

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON FUNDING SCENARIOS FOR 2035 RTP UPDATE

Background

The 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) was adopted by the Transportation Policy Council in October 2007. Future revenues for transportation expenditures were forecast to be \$156.7 B. Recently the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) released its 2010-2020 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) and the statewide, long range plan. Its projection for federal and state highway revenues is significantly lower than that anticipated in the 2035 RTP.

H-GAC is developing a 2035 RTP Update (FY 2011-2035) that incorporates TxDOT's new financial expectations. The draft revenue forecast indicates a total of \$85.7 billion in federal, state and local revenues. To achieve fiscal constraint, therefore, it is estimated that roughly half of the transportation expenditures listed in the current RTP must be reduced or delayed beyond the RTP timeframe.

At last month's TPC meeting, staff presented 3 financial scenarios:

Baseline – Represents TxDOT'S revised program of projects consistent with the Unified Transportation Plan (UTP) with the addition of full build out for US 290; locally sponsored projects (both highway and transit) remain the same as 2035 RTP.

Enhanced – Identifies additional roadway projects that could be funded with new or "enhanced" revenue sources.

Full – Includes the remaining projects in the current 2035 RTP

Current Situation

Throughout the month of August, MPO staff engaged in a public outreach effort to provide information on the funding shortfall, its consequences and possible solutions including redefining project priorities, revising project scopes and the regional impacts of various revenue enhancing strategies. As part of this effort, staff conducted meetings across the region at chambers of commerce and county commissioners' courts as well as a public meeting held at H-GAC. Information on the funding shortfall and the project scenarios was posted on the H-GAC website. Interviews with a variety of media outlets were conducted.

In addition to those activities, H-GAC posted a Transportation Survey to solicit public feedback on the transportation funding issue. To date, over 700 responses have been received. Attached is a summary of the responses to date.

Requested Action

The comments received during the public comment period do not indicate a consensus on revenue enhancing strategies. Staff recommends development of the 2035 RTP Update using the Baseline scenario for purposes of fiscal constraint and air quality conformity.