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FUTURE OF AREA ROADS IN JEOPARDY
*Public Asked to Weigh in on Funding Shortfall
for the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan*

Public Comment Period through August; Public Meeting Planned for August 19

HOUSTON (August 16, 2010) – In an effort to gain public input on a recently projected \$70 billion region-wide transportation funding shortfall and potential means to close this gap which negatively impacts regional roadway projects and maintenance, the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) has announced a public comment period for the month of August for the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The public can comment at the public meeting held at H-GAC on August 19 or online via survey or email.

The current Houston-Galveston region RTP, originally approved for \$156.7 billion in 2007, needs to be updated to reflect the latest funding forecast of \$85.7 billion. Factors contributing to the funding shortfall include the recent recession and declining returns from the federal and state motor fuel taxes. If a revenue solution is not found, new roadway projects and maintenance of existing roads in and around the eight-county region are in jeopardy.

“Based on current projections, more than a few high-profile projects will have to be scaled back or shelved completely,” said Alan Clark, Director of Transportation Planning at the Houston-Galveston Area Council.

“But reduced or eliminated projects might not be the worst of it,” said Commissioner James Patterson, chairman of the Transportation Policy Council (TPC). “With the expected growth of the region by another one million people, repair and maintenance of the infrastructure

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itself also will not be able to keep pace. The result is more congestion, more potholes and longer commutes.”

Alternate revenue sources under review at this time include:

- **Ending diversions of Fund 6** – in 2009, the diversion of Fund 6 (motor fuel revenues) to education and other state programs totaled \$776 million. Ending the diversions can generate \$5 billion in revenue
- **Increase motor fuels tax** – each one-cent increase in motor fuels tax can add \$142 million to transportation funding, a potential gain to the region of \$28 - \$32 million
- **Index motor fuel taxes 3% annually** – fuel taxes have not been indexed to inflation since 1993, resulting in declining purchasing power and revenues. The 3% annual index can result in \$5.2 billion
- **Increase vehicle registration fees** – an increase of \$40 for vehicle registrations can generate \$4.6 billion. Currently, the typical fee is \$50
- **Establish a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fee** – in contrast to taxing fuel consumption, a VMT fee is calculated on the number of miles a vehicle travels and uses the roadways. A penny per mile could generate nearly \$5.8 billion over the next decade

Having Your Voice Heard

Because the projected shortfall could have such severe impact on the area, H-GAC is inviting the public to participate in the discussion and provide comment on the changes to the 2035 RTP through August 30 at 5 p.m. through the following ways:

- Survey – take an online survey at <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22AZ2A7YFGY> or go to the H-GAC website at www.h-gac.com for the link
- Written comments – submit to Transportation Public Information, Houston-Galveston Area Council, P.O. Box 22777, Houston, TX 77227-2777 or email to publiccomments@h-gac.com or fax to (713) 993-4508
- Public meetings – please contact the chamber of commerce in your area for meetings information or attend the public meeting on Thursday, August 19 at 5:30 p.m. at the H-GAC offices, 3555 Timmons Lane, 2nd floor conference room A, Houston, TX 77027

For more information on the 2035 RTP plan, please visit <http://www.2035plan.org>

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About H-GAC

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) is a voluntary association of local governments in the 13-county Gulf Coast Planning Region—an area of 12,500 square miles with more than 5.7 million people. The State of Texas designated H-GAC as the region's MPO for transportation planning for Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery and Waller counties.