
Appendix A

Public Comments

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Appendix A — Public Comments

Public Involvement Process for 2017-2020 TIP

The public comment period for the Draft 2017-2020 TIP began on April 11, 2016 and concluded on May 11, 2016. Public meetings were held at H-GAC offices on April 26, 2016 from noon-1:00 pm and from 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm.

In addition to the public meetings, e-mail, notices, and the H-GAC website was used to communicate updated information throughout the TIP development process. The website includes a webpage for the ongoing development and administration of the TIP (<http://www.h-gac.com/taq/tip/>). This section contains TIP documents, as well as information on the TIP Subcommittee, development timeline, and links to contact H-GAC staff or make public comments.

During the public comment period, staff received six (6) comments from individuals and organizations.

Additional opportunities for public engagement will be provided throughout the TIP development process as new policies and project programming actions are considered. All comments received by H-GAC related to specific transportation projects or services are forwarded to the appropriate local or state agency for their consideration.

Summary of Public Comments

- **Support/Oppose Specific Projects, Agency Priorities**
 - FM 1463 (1/0)
 - IH 610 (0/1)
 - IH 45 (0/1)
 - SH 146 (0/1)
 - West Belt railroad grade separations / IH45 S / Spur 5 (0/1)
 - Hardy Toll Road Downtown extension (1/0)
 - Grand Parkway Segment B (0/1)
 - Bellaire Boulevard (1/0)
 - Beltway 8 Ship Channel Bridge (0/1)
 - Grand Parkway Segment D (1/0)
- **Policy / Editorial Comments**
 - More Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects
 - Pilot Commuter and Transit Projects
 - CMAQ Funding

The following comments and prepared responses were presented to the Transportation Policy Council at its May 27, 2016 meeting for its consideration prior to adoption of the 2017-2020 TIP. All comments received by H-GAC related to specific transportation projects or services were forwarded to the appropriate local or state agency for their consideration.

Listing of Public Comments

OSCAR SLOTBOOM

General comment: I support the plan's emphasis on highway improvements.

Specific projects:

page 3-31, 0271-17-163, IH 610, Construct fixed guideway I support the idea of the busway, but the proposed design presented to the public at the recent TxDOT meeting has serious flaws. The area of concern is between Buffalo Bayou and Post Oak, where the busway is shifted to the middle of the freeway and terminated under the Post Oak overpass.

1. The proposed design forces buses through the congested West Loop/Post Oak intersection, causing a delay for buses 2. The proposed design precludes use by non-bus vehicles, preventing HOVs and vanpools from using it, so the busway will be empty except for occasional buses. The facility will be far more beneficial if designed to be usable by HOVs.

3. The proposed design causes disruption to the main lanes during construction, a serious concern due to the already severe traffic congestion 4. The proposed design has poor geometrics where it is shifted between the frontage road and center of the freeway (a sharp S-curve) 5. TxDOT is studying elevated express lanes for the West Loop, and the proposed busway will increase the express lanes' complexity, cost and construction disruption to the main lanes.

A better design is to

1. Keep the busway along the southbound frontage road, and bypass the Post Oak intersection with a direct connector to the bus lanes on Post Oak 2. Widen the shoulders by a few feet to make the facility suitable for HOV vehicles.

Pages 3-48, 3-49, 3-55, 3-56, 3-57, 3-66, 3-67, 3-82; IH 45 Gulf Freeway projects, NASA I bypass to Galveston, and SH 146 Fairmont Parkway to FM 518 The widening of SH 146 in the Seabrook area should be higher priority than the widening of IH 45 from FM 517 to Galveston. I agree that the widening of IH 45S from NASA I to FM 517 should remain high priority.

Page 3-71, West Belt railroad grade separations This project is expensive and it should be coordinated with the about-to-begin TxDOT study of the Spur 5 extension to ensure TxDOT's recommendations are compatible with this planned project. A delay of this project may be logical.

I would like to see the Spur 5 study include the option of relocating the Interstate 45 main lanes to the West Belt railroad corridor. This would allow the lanes currently designated for IH 45 through downtown in the proposed future plan to be used for managed lanes. In the existing proposed downtown plan, the Pierce Elevated retirement would be the last phase of the project (maybe after 2030), but if the IH 45 main lanes are relocated to the West Belt RR corridor, the Pierce Elevated could potentially be retired much sooner.

Page 3-70, Hardy Toll Road Downtown extension I would like to see this project begin sooner than 2019. The Beltway 8 east ship channel bridge could potentially be phased or delayed to allow the Hardy Toll extension to proceed first.

Page 3-82, Grand Parkway Segment B

I think this corridor needs to be restudied to get a better alignment.

The current recommended alignment has a huge dip to the south. This indirect route will increase construction cost, increase time for drivers, increase the toll and make it less attractive to trucks. A south bypass suitable for freight should be straight and direct.

Page 3-83, Bellaire Blvd

This project was completed in 2015.

BW 8 (Sam Houston Tollway) SH 225 to IH 10E (ship channel bridge):

This project is not included in the project listing but I was told at the meeting that its projected cost is \$823 million and the expected start is the first half of 2017.

Due to the high cost, I asked at the meeting if there was consideration for building the new structure on the west side for southbound traffic, and converting the existing structure for northbound traffic. David Wurdlow did not know if the existing structure was slated to be removed for navigation or maintenance reasons.

If the cost of the bridge could be cut in half in the short term, the available funding could be directed to the Hardy Toll Road north extension to complete that project sooner.

Projects not included in the listing

I. I would like to see the widening of the Grand Parkway SH 99 between the Westpark Tollway and IH 10W. I realize this project may not be through the planning process yet, but it could potentially be ready for 2019 or 2020.

H-GAC Response (Oscar Slotboom):

Thank you for your comments regarding the Draft 2017-2020 TIP. Please find below our responses to your specific comments. In many cases we are providing your comments to the relevant project developer and/or facility owner.

IH 610/Uptown Busway

We have provided your comments to TxDOT for their consideration.

IH 45 S and SH 146

The proposed projects were vetted through a competitive programming process that considered project priority and readiness. In addition, H-GAC has worked with TxDOT and local project sponsors to compress the time periods of construction within our major corridors to reduce project construction costs and the external costs imposed on the traveling public.

West Belt Grade Separations/IH 45 S/SP 5

The West Belt railroad grade separations are consistent with TxDOT's plans for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (IH-45 N). We are not aware of plans to evaluate an alternative alignment for IH 45 mainlanes along the West Belt between SP 5 and IH 10 as proposed in your comments. We have provided your comments to TxDOT for their consideration.

Hardy Toll-Road Downtown Extension

Your comments have been provided to the Harris County Toll Road Authority for their consideration.

SH 99 (Grand Parkway) Segment B

Your comments have been provided to the Grand Parkway Association, TxDOT, Galveston County, and Brazoria County for their consideration.

Bellaire Boulevard

We are currently working with the City of Houston to confirm the status of this project.

Beltway 8/Ship Channel Bridge

Your comments have been provided to the Harris County Toll Road Authority for their consideration.

SH 99 (Grand Parkway) Segment D

Your comments have been forwarded to Fort Bend County and TxDOT for their consideration.

MR. MCELWAIN (KATY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT)

In reviewing the 2017-2020 draft TIP I do not see any mention of improvements in the Katy area. On behalf of Katy ISD and the community within the boundaries of Katy ISD we wanted to reiterate our tremendous need to have completed as rapidly as possible FM 1463 from I10 to FM 1093; improved to four lanes curb and gutter along with signalization at major intersections and sidewalk construction. Serious mobility and safety conditions currently exist. It is our understanding that this project is with TXDOT in the design stage but additional funding to

accelerate this much needed project for this community could benefit from HGAC involvement. The residential growth in the area has far outpaced the mobility development.

Also north of interstate 10 within the boundaries of Katy ISD there is a tremendous need to improve the network of thoroughfares. With the opening of the Grand Parkway from I10 to Hwy 59 an extremely large volume of traffic has emerged burdening the existing one mile grid of two lane farm roads within the Katy ISD boundaries. Large housing developments and master planned communities are blossoming overnight in this area. If the improvement of this network of roads including additional access points to the Grand Parkway is not addressed immediately the mobility will lag once again far behind the residential and commercial development resulting in the same type of mobility and safety concerns which we have been experiencing south of I10.

The involvement of the HGAC in addressing, recognizing and communicating the urgent mobility needs within the boundaries of Katy ISD is not only appreciated but very much needed to assist the Counties and TXDOT in support of our community and its well being.

H-GAC Response (Peter McElwain):

Mr. McElwain:

Thank you for your comments regarding the 2017-2020 draft TIP. HGAC recognizes there has been tremendous growth along FM 1463. In partnership with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and local governments, HGAC works to mitigate congestion, enhance transportation safety, and develop regional mobility strategies. H-GAC's Transportation Policy Council (TPC) recently committed funding to reconstruct and widen FM 1463 from IH 10 to FM 1093. The first section of this work, from IH 10 to Spring Green Blvd, is scheduled for construction in fiscal year 2018, with the remainder of the corridor currently scheduled for construction in fiscal year 2024.

The network of local thoroughfares throughout the region are developed by our counties, cities and special purpose districts (MUDs, etc.) working in partnership with the private development community and guided by public input. We want to make sure you are aware that Harris County and the City of Houston are currently accepting public comments on a planning study to evaluate future major thoroughfare alignments in the northwest quadrant of Harris County. The study area includes the Katy community. More information on the study can be found at www.eng.hctx.net/Home/US290-Area. The public comment period is open until May 13th and written comments can be submitted by e-mail to us290amstudy@hcpid.org or by mail to:

Harris County Engineering Department
10555 Northwest Freeway, Suite 120
Houston, TX 77092
Attn: Fred Mathis, P.E.

BIKE HOUSTON

The H-GAC TIP projects provide an opportunity for H-GAC to take action to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and increase physical activity – all regional wide goals – by funding all transit and ped/bike projects included in the call.

This would send a clear signal that H-GAC supports transportation alternatives. Going forward, H-GAC should take a proactive approach to soliciting transportation alternative projects and commit to spending a greater portion of funds on these projects.

Roadway projects are not the solution to mitigate ever-rising traffic congestion – they often result in induced travel demand, negative impacts on the environment, air quality, and quality of life. However, if H-GAC continues to fund billions of dollars of roadway projects and only spend millions on transit and ped/bike we will continue to see roadway growth and associated issues.

A direct approach of soliciting transit and ped/bike projects is needed to demonstrate to government and agencies that it is worthwhile to submit major transportation alternative projects. H-GAC staff and the ped/bike subcommittee should work to do this for future TIP calls for projects.

BikeHouston, on behalf of the 1 million people with bicycles in the Houston region, recommends that H-GAC does the following:

- Fully fund all ped/bike projects which represent 1.1% of the TIP call for projects from 2017 - 2020.

Going Forward:

- Take an active approach to soliciting and supporting applications for CMAQ funds and all transportation alternative projects, including Pilot Commuter and Transit Projects.
- Raise the federal share of CMAQ funding for 80%. This is allowed by the FHWA and would help to address the major start-up costs for transportation projects.
- Make a highly publicized commitment to spend a higher percentage on transportation alternatives. 30 – 50% is reasonable given the changing demands and demographics of the region. See the Kinder Area Survey, <https://kinder.rice.edu/has/>, for further details.
- Consider weighing spending by population density.

HGAC Response:

Dear Ms. Blitzer,

Thank you for your comments regarding the draft 2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). H-GAC takes a proactive approach in soliciting a mix of projects based on Transportation Policy Council (TPC) guidance. The TPC consists of 28 members representing cities and counties, the Texas Department of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County. The TPC allocates flexible federal and state funds based on many factors including public safety, transportation system condition, congestion mitigation, freight movement and economic vitality, and environmental sustainability. Currently, approximately 15% of flexible funds are committed to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit projects to meet the goals of the region. As always, H-GAC staff continues to inform the TPC of changing demographics and regional transportation priorities. Your comments have been provided to the TPC for their review.

DOUG HOUSE MD

Name Doug House, M.Ed.

Email Address house567@earthlink.net

Your Comment/Question

Comment 2017 - 2020 TIP comments: Three medical doctors, Andrew Dannenberg, Howard Frumpkin, and Richard Jackson, in their 2011 released book, Making Healthy Places. "The trouble is that in the last half century, we have effectively engineered physical activity out of our daily lives. Health is determined by planning, architecture, transportation, housing, energy, and other disciplines at least as much as it is by medical care. The modern America of obesity, inactivity, depression, and loss of community has not 'happened' to us; rather we legislated subsidized, and planned it." · Fully fund all ped/bike projects which represent 1.1% of the TIP call for projects from 2017 -2020. Going Forward: · Take an active approach to soliciting and supporting applications for CMAQ funds and all transportation alternative projects, including Pilot Commuter and Transit Projects. · Raise the federal share of CMAQ funding for 80%. This is allowed by the FHWA and would help to address the major start-up costs for transportation projects. · Make a highly publicized commitment to spend a higher percentage on transportation alternatives. 30 - 50% is reasonable given the changing demands and demographics of the region. See the Kinder Area Survey, <https://kinder.rice.edu/has/>, for further details. · Consider weighing spending by population density.

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NGA NUYGAN

Hello, I submitted an email supporting the Bike and Trail Hike to be built in the International Management District sometime August of last year. I continue to support this development but would like to remain anonymous. When I sent the email, I thought that it was going to be kept between the recipient and me. I recently found my comments online and am wondering if we can keep this confidential or if we can change the name to my legal name with is a very common name, Nga Nguyen. Would this be possible? I would really appreciate it. link to the communication: https://www.h-gac.com/taq/tip/call-for-projects-comments/comments-received/10_Intl_Mgmt_District_Bikeways.pdf

HGAC RESPONSE:

Thank you for your comments. In November of last year, the TPC approved funding for the International Management District bike and hike trail linking Arthur Storey Park at Beltway 8 to S. Dairy Ashford. Necessary engineering and design studies are funded in fiscal year 2019 with construction to commence at a later date, currently estimated to begin in fiscal year 2023.

ENERGY CORRIDOR**H-GAC 2017 - 2020 TIP Draft Project List
The Energy Corridor District Comments**

Clark Martinson, General Manager cmartinson@energycorridor.org, 281-759-3800
April 26, 2016

Need to Reduce Traffic Congestion

Regional growth forecasts indicate continuing increases in traffic volume, which will lead to longer periods of roadway congestion. Roadway-related projects are receiving approximately 85% of the TIP funding. However, roadway projects are not the solution to mitigate the ever-rising traffic congestion and in fact often result in induced travel demand, negative impacts upon the environment and air quality, and adverse effects upon quality of life.

To reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality, H-GAC should increase funding for projects that support transportation demand management alternatives, improve the pedestrian and bicyclist environment, reduce vehicle miles travelled and increase transit.

More Transit Funding

In the 2017-2020 TIP, TxDOT is sponsoring 72 regional roadway projects for a total of \$4.5 billion. METRO is sponsoring \$700 million in projects in the urban core where significant congestion is increasing - 6,400 times less than TxDOT roadway projects. Funds should be more equitably distributed to transit projects if we intend to change commuting behavior to reduce congestion on our roadways and have a more lasting impact upon regional mobility, air quality and the region's quality of life.

We urge the redistribution of regional roadway funds to METRO high frequency/high capacity transit and Harris County Transit, Fort Bend County Transit and other pilot transit projects where increasing transit patronage can begin to reduce congestion in our region.

More TxDOT Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure Funding

Slightly more than 1% of the TIP funds are allocated to Pedestrian and Bicyclist Projects. H-GAC should continue to aggressively encourage public space, trails and complete streets projects that improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and create an environment supporting transit use. Local governments and municipal management districts are sponsoring almost all of the ped bike projects – and nearly 50% have no federal or state contributions. TxDOT is sponsoring 3 ped bike projects for a total of \$6 million. In contrast TxDOT roadway projects are receiving 750,000 times more funding than TxDOT ped bike projects.

More CMAQ Transportation Demand Management Funding

H-GAC and TxDOT need to increase investment in infrastructure projects and encouragement programs that promote transportation demand management alternatives such as ride sharing,

www.energycorridor.org • Phone (281) 759-3800 • Fax (281) 759-3801
14701 St. Mary's Lane, Suite 290, Houston, Texas 77079

transit, and walking and bicycling. To encourage more projects that qualify for Congestion Mitigation Air Quality funding, H-GAC should reduce the local match requirements and provide the maximum allowable federal and state contributions. Innovative new programs and approaches, as well as programs that have proven to be effective and sustainable, will be needed to meet this challenge.

Project Funding								
Category	Federal		State		Local		Total	% of All Funding
Air Quality	\$34,884,000	83.62%	\$0	0.00%	\$6,831,000	16.38%	\$41,715,000	0.41%
Ped Bike	\$50,552,868	44.20%	\$4,112,703	3.61%	\$39,704,803	32.20%	\$114,370,374	1.13%
ITS Safety	\$80,465,251	51.55%	\$32,800,240	13.81%	\$72,823,539	14.62%	\$156,089,030	1.54%
Transit	\$286,677,563	31.96%	\$5,000,000	0.56%	\$605,188,306	67.48%	\$896,865,869	8.86%
Freight	\$94,797,780	26.79%	\$0	0.00%	\$259,082,799	73.21%	\$353,880,579	3.50%
Roadway	\$1,394,325,954	16.30%	\$3,712,196,460	43.38%	\$3,450,239,689	40.32%	\$8,556,762,112	84.56%
Total	\$1,941,703,416		\$3,774,109,412		\$4,403,870,136		\$10,119,682,964	100.00%

1. A more active approach to soliciting CMAQ applications – especially from Pilot Commuter and Transit Projects. Other than posting the RFP on the H-GAC website, almost nothing is done to promote and educate the CMAQ program to the local constituencies. A better approach will involve educational outreach and promotion to solicit well-qualified applications.
2. The current funding levels required locally are below those allowed by the FHWA. As indicated in Section V., paragraph F, of the CMAQ Program Guidance issued on November 12, 2013, "The Federal share for most CMAQ projects has been 80 percent." An exception to this rule is for certain identified programs that may be funded up to 100%.
As the start-up cost for transportation projects can be quite costly, and therefore limit applications for funding, it becomes very important to fund the selected projects to the maximum allowed so that qualified organizations are encouraged to seek out CMAQ project opportunities. Therefore, please consider raising the federal share to 80% for all eligible years of CMAQ funding.
3. Funding for Pilot Commuter and Transit Projects should be increased in response to the demand that qualified service providers in the H-GAC region propose.

www.energycorridor.org • Phone 281-759-3800 • Fax 281-759-3801
14701 St. Mary's Lane, Suite 310, Houston, Texas 77079

H-GAC Response (Energy Corridor District):

Clark -- Thank you for your comments regarding the Draft 2017-2020 TIP. H-GAC appreciates the commitments made by the Energy Corridor District to enhance regional mobility and actively participate in the metropolitan planning process.

As an appointed member of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and its Transportation Air Quality (TAQ) Subcommittee, we view the Energy Corridor as a key partner and leader in the planning, development, funding and implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) projects within the region.

With regard to some of your specific comments, we have provided responses below:

More CMAQ Transportation Demand Management Funding

Responses to your enumerated points are below:

We are always looking for ways to proactively promote participation in regional air quality programs. If you have specific ideas on how to accomplish this, please coordinate through Marco Bracamontes at marco.bracamontes@h-gac.com.

We are currently evaluating the effectiveness of the Pilot Commuter and Transit Projects program with the aim of maximizing the potential to achieve desired changes in travel behavior within the limited funding available. This work will involve the identification of clear program goals and performance metrics. We understand that the level of funding leverage available through the program is a factor as agencies make decisions about their participation.

Our current experience does not support an increased level of funding at this time. Additional resources could be provided should program needs and performance warrant.