



SUSTAINABLE

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES



The Houston-Galveston Area Council's Sustainable Transportation Strategies are based on a vision of a future where everyone in the region has the choice to get where they want to go by walking, biking or taking transit, rather than always relying on their vehicles. This document showcases the various elements of H-GAC's **Livable Centers** and **Pedestrian-Bicyclist** Special District programs, including studies that have been completed throughout the region, federal and local funding success stories, and case studies highlighting partnerships, planning and construction. The region's landscape is always changing as more and more Sustainable Transportation Strategies are implemented. Be sure to visit our website at www.h-gac.com/community to see the latest accomplishments.





PLACES.
SPACES.
CONNECTIONS.
NEW
DIRECTIONS.



Governance

- Adoption of Study
- Local Support
- Policy Changes
- Prioritization of Projects



Financing

- Leveraging Funds
- Fiscal Feasibility
- Grants and Loans



Partnerships

- Collaboration Building
- Public-Private Ventures
- Regional Coordination



Construction

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements
- Street Improvements and Transit Accommodations
- Public Spaces and Wayfinding Signs



Collectively and individually the programs that form the basis of H-GAC's Sustainable Transportation Strategies are built on a foundation of designing complete and connected communities by reducing the number of times you need to use your car for day-to-day activities. The Livable Centers Program encourages development of safe and attractive places for people to live, work and play. The goal of the Pedestrian-Bicyclist Special District program is to encourage walking or bicycling as a safe and convenient alternative to driving, by improving sidewalks and bikeways. Both programs work to achieve their goals by assisting residents in identifying improvements that can be made to existing communities while maintaining the character and integrity of these neighborhoods.

People throughout the region are looking for shorter commutes to work, shopping, entertainment and school and are now beginning to ask their community leaders to offer them more choices. In response, H-GAC works with partners across the region to lead Sustainable Transportation Strategies studies with recommendations and plans for developing communities centered around diverse amenities, such as retail and employment centers, housing opportunities, entertainment venues and access to transit. The studies also highlight areas around the region where biking and walking options are in high demand, such as locations with dense populations near public buildings, jobs and landmarks, or where biking and walking choices are already available but in need of improvement.



Sustainable Transportation Strategies focus on a future where job growth and economic development are dependent on the region keeping industry and attracting new business, while providing quality housing choices, protecting valuable natural resources and offering multiple transportation alternatives. By developing Sustainable Transportation Strategies plans, decision-makers across the region now have the tools they need to make that future a reality, including roadmaps to implementation and construction, and pathways to partnership-building and financing options.

■ **Mobility**

Concentrating destinations and improving sidewalks and bikeways create communities where walking, bicycling or using transit is more convenient than driving and reduces congestion on major thoroughfares.

■ **Community**

Welcoming public gatherings with parks and plazas and providing safe, accessible hike and bike trails develops a sense of place among residents and visitors and promotes fellowship with family, friends and neighbors.

■ **Economy**

Establishing employment opportunities centered around housing, distinct destinations and multiple transportation choices produces a desirable economic climate for new and continued business investments.

■ **Environment**

Advancing communities with diverse amenities built on less land than some traditional development to preserve and protect the region's waterways and green spaces, while increased walking, biking or transit trips can reduce pollution.

■ **Health**

Communities that make it easy to walk and bike for day-to-day trips to the store, school, or work enable people to build exercise into their daily routine with very little time or effort. Reducing vehicle trips also improves air quality, which helps everyone in the region breathe a little easier.

Governance | Waller

Tucked away just 40 miles from the metropolis of Houston is the small, rural city of Waller. For decades, the City has maintained a quaint, small-town charm. However, with one of the region's top transportation corridors running alongside it and development steadily stretching outward from Houston, this town of 2,300 people is faced with the challenge of becoming a vibrant and unique destination for visitors and residents alike without losing any of its hometown integrity.

City leaders recognize a need for a strong plan to help revitalize downtown Waller, making it a showpiece stop along the US 290 Corridor and potential Business Route 290 Commuter Rail Station. With this goal in mind, the City of Waller and the Waller Economic Development Corporation partnered to complete a Sustainable Transportation Study. The resulting plan focuses on creating a more welcoming and walkable downtown, with sidewalk improvements and increased park space to support local store and restaurant owners and attract new businesses. The plan also embraces the community's history with the Waller Heritage rail that will direct visitors to historical landmarks throughout the city. The Waller City Council adopted the Plan in 2009.

Earning an award from the American Planning Association in 2010, the Plan is the perfect instrument for moving the City's vision forward and is the first step in the creation of the City's Comprehensive Plan. City planners continue to use the plan as a means of supporting policy decisions and communicating with developers and potential funders. In fact, the City uses the plan as the basis for federal, regional and local improvement grants.



"The study has continued to be used as a tool to communicate the community's vision to redevelop our city on time-tested principles of having a centralized walkable destination place."

John Isom

Waller Economic Development Corporation



"It's very convenient for customers to walk from one like business to another. The only problem is that we have Airline in between - it's a bit like frogger for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing the street. We turned to the Airline Improvement District to get a one-cent sales tax to fund the various projects to resolve these types of issues."

Randy Sim

Owner, Mercado Sabadomingo

Financing | Airline

Imagine a community where residents can walk, bike or take transit everywhere they need to go during the week, including work, school and church. A community where the weekend is filled with shopping and entertainment at several large, centrally-located flea markets. A community where residents feel safe walking on well-kept, wide sidewalks and along bustling thoroughfares in designated crosswalks and green spaces. This community will soon be a reality in the Airline Improvement District north of Downtown Houston.

Today this community is home to one of the city's most robust marketplaces, often drawing 30,000 to 40,000 visitors per weekend day, but residents and employees making their way to the market may be forced to travel on narrow sidewalks and unpaved paths or in the adjacent multi-lane roadway with few convenient crosswalks. However, thanks to a Sustainable Transportation Study sponsored by the Airline Improvement District, community leaders have secured nearly \$3 million in funding through the Transportation Improvement Program to design and build new and improved sidewalks, medians to give pedestrians a place to stop when crossing roadways, crosswalks, covered bus stops and bicycle racks.

Community members and business owners decidedly supported the Airline Improvement District's plan through public events and surveys collected at the markets, illustrating a great need for safety enhancements in the community. As a result of this support, the District was able to provide the local match required to receive the federal funding for the projects. Design is currently under way and construction will begin in 2013.

Case Studies

Partnerships | Near Northside

The Near Northside, situated just north of downtown Houston, will be the home of the new North line light rail as part of METRO's light rail expansion. This expansion will bring new transportation choices to the residents of the Northside and is an exciting opportunity to build on and enhance the community's resources. The Greater Northside Management District and H-GAC teamed for a Sustainable Transportation Study focusing on preserving and enhancing the community's identity while keeping the safety and well-being of its residents in mind. Four station stops, from the University of Houston downtown to Moody Park, were included in the study area.

Painting a picture of partnership, the management district and H-GAC worked with METRO and the City of Houston throughout the process, giving each entity a specific role in realizing the goals of the plan. The City is working with the management district to upgrade the designation of Burnett Street to "major collector," which means it will be eligible for funding for reconstruction. The management district is also working with METRO to develop small pieces of property along the rail line into community art areas. Other partnerships include working with a private developer to add paint and lights to the Hernandez tunnel, a major pedestrian route from the Northside to Downtown Houston and collaborating with Local Initiative Support Corporation's GO Neighborhood program to combine resources and gain support from the community. Avenue Community Development Corporation was also a significant contributor to the plan and their new senior housing development is a reflection of core plan elements – such as affordability and access to amenities.



"Residents must be able to access the rail easily from their homes and to and from businesses; otherwise, it will not benefit our community. The study identified ways to make our area walkable and pedestrian friendly and the streets on which to focus."

Rebecca Reyna

Greater Northside Management District



"The livable centers study has provided a platform for the residents and businesses to plan for the future. This neighborhood is transit-dependent; walks and bikes to work and to school; this neighborhood has embraced the concept of a livable center."

Diane Schenke

Greater East End District

Construction | East End

Anyone driving through the East End of Houston can see what a difference just a few pedestrian-oriented improvements can make in a community. In 2011, the Greater East End District completed the first phase of extensive improvements to streets and sidewalks with a goal of giving residents and visitors a safe and attractive promenade to walk down to reach the light rail and shops along Harrisburg. More than 300 community members and elected officials helped celebrate the completion of this phase along Harrisburg Boulevard between Lockwood and Oakhurst.

The designs for the improvements are inspired by the heritage and spirit of the community. Visitors know they are in the East End just by looking around and seeing the community's sunrise icon embedded in the sidewalk pavers, brightly colored directional signs and community entryways, beautiful native trees and stunning artwork. When complete, the project will run along METRO's light rail line, include seven intersections and feature sidewalk enhancements, pavers, crosswalks, ramps, lighting, benches, information kiosks, trash cans and community-specific signs.

The East End project on Harrisburg marks a significant milestone for the Sustainable Transportation Program – it is the first Sustainable Transportation study that has led to construction of a project and has garnered phenomenal public support. The management district is using the plan as a launching point for additional projects including a study to further the community's "Urban Village Initiative" with museums, markets, hike and bike trains, street cars and other amenities that will help unify this family-friendly neighborhood.

Case Studies

SUSTAINABLE

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

Year Completed	Study Name	Partner Name	Study Type	Accomplishments	Built Projects Value	Future Projects Value
2004	Third Ward Pilot Project	Greater Southeast Management District	Special District	💰	\$359,000	
2005	Montrose Pedestrian and Bicyclist Plan	City of Houston	Special District	🏛️ 💰		
2005	Gulfton Pedestrian and Bicyclist Plan	City of Houston	Special District	👉		
2006	Galveston Pedestrian and Bicyclist Special Districts Study	City of Galveston	Special District	🏛️ 💰		\$858,000
2007	Sugar Land Town Center Study	City of Sugar Land	Special District	🏛️ 💰		\$4,500,000
2009	AID Pedestrian and Bicyclist Special District	Airline Improvement District	Special District	🏛️ 💰 🧑		\$2,900,000
2009	East End Livable Center Plan	Greater East End District	Livable Center	🏛️ 💰 🧑 👉	\$2,250,000	\$5,000,000
2009	Missouri City Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan	City of Missouri City	Special District	🏛️ 👉	\$2,000,000	
2009	Tomball Livable Centers Downtown Plan	City of Tomball	Livable Center	🏛️		
2009	Waller Advance Plan	Waller Economic Development Corporation	Livable Center	🏛️ 🧑		
2010	Midtown Livable Center	City of Houston	Livable Center	🏛️ 🧑		\$1,460,000
2010	Near Northside Livable Center	Greater Northside Management District	Livable Center	🏛️ 🧑		
2010	Upper Kirby Livable Center	Upper Kirby Management District	Livable Center	🏛️ 💰 🧑 👉	\$5,711,111	\$5,110,000
2010	Fourth Ward Livable Center	City of Houston	Livable Center	🏛️ 💰		\$11,912,623
2010	Energy Corridor Livable Centers Plan	Energy Corridor Management District	Livable Center	🏛️		

Totals \$10,320,111 \$31,740,623

🏛️ GOVERNANCE

🧑 PARTNERSHIPS

💰 FINANCING

👉 CONSTRUCTION

COMBINED TOTAL VALUE **\$42,060,734**

SUSTAINABLE

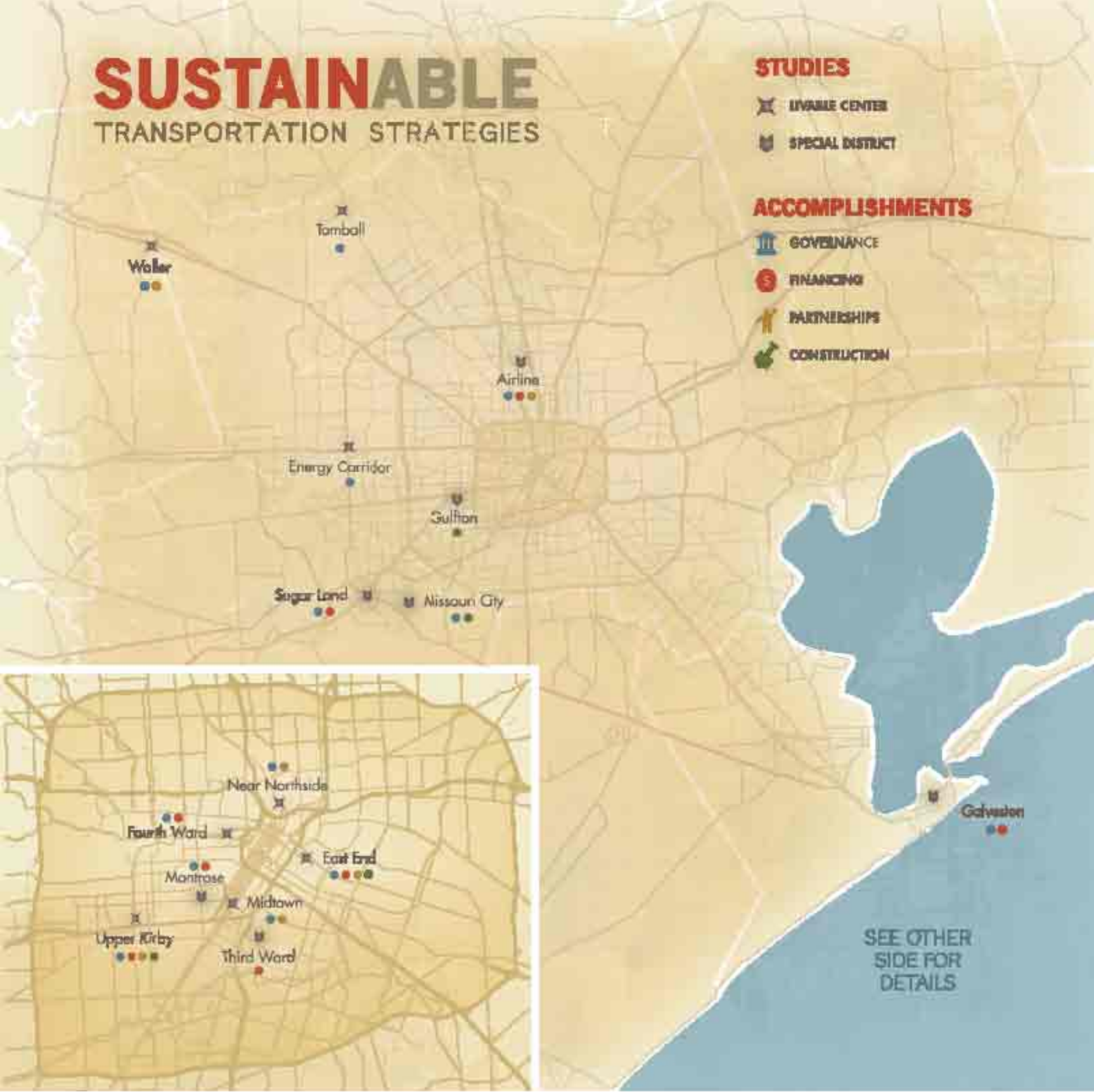
TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

STUDIES

- ✕ LIVABLE CENTER
- 🏡 SPECIAL DISTRICT

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 🏛️ GOVERNANCE
- 💰 FINANCING
- 🤝 PARTNERSHIPS
- 🚧 CONSTRUCTION



SEE OTHER SIDE FOR DETAILS



CE0911

Contact Information:
www.h-gac.com/community
(713) 627-3200

The preparation of this document has been financed in part through grant[s] from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, under the Metropolitan Planning Program, Section 104(f) of Title 23, U.S. Code. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of the U.S. Department of Transportation.