munoz Engineering and Surveying, Inc.; Rigcatco Consulting; L&G Consulting Engineers, Inc.; Olivarri& Associates, Inc. and TEDSI Infrastructure Group, Inc., will be working with LRGVDC to complete the plan over the next year.

**LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**  
*Regional Economic Adjustment Plan for Building Disaster Resilient Communities*  
EDA Grant No. 08-79-04390

